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Two Former Hartford Catholic Schools Face Foreclosure After Years of Neglect

July 21, 2025

– Categories: Real Estate



Two long-vacant former Catholic school properties in Hartford, Connecticut, St. Peter's School and St. Augustine School, are now on the brink of foreclosure after years of decay and unfulfilled redevelopment promises. Once viewed as potential catalysts for neighborhood renewal, both sites have sat idle for nearly six years and are now symbols of stalled urban progress.

St. Peter's School, along with its neighboring 157-year-old church and former convent on Main Street, is scheduled for foreclosure auction on August 2, according to court records. The properties are being reclaimed by Lending Assets LLC of New York, the lender that financed their 2021 sale. Meanwhile, the St. Augustine School site in the Barry Square

neighborhood is inching closer to city takeover due to nearly \$1 million in unpaid property taxes and blight fines.

Municipal officials have had both properties on their radar for several years due to their condition and lack of redevelopment progress. The current owner, Shmuel Aizenberg, a landlord known for his controversial portfolio in New Haven, acquired both properties in 2021 under limited liability companies, following initial approval by the city for apartment conversions. However, redevelopment efforts stalled shortly after acquisition.

Frustrated Neighborhood

Michael D. Perez, Hartford's Director of Blight Remediation, confirmed that both sites have been subject to city intervention, notably St. Augustine, which has received top priority due to community concerns. The city has boarded up windows, removed overgrowth, and addressed illegal dumping, but residents remain frustrated. "Every time I see the mayor, he asks, 'What's the status of that property?'" Perez said, underscoring the urgency.

Hyacinth Yennie, chair of the Maple Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Group, expressed the neighborhood's disappointment. "It's become a haven for drugs and prostitution," she said in an interview, citing years of neglect and failed developer promises. "We're sitting here watching the property fall apart while the community is crying out for housing."

At St. Peter's, Lending Assets alleges that Aizenberg's ownership group has defaulted on about \$1 million in loans. The lender has indicated its intent to foreclose, sell, or potentially redevelop the site. In support, the city agreed to cap its municipal liens on the property at \$60,000, hoping to expedite its rehabilitation.

Despite the neglect, St. Peter's location across from Barnard Park in the South Green area still holds potential. Chris McArdle, president of neighborhood group CSS/CON (City-Sponsored Strategy for Community Oriented Neighborhoods), noted that while crime around the park has declined, the towering, empty church building remains a blight on the landscape.

Aizenberg's real estate activity extends beyond these school sites. In 2021, he bought several properties in Hartford, including "The Grand on Ann" apartments and a building at 275 Asylum Street for residential use. However, court filings now show several of his

Hartford assets, including five Huntington Street apartment buildings with 68 units, are also in foreclosure, with a court-appointed receiver overseeing operations.

With both school properties teetering on the edge of new ownership, Hartford officials are hopeful that serious developers will step in to transform the sites into much-needed housing and amenities, before they fall further into ruin.