

# DEWINE: LOOK OUT FOR OPENING DAY SCAMS

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# business

## Will Macy's take over Belk stores?

North Carolina-based rival may be for sale

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Just weeks after Macy's declared it's looking for a new way to grow revenues, a major North Carolina rival confirms it might be for sale.

But analysts are skeptical the Cincinnati-based retailer wants to double-down on a traditional department store concept.

Belk, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, operates 297 department stores throughout the Southeast from Maryland to Texas. Belk's nearest store to Cincinnati is in Ashland, Kentucky.

Earlier this week, Belk reported a \$146.1 million profit on revenues of \$4.1 billion, but disclosed it was reviewing its long-term strategic plan and hired investment banker Goldman Sachs to weigh its options.

"We are coming off a successful fourth quarter, have a strong financial position and are enthusiastic about our future," said Belk spokeswoman Jessica Graham.

"We also believe, however, that we have an obligation to consider whether there are alternatives to our current plans that would provide a better return for our stockholders."

That's corporate-speak for the company is considering selling out to the highest bidder.

Macy's officials declined to comment Friday.

### Can they, would they?

Closing the books on its latest fiscal year, Macy's executives last month said they were looking to

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THE ENQUIRER/  
PATRICK REDDY  
Exterior of a home at 1806 Westwood Ave., in South Fairmount.



## IF YOU CAN MOVE THIS HOUSE, IT'S YOURS

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**T**ime is running out to save a group of historic buildings in South Fairmount older than most Cincinnati residents.

The Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati is engaged in a last-ditch marketing effort to drum up interest in relocating five properties on Queen City and Westwood avenues. The properties are 1783 Queen City Ave., 1786 Queen City Ave., 1789 Queen City Ave., 1786 Westwood Ave. and 1824 Westwood Ave.

### West Side historic buildings at sewer project face demolition

The marketing effort is happening while the sewer district is working to acquire and ultimately demolish nearly 80 properties in the proposed path of an urban stream and other infrastructure fixes in the neighborhood. Developing the stream is viewed as one component

of a solution to help reduce combined sewer overflows into Mill Creek.

MaryLynn Lodor, deputy director of the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati, said her hope is that someone comes forward with a plan and their checkbook to move the properties. Officials want interested parties to present the sewer district with relocation plans by next month and potentially have the buildings moved by Aug. 1.

Thirty of the 77 buildings targeted for demolition have been torn down. The sewer district needs the property to reduce the frequency of com-

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## COVER STORY

## House

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bined sewer overflows in the Lick Run watershed, which spans 2,900 acres of South Fairmount and portions of East Price Hill, West Price Hill and Westwood.

The money the sewer district would spend on demolition could be put toward moving the building, said Deb Leonard, a communications specialist helping the sewer district with community outreach efforts.

"We're happy to partner on that but the clock is ticking," Lodor said.

The properties are listed on a national website that connects preservation enthusiasts with properties needing renovation [www.historicproperties.com](http://www.historicproperties.com). Officials also expect to gain interest from one of the buildings featured in a national magazine.

### CSOs a big problem, Lick Run plan is a fix

The effort is part of a series of infrastructure projects under an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency calling for the reduction of how often untreated overflows are discharged to local water bodies and the Ohio River.

After several years of work, the EPA approved the sewer district's plan two years ago to make improvements in the Lower Mill Creek watershed – one of Cincinnati's biggest problem areas.

The \$193 million Lick Run project – which includes building a new man-made "urban stream" – is expected to eliminate about 369 million gallons of combined sewer overflows. This concept was designed as a more than \$200 million savings compared to building a deep tunnel to handle this problem, Lodor said.

The current project was borne from a desire to sustainably reduce combined sewer overflows and assisting in community development, she said.

"Could it be more than just a sewer project?" Lodor asked. "We were trying to push the envelope on how we're solving the problem."

Plans call for 88 percent of flows during a typical year to reach the Mill Creek treatment plant or be discharged as stormwater to the Mill Creek.

Lodor said design plans are being finalized for the Lick Run project and it could be bid in spring 2016. The project could be completed in summer 2018.

The Lick Run project is one of the largest in Cincinnati's multibillion-dollar overhaul of its sewer system, which has been required under federal law. Cities and regional sewer systems across the country, including Sanitation District No. 1 in Northern Kentucky, are under federal order to stop overflows. The sewer district provides wastewater services to 855,000 people over 290 square miles and treats 201 million gallons of wastewater per day.

### Historic preservation tough to balance

Kevin Pape, president and co-founder of Over-the-Rhine cultural resources consulting firm Gray & Pape, said the company helped the sewer district identify and evaluate historic properties.



THE ENQUIRER/PATRICK REDDY

Deb Leonard stands atop a combined sewer overflow gate on the Mill Creek just north of the Harrison Avenue overpass. During heavy rain sewage and rain water combine and can run over the top of the overflow. Below her are gates installed to help control the problem.

He credited the agency for wanting to work with residents to balance the need to secure land for the project and preserving what it could of the neighborhood's fabric.

It's not an easy task, Pape said. His firm's study, completed in 2011, identified nearly 40 buildings between White Street and the Mill Creek and Queen City and Westwood that could be eligible to be listed on a national historic property.

Two of the five buildings of interest – 1789 Queen City and 1824 Westwood – feature Mission Style architecture, which was popular in the early 20th century and gained its inspiration from Spanish colonial missions in the Southwestern United States. But the architectural style isn't common in Greater Cincinnati, according to the report.

"A lot of the work we do, clients are compelled to do it by regulation," he said. "MSD wanted to do the right thing."

Paul Willham, president of the Knox Hill Neighborhood Association, doesn't see it that way. Knox Hill overlooks the properties on Queen City and Westwood that are in jeopardy of being demolished.

He said the agency has done the bare minimum to get people interested in the buildings and had to be threatened to comply with rules regarding historic property reviews.

"If Cincinnati wants to be a world-class city, the biggest card it can play is its historic architecture much like New Orleans and Charleston (South Carolina)," he said. "Our approach has been – other than in Over-the-Rhine – to bulldoze it."

Tony Parrott, executive director of the Metropolitan Sewer District and Greater Cincinnati Water Works, said the sewer district has worked extensively since 2010 to ensure historic preservation interests are considered in its South Fairmount projects. He said the sewer district has worked to avoid impacts on as many properties

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#### KEVIN PAPE

President and co-founder of Over-the-Rhine cultural resources consulting firm Gray & Pape

as possible that would be in the path of the Lick Run urban stream.

Tearing down the buildings – some of which were a century old – has created an opportunity to salvage items that could be reused, said Chris Miday, deconstruction manager for Building Value, in Northside. The agency recruited the Easter Seals TriState affiliate Building Value to work on many of the demolition – or what's called deconstruction – projects. Among the items salvaged include doors, metal stair rails, fireplace mantels, decorative bricks, and chimney caps for resale at its materials

reuse center. Miday said these salvage efforts are important to helping reduce the amount of construction waste that ends up in landfills.

Keep Cincinnati Beautiful has done maintenance on many of the vacant lots created from the deconstruction projects.

Miday, who has completed historic renovations on homes and says he appreciates preservation projects, said the project has presented an internal struggle for him. Some of the properties faced cost-prohibitive repairs and they are squarely in the path MSD needs for its construction plans.

It's also a tough sell to residents in the area. Miday said people are more receptive to Building Value's mission to preserve historic elements and provide job training for people interested in careers in construction. The sewer district's Lodor said Building Value's work in South Fairmount has resulted in 1,700 hours of training for associates in the program.

"These places are getting torn down either way," he said. "... We're making lemonade with lemons basically. It's a shame to see these places go."

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