

Las Vegas Implosion Takes Down the off-Strip Clarion Casino

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 10 February 2015 12:04 -

With a 4,400-pound explosive punch, a Las Vegas hotel turned into a pile of rubble early Tuesday.

The 12-story Clarion casino-hotel became the 13th hotel to gain implosion infamy in a town that explodes the old to make way for the new.

"Hopefully 13 will be a lucky number," Lorenzo Doumani, the site's new owner and developer, said a few hours before he and his family counted down to the Clarion's final seconds at nearly 3 a.m., flanked by two showgirls and having listened to a pre-implosion soundtrack of [Frank Sinatra](#).

The 200-room casino-hotel opened in 1970 as the Royal Inn and was called the [Debbie Reynolds](#) for its one-time owner — as well as the Greek Isles and the Paddle Wheel.

Amanda Dickerson had never stayed at the Clarion or any of its incarnations, but she reveled in its demise early Tuesday morning after traveling from Ripon, Wisconsin, to check an unlikely item off her life's bucket list: witness a building implosion in person.

"We don't do this in Wisconsin," she said after the dust had almost settled. "It was truly amazing."

Dickerson, 35, her boyfriend Pete Kuhn, 38, and Las Vegas local Cherie DeWilde, who first alerted her friend to the impending implosion, had been scoping out the casino-hotel earlier Monday when they got to talking with the construction crew. After telling their tale, the trio earned an exclusive invite to watch the building crumble from across the street alongside the developer, his family, friends and members of the press.

"It was one of the best experiences of my life," Dickerson said.

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Pointing to the leftover rubble, Kuhn joked that it resembled something else.

"That also looks like our wallet this week," he said.

What took seconds to destroy required several months of planning and 4,400 pounds of explosives, said Anthony O. Schlecht, safety coordinator for Las Vegas-based Burke Construction who said the preparation extended to covering nearby pools, including at the neighboring Marriott hotel.

It's been a while since a casino-hotel was felled by controlled explosives. Between 2004 and 2007, six Vegas properties were brought down, but in the eight years since, the only Strip-side implosions were the segment of the Tropicana and a parking structure.

The Clarion was no marquee property on the scale of a Stardust, which was imploded eight years ago, or a Dunes, which made way for the Bellagio.

"It's a little harder to gin up the same degree of interest," said University of [Nevada](#), Las Vegas history professor Michael Green of the Clarion's less noteworthy impending implosion.

Doumani said he knows this isn't a landmark property.

Perhaps appropriately, Doumani watched the implosion of the casino-hotel he bought last year from a parking lot that paved over the spot where the Landmark casino-hotel once stood, before it was demolished in 1995.

Instead the Clarion, off the Strip across from the area's convention center, has had several names and had fallen into bankruptcy nearly as many times, he said.

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"It is not a storied site," he said.

He said it was the building itself, and rooms that resembled cubicles, that didn't work, not the location.

Its proximity both to the Strip and to the convention center appealed to Doumani. His plan — or hope while he works on financing and waits for nearby development to come to fruition — is to build a 60-story hotel tower that could be the tallest occupied building in Las Vegas.

There would be no condos and no casino, he said.

"Instead of trying to compete with everybody, you have to have something unique," he said.

And that uniqueness could involve catering to convention-goers, including incorporating untraditional office-space to appeal to companies that frequent Las Vegas for conventions.

He said he hopes to have a plan in place by the end of the year. He doesn't expect any kind of opening before 2018.

Doumani said he'll be posting updates to 305CCD.com including video of Tuesday's implosion.

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