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## It's official: Center is sold

BY JOE CONROY  
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LAURELTON — Some big changes are coming up for the former Laurelton Center.

After years of being in limbo and several near sales, a developer has purchased the large complex.

Mountain Valley Inc. finalized the deal with the Department of General Services on Friday morning for the transfer of the former mental health facility to its new owner.

State Rep. Russ Fairchild turned the keys to the complex over to new owner Gary Murphy, CEO of Mountain Valley, Friday afternoon.

"There were four separate deals in the past nine years, all of which fell through," said Fairchild. "After the last deal never got closed, I decided something needed to be done. I didn't want it to sit here for another nine years."

In January of last year, a potential sale of the property saw the light of day when a rehabilitation company look to purchase the complex and use it as a treatment facility. The



**DONE DEAL** — From left, Gary Murphy, CEO of Mountain Valley Inc., talks with State Rep. Russ Fairchild Friday at the former Laurelton Center. Murphy recently purchased the long-vacant complex and has some big plans for its future.

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# Center

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company pulled out of the deal after surrounding residents fought the sale.

Fairchild, frustrated with the current state of affairs of the property, approached Congressman Jake Corman with a proposition that would hasten the transfer of ownership from the state to a willing buyer. He recommended that a task force, made up of members of the community surrounding the property, be organized in order to interview prospective buyers. Corman agreed and got things in motion.

"I really wanted the residents to have a say as to who would be entering their community," said Fairchild. "I introduced the legislation of the transfer when the task force felt that Mountain Valley Inc. was the buyer they wanted to see obtain the

property. The legislation was signed in July of last year for the transfer of the Department of General Services over to Gary. It all worked out just the way we wanted it."

Murphy's initial plans for the center included office space and computer labs for a facility he owns just a half a mile from the Laurelton Center, but he changed his plans after touring the grounds.

"My initial interest was purely for office space and computers but after walking around the property, I just felt there was too much opportunity to just use it as office space."

What Murphy plans to do with the property is to have a few different factions

to it, mostly for recreational purposes.

A bed and breakfast, a dude ranch and a small business development center are all set to be incorporated into the property.

Rumors that there will be game hunting on the property were quelled by both Murphy and Fairchild, stating that the law forbids any game hunting on the center's property.

Murphy plans to get going on the project very soon but has no projected date for its completion.

"I'm taking things one step at a time here. It'll move as quickly as reality permits."

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