

NEWS

CORONA: Downtown mall could get overhaul

Two developers will make their pitch to reinvent the outdoor Corona Mall

BY PETER FISCHETTI / STAFF WRITER

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IF YOU GO

What: The Corona City Council will host a study session on possible development of the Corona Mall.

When: Nov. 19, 3:30 p.m.

Where: Corona City Hall, 400 S. Vicentia Ave.

Corona has taken what it hopes is the first step in resuscitating the heart of its downtown.

City Council members met in closed session with city officials Wednesday to discuss letters from two developers who want to buy part of the Corona Mall. Both are interested in mall property that was purchased by the city and now owned by the state.

The developers are Foremost Communities, whose projects are primarily residential, and Corona 3rd Street LLC, which is owned by members of the Calvert family, Woody Harpole and Tim Hawke.

The meeting, led by Darrell Talbert, Corona's administrative service director, focused on the northeast quadrant of the Corona Mall, which consists of about 3 acres between Fourth and Sixth streets from Main Street east to Ramona Avenue.

The mall, built in the 1960s as an outdoor retail center, has recently become home to offices. Many units are empty.



During the closed session, the city decided to host a study session next month at which the two developers, and perhaps others, will share their vision and plans to revitalize that part of the mall.

Ultimately, if a developer is chosen, it won't be based what it's willing to pay. The price will be set through an appraisal process approved by the state. Instead, with input from the public, the council will choose the plan that it believes will best serve the community.

The process, Talbert said, "will be exceptionally complicated."

Twelve of the 27 parcels in the area in question are for sale by the city, but since the demise of its redevelopment agency in 2012 they are now owned by the state, which will receive the proceeds.

The other 15 parcels, comprising about half of the acreage, are owned by individuals or trusts. That's where it gets complicated, Talbert said.

Harpole, one of the developers, said the area should be demolished and rebuilt with retail on the first floor and residences above.

He said his group has a good idea of what it would have to pay for the city property and said it would be "a multimillion-dollar deal."

Buying out the other owners might not be necessary, as the developer could offer owners of units at the mall other spots in the center, he said.

Foremost Communities will soon start work on Sierra Bella, a tract of 237 homes in Sierra del Oro. Its president, Steve Cameron, said he has become familiar with Corona after 20 years of building homes in the city.

"I've always said, what a great opportunity to be a catalyst" in redeveloping the downtown area.