

Developers eye property around Grizzlies stadium

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FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- Developers seem to have their eyes on property around Grizzlies stadium.

Several empty buildings including half of the old Gottschalks store at the south end of the Fulton Mall at Inyo Street are being offered as potential locations for new projects.

We've seen lots of plans for downtown come and go, but city officials believe there's a real potential for success here.

The area at the south end of Fresno's Fulton Mall has become a business ghost town. Many of the properties were owned by the city's now defunct redevelopment agency, which wasn't able to redevelop them, but now, developers are coming forward, asking for a chance to do something.

The mall is in city council member Oliver Baines district and he is open to seeing what the developers have to offer.

Baines said, "Obviously we want some entertainment and housing beyond that I don't want to hamstring the private sector too much I think we really need to let them say this is where we believe the market is."

Unlike previous proposals, several developers approached the city and the new version of the redevelopment agency, saying they have some ideas. So they have been given time to submit proposals for their ideas.

City council member Lee Brand who has scrutinized many development deals likes what he's seen so far.

Brand explained, "Based on the level of interest I've seen from some people that are well known, proven track records in the city of Fresno it seems like it's a very viable project."

Craig Scharton heads the downtown improvement association. He's been showing developers the area for the past week, and says there is solid interest in being near Grizzlies stadium.

Scharton said, "So, having some fun restaurants that are near the outfield entrance to the ballpark, maybe looking over the ballpark as well as either some apartments or lofts, we've shown around some professional athletes who think it would be cool to have an apartment over looking the ball park."

The key to getting this down however depends on bringing traffic back to the Fulton Mall. The city council has already approved the idea, but may still face some legal hurdles from folks who want to keep the mall as it is.

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