

## Articles in the Shoreline/Lake Forest Park Enterprise

September 2003

*Published: Friday, September 12, 2003*

### **Shoreline/Lake Forest Park City briefs**

LFP seeks comp plan task force

Lake Forest Park Mayor Dave Hutchinson is seeking individuals interested in serving on an advisory task force for a new study --- "Sustaining the Livability of Lake Forest Park."

Sustaining Lake Forest Park is an effort by the city to examine ways to strengthen commercial areas and increase housing options, guided by the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan. Members of the 11-person task force will work with consultants and the public to prepare a final report and a set of recommendations to the mayor.

The task force will meet for approximately one year. Meetings will likely be twice a month, but could vary depending on the work and the time line.

Members will include: three city commissioners (representatives from the Planning Commission, Environmental Quality Commission and Economic Development Commission), three city council members, two business representatives and three at-large citizens.

Those interested in serving on the task force, must complete an application available at city hall and on the city's website and send it to the mayor by 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 26.

For more information, call city administrator Karen Haines at 206-368-5440.

*Published: Friday, September 19, 2003*

### **LFP starts strategic plan**

*By Pamela Brice  
Shoreline / Lake Forest Park Enterprise editor*

Lake Forest Park wants the public's help in examining ways to strengthen the city's commercial areas and economic base, and to look at ways to increase housing options in a community that is mostly made up of single-family residences.

The city first incorporated in 1961 as a result of opposition to the building of the Towne Centre shopping mall. The 16-acre mall has become the community gathering place, hosts a venue of community events and is the primary commercial center for the community. Smaller commercial areas along Ballinger Way are also in Lake Forest Park's jurisdiction. On Bothell Way, Lake Forest Park claims commercial areas as far south as Acacia Cemetery on the west side, and to 145th Street on the east side. (From Acadia Cemetery to 145th on the west side is in Shoreline's jurisdiction.)

The task force will meet for one year and be made up of three city commissioners representing the Planning Commission, the Environmental Quality Commission and the Economic Development Commission, three City Council members, two business representatives and three citizens at large.

Applications to serve on the task force are available at City Hall and are due back to the city by Sept. 26. Contact Karen Haines at 206-368-5440 for more information.

While the city's budget is balanced, forecasts show in the next several years that the city faces budget challenges because the state will no longer help supplement the city's budget with backfill money, due to Initiative 695. Encouraging economic development is key for the city as it looks toward its economic future as well, says city administrator Karen Haines. Also, the state requires the city to update its Comprehensive Plan to include planning for economic development.

Another priority for the city, as outlined in its Comprehensive Plan, is to look at ways to encourage different housing options in the city besides single-family homes.

According to Haines, the Council has earmarked about \$30,000 to go toward a consultant-generated study of how the city can approach economic development and housing options. Also, the city has over \$1 million in unallocated reserves it could draw upon.

At the City Council workshop meeting Sept. 1, 1 the Council went over the criteria it plans to send out to perspective consultants who will work with a citizen's Advisory Task Force to conduct a study, then produce a "Strategic Plan for

## Sustaining a Livable Lake Forest Park."

The city wants the study to consider demographic and socioeconomic data, analyze the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to it commercial and housing options. The study will evaluate the city's business and market situation and opportunities for increased revenues through sales tax property values and increased investment. It will also look at how much of the city's local sales tax dollars stay in the community and problems that may exist for the city to capture its fair share of sales tax dollars due to the fact that the city shares a zip code with Shoreline. The study will include a retail analysis and examine existing regulations and identify incentives for redevelopment in the city's commercial areas.

The city is forming an Advisory Task Force to help select and then work with consultants on the strategic plan. The task force will meet for one year and be made up of three city commissioners representing the Planning Commission, the Environmental Quality Commission and the Economic Development Commission, three City Council members, two business representatives and three citizens at large.

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### **December 2003**

*Published: Friday, December 12, 2003*

## **Bulletin board**

Regular meeting- 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 8, at City Hall, Council Chambers, 17425 Ballinger Way NE, Lake Forest Park. Agenda includes: discussing a contract for a Sustainable Lake Forest Park task force.

### **January 2004**

*Published: Friday, January 02, 2004*

## **LFP looks at contract for shopping center plan**

*Enterprise staff*

The Lake Forest Park City Council is now reviewing a contract being recommended by the 15-member Sustaining Lake Forest Park Task Force for the city to award creating an economic redevelopment plan for Lake Forest Park Towne Centre to consultants Burke and Associates.

Mayor Dave Hutchinson appointed the task force in October to help the city hire a consultant who will work with the public to create the redevelopment plan. The task force reviewed, made some changes, and approved sending the Request for Proposals to four pre-qualified consultants.

The four consultants each returned proposals for consideration by the Task Force. The Task Force members reviewed the proposals and decided which of the consultants to interview. The interviews with the consultants were held on Nov. 25.

The Task Force deliberated and made a recommendation to the Mayor. The administration is completing negotiations and the contract is now before City Council for review and adoption in early 2004.

*Published: Friday, January 02, 2004*

*Published: Friday, January 16, 2004*

## **Mayors set course for the new year**

*By Pamela Brice  
Shoreline / Lake Forest Park Enterprise editor*

Shoreline and Lake Forest Park mayors say they have a lot to look forward to this year.

In Lake Forest Park, completing a redevelopment study for the Towne Centre is one project on the horizon.

"The sustaining Lake Forest Park study is one big one in terms of developing a vision for our center, and of course G.E. has said they plan to sell the mall in a year, so we will have to find a good buyer," said mayor Dave Hutchinson.

Building sewer service to areas served by septic systems is another project to begin in 2004.

"We've got about five or six areas that still have septic systems, so we want to figure out the financing piece and how we can get that done," Hutchinson said. They will also be looking at doing a rate study and creating a capital budget for

the sewer system.

This year Lake Forest Park will also begin offering passport services, in hopes of creating additional revenue. In 2003, Mill Creek earned about \$48,000 in revenue from its passport services.

"We are also hoping to complete the comprehensive plan update and investigate whether we should share services such as courts or police."

The county's Burke-Gilman Trail redevelopment project is also on the horizon in 2004.

"We want to make sure we are involved and supporting our residents to come to an amicable decision as to how to do the engineering on the trail to increase safety and reduce liability of the residents that live on the trail," Hutchinson said.

**February 2004**

**February 2004**

*Published: Friday, February 20, 2004*

## **Briefs**

Lake Forest Park to hold forum

A community forum to address the future of the Towne Center is scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, March 4, at Third Place Commons, 17171 Bothell Way NE.

The forum is entitled Sustaining a Livable Lake Forest Park and will explore how to strengthen and enhance the economic and social viability of the city's commercial areas, particularly the Towne Center.

A task force, which has been studying community sustainability issues, will present its findings and citizens are encouraged to join in the conversation about the future of the Towne Center.

For more information, call city hall at 206-368-5440 .

*Published: Friday, February 27, 2004*

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commercial areas, particularly the Towne Center. A task force, which has been studying community sustainability issues, will present its findings and citizens are encouraged to join in the conversation about the future of the Towne Center. For more information, call city hall at 206-368-5440 .

**MARCH 2004**

*Published: Friday, March 12, 2004*

## **Shopping around**

**LFP residents look to future as mall owners say sale is likely**

*By Brooke Fisher  
Enterprise writer*

LAKE FOREST PARK – "Everything is waiting for you, downtown."

The line from Petula Clark's song, "Downtown" is just the opposite feeling many Lake Forest Park residents entertain about their downtown area, Towne Center.

It is a gathering place, a business place, and overall, a place that residents agree has very little to offer them.

This is likely to change within the next few years, however, with the owner of the property, GE Capital, planning to sell the shopping center.

For the Enterprise  
John Hawley, Lake Forest Park finance director, records his groups' ideas and thoughts on how to make the best of their neighborhood Thursday, March 4, at a Lake Forest Park town meeting in the Third Place Commons.

More than 180 residents gathered March 4 at what is now the heart of the city's downtown area-- Third Place Commons-- to brainstorm how they would like to see the shopping center evolve in the next few years.

"It would be good to bulldoze this entire place and restructure it," said Carol Haig, a resident of Lake Forest Park for more than 40 years who attended the forum.

This very idea of restructuring the entire center is being addressed formally by a

Task Force comprised of 15 members of the community, including business owners and council members. They have been meeting since October and are working in conjunction with consultants from Berk & Associates to develop a master plan for the property. The citizens' comments gathered at the forum will be assessed by both Berk & Associates consultants and the Task Force as a strategic plan is drafted.

Council member Roger Olstad, who is chair of the Task Force, said GE Capital intends to put the property on the market for sale within the next year. This is part of the impetus to develop a master plan, he said, although there is no certainty that the future buyer of the center will take into consideration the master plan for the land. The only definite control the city has over the property is related to zoning and land use. Nonetheless, Olstad said city officials hope to ensure that what eventually happens to the center is in the best interest of the community.

"We would like to influence the buyer to take a look at the possibility of options, tearing down or adding to, or building up," Olstad said.

There is a loss of sales tax at Towne Center, Olstad said, because the current stores do not gather much sales tax revenue. Because the history of the center is one of underutilization, and residents are often unable to find what they would like to purchase, the city loses sales tax revenue. Residents may be shopping elsewhere either because they prefer to or out of necessity.

There is also the opportunity to build senior housing on a portion of the land, which is included in the comprehensive plan. Towne Center is an ideal location, according to Olstad, because there are a number of other amenities already there.

Several residents pointed out that Towne Center was not an all-encompassing shopping center, and said there has been a recent challenge in retaining retail stores, which can be seen with the recent closures of Gottschalk's, Skipper's and Coco's.

"More upscale businesses might be more in tune with people here," said Libby Fiene, a longtime resident.

Council member Mary Jane Goss, who is a member of the Task Force, said the city is lucky to be at a place in time where they are able to design and implement a plan to improve the city and fashion Towne Center as a place to better serve the community.

What the Task Force has asked from consultants with Berk & Associates is an economic, fiscal and real estate market analysis, Olstad said.

"What we don't want is a report that sits on somebody's shelf," Olstad said. "We want a strategic plan with implementations."

Mayor Dave Hutchinson was very pleased with the participation from residents, which he said means there will be a better vision of the future of the Towne Center.

"That is our downtown, there is no question about that," Hutchinson said.

He said GE Capital, which is an asset management firm, is selling the property because of a policy they have stipulating that properties are sold after 10 years of ownership. GE Capital has, however, owned Towne Center for about 14 years.

The center has changed over the years, Hutchinson said, and with the addition of Third Place Books the shopping center has become a meeting place that can now be built on. He said the new owner will hopefully have the community's interest in mind, rather than income being the driving force.

This community forum was the first of three. The second community forum, entitled Preliminary Vision & Design Concepts is scheduled for 7 p.m. April 29 and the third and final forum, entitled Design Concept Options & Action Strategies, is scheduled for 7 p.m. July 15.

#### **APRIL 2004**

*Published: Friday, April 09, 2004*

##### **Second forum for a 'Livable LFP'**

The next Community Forum will take place at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 29 at Third Place Commons. Residents will be able to see and critique how Berk & Associates translated attendees' input into design alternatives for the Center. A summary of citizen comments from the March 4 forum and presentation notes from the Task Force's March 18 meeting will also be available.

#### **MAY 2004**

*Published: Friday, May 07, 2004*

## **Forum looks at alternatives for LFP mall**

*By Brooke Fisher  
Enterprise writer*

LAKE FOREST PARK-- More than 100 residents, disguised as architects, gathered at Third Place Commons April 29 to try their hand at creating a Towne Center.

Some were dreamers and others realists, but all succeeded in crafting a Towne Center out of paper that, if built, would barely resemble the current area that is considered downtown to most residents. This project was the highlight, and the main focus, of the second community forum entitled "Sustaining a Livable Lake Forest Park Task Force."

In addition to public input, the concept of restructuring the Towne Center is being formally addressed by a Task Force comprised of 15 members of the community, including business owners, Council members and residents serving on various boards such as Environmental Quality, Parks & Recreation, Economic Development, and Planning and Human Services commissions.

Enterprise staff  
Robert Sindelar, Anna Schubert, Millie Kearney, Mary Parker-Hale and Julian Anderson (from left) gather around a table to build a paper model Towne Center.

According to city officials, the owner of Towne Center, GE Capital, plans to sell the shopping center within the next year. Council member Roger Olstad, who is also chair of the Task Force, explained the city government does have some control over the future of the center, with regards to zoning, building regulations and environmental accountability.

"We want to alert potential buyers as to what residents want their Towne Center to be like in years ahead," Olstad said.

These words, it appeared, were a go-ahead for residents who clearly had an idea of how they envision the future center.

Before they began working on their models, John Owen, of MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design asked all attendees to evaluate eight models, on display, to determine what they liked and disliked about other downtown areas, such as University Village. He also advised residents it may be wise to consider an incremental approach with their designs, and cautioned them that they would have to compromise.

"If someone wants open space and someone wants a lot of housing, see if you

can work it out," said Owen, "There are no wrong answers tonight, this is what you think or feel."

With cut-out pieces, residents in small groups decided where they would like to see commercial and residential areas, parking and open space. And residents did not forget to include nature in the design process. Several citizens favored relocating a portion of Lyons Creek, so it flows through the Towne Center. Many also included trees in the design.

Numerous participants stacked their cut-outs, indicating they would like to see multi-story buildings. Other ideas included residential on top of commercial space, the need for an upscale restaurant, overpasses for people on bikes, plazas, relocating the library near City Hall, day lighting the creek for access and sky bridges over Bothell Way.

"I would really like to encourage bikes, pedestrians and transit," said Mary Parker-Hale.

The designs created by residents are being evaluated by the Task Force and consultants and a series of alternatives will eventually be designed.

The third Community Forum is scheduled 7 p.m. July 15 at Third Place Commons.

*Published: Friday, May 14, 2004*

## **Editorial**

### **LFP doing right thing for future**

Many longtime Lake Forest Park residents shorten their references to their city to "The Park."

Understandable, given the city's lush, green core and quiet neighborhoods offering a peaceful refuge close to Seattle. It hasn't always been that way. Most of the revered tall trees are actually second growth, springing up after early residents logged some areas virtually clean, according to historical photos.

The cusp of change again faces Lake Forest Park and city officials are doing the right things to shape whatever happens.

The most visible change on the horizon is at Lake Forest Park Towne Center.

While the shopping center has been a community focal point for years, it has

also, on the whole, struggled as a commercial center. There have been welcome successes: a grocery store, bakery and more recently, Third Place Books. There have also been some empty storefronts and a turnover of department stores.

The property owner, GE Capital, has said the land will go on the sales block in the next year. Rather than wait to see what the marketplace wind blows in, city officials are asking residents what they'd like to see and then use that vision to work with potential developers. The result could be a commercial center that meets the needs of residents, developers and business owners, many of whom are area residents creating much needed jobs.

At the same time, city and King County officials are working to make sure that one of the premier regional recreation features, the Burke-Gilman Trail, fits both the city's and trail-users' needs.

City officials should make sure that the trail and its rules and regulations are appropriate for Lake Forest Park. County Council member Carolyn Edmonds has shown she is willing to work with the city and trail-users to make sure all sides are satisfied.

Two key projects with solid planning efforts behind them should make for changes Lake Forest Park residents can live with for a long time.

**JULY 2004**

*Published: Friday, July 23, 2004*

## **Residents discuss designs for future Towne Centre**

*By Brooke Fisher  
Enterprise editor*

LAKE FOREST PARK -- Residents assumed their role as assistant designers July 15 as they evaluated three site designs for a future Towne Centre.

The open-house event was the last of three community forums which focus on the redevelopment of Towne Center, which is expected to be for sale within the next year by the owner, GE Capital.

A 15-member Task Force, consisting of Council members, citizens, business owners and members of city boards and commissions, has been in charge of strategically planning for ways to enhance the city center.

While there are no guarantees that tentative designs for Towne Centre will be heeded by future owners, city officials nevertheless do have control over some regulations.

Council member Roger Olstad, who is task force chair, said the group will have recommendations for zoning, building regulations and protection and enhancement of environmental standards. Once determined by the task force, the recommendations will go to the City Council for approval.

With the recent loss of two major tenants and the closure of three restaurants at Towne Centre, Olstad stressed the importance of redevelopment.

"This is a shopping center that appears to be in major trouble," Olstad said.

The purpose of the task force, he said, is to give residents a voice and tell prospective buyers how they would like Towne Centre to evolve in future years.

All three site designs feature mixed-use development, either above the retail or detached. The first option, "The Stream," has 270 housing units, 140,000 square feet of commercial space and 76,000 square feet of green space. In option one, McAleer Creek is day lighted and rerouted through a center courtyard. This option features four separate buildings, which form a square, with small shops oriented to open space in the center courtyard.

The second option, "The Commons," includes 200 units of housing, 174,000 square feet of commercial space and 54,000 square feet of green space. This design maintains the Albertsons store, with two main buildings that are two stories residential over two stories retail. Two additional housing structures would be located on the north end, adjacent to Albertsons, with three and five stories residential.

The third alternative, "The Steps," has 260 units of housing, 200,000 square feet of commercial space and 99,000 square feet of green space. This design features six separate buildings, which form a rectangular shape. A center plaza is also included in designs, with a "main street" running between buildings.

Resident Mike Howatt said option three handles housing the best, because in the other two options, housing faces parking. However, he liked option two because the Albertsons store is maintained.

"It is the most economically viable," Howatt said. "We have to have a strong business front."

Misti Davis, a seven-year resident, said she favors option one and the fact that

the stream is day lighted.

"It would be nice to have green space," Davis said. "It accentuates the natural attributes of Lake Forest Park."

Davis, however, was concerned with the amount of housing and said she was intimidated by too much residential over retail. She said she was pleased with the community forums and felt that a real effort was made to include citizens in the design process. The main focus is on the community and maintaining the charm of the area, she said, rather than just on retail.

Each site design shares similarities, said Dale Cote, task force member. These include retail and housing brought towards the center, surface or underground parking and residential over retail. The last feature is recommended in the designs, he said, because market studies show that Towne Center could support 150- 250 units of housing.

John Owen, an architect with Makers architecture and urban design, said all three site designs were created with a base approach, such as 3-5 units of residential over one-story retail. All alternatives have better crossings, attempt to clean-up the creek, and have better circulation and a better mix of uses. The assumption, he said, is that development will occur in phases, which is an efficient way to develop.

"We are trying to help the city work with developers to get what the city wants," Owen said. "Empty nesters or young couples would have a view of the lake, access to the trail and amenities on site."

When the Task Force has completed their work, their recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for approval.

The work is nearing an end, Olstad said, and the final report will be issued to the Council at the end of September.

**August 2004**

*Published: Friday, August 06, 2004*

## **Community focus**

Towne Centre comments taken

The final community forum for the Sustaining a Livable Lake Forest Park project was July 15 at the Commons in the Lake Forest Park Towne Centre. More than 100 people attended the open house and provided the task force with comments

on the vision for Towne Centre.

Comments can still be submitted for a limited time while the task force is working on its final report. The task force will be meeting two more times. Members of the task force will be reviewing the final recommendation in early September and submitting their report to the city council Sept. 23.

**September 2004**

**October 2004**

*Published: Friday, October 01, 2004*

## **A mall makeover Report is submitted to Council detailing redevelopment**

*By Brooke Fisher  
Enterprise editor*

LAKE FOREST PARK -- Towne Centre isn't just getting a little nip and tuck-- it's headed for an extreme makeover.

The Lake Forest Park Task Force, comprised of 15 members of the community, including business owners, Council members and citizens, has been working on a recommendation for the property for about nine months, after the Council agreed the space is underutilized.

A final report of their work was submitted to the City Council Sept. 23, and summarizes their recommendations after monthly meetings, three community forums and design help from consultants at Berk & Associates.

Enterprise/CHRIS GOODENOW  
Janet Garcia takes a break from work to eat dinner in an empty hallway Sept. 24 at Towne Centre. The hallway has seen less traffic since Jo-Ann Fabrics and Crafts lowered their gates and closed.

Realistically, it may take years for any noticeable changes to occur. It largely depends on the agenda of the future owner of the center, which will soon be put on the market for sale by the current owner, GE Properties.

But the design work to some extent has already been completed.

"The mall is going to be put up for sale," said Bonnie Berk, principal at Berk & Associates. "We are not sure when change is going to occur, but this can be an opportunity for the city."

The city can best prepare itself for future change, Berk said, by adopting the task force recommendations and taking action on the proposed revisions. By implementing developer guidelines, the city will be able to work most effectively with developers for the 16-acre site that is currently under-performing commercial property, she said.

While there are no guarantees that tentative designs for Towne Centre will be heeded by future owners, city officials nevertheless do have control over some regulations. The city has the authority to remove regulatory barriers to development, and position the site for future development.

"The city's optimal role is to make the project as attractive to a good developer as possible," said task force chair and Council member Roger Olstad, "within the community's values and vision."

Task force recommendations include eliminating the B & O tax, continuing with the city's efforts to amend the sign ordinance, working with the future developer to enhance the stream corridor and make it an open space amenity for the city center, retaining the locations of signalized site access to the center, improving pedestrian access, and working with the developer to explore ways to enhance transit capabilities.

Land use recommendations include amending the municipal code to allow for increased density, reducing setbacks to zero (which are currently set at 20 feet), and removing stipulations against residential use.

The task force also recommends working with the future developer to establish optimal height limits and design guidelines. They also suggest increasing the height limit (currently 30 feet) to allow for five stories, as well as decreasing retail parking requirements to a minimum of 3.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

Included in the task force's recommendations are three site designs, all of which feature mixed-use development, either above the retail or detached.

The first option, "The Stream," has 270 housing units, 140,000 square feet of commercial space and 76,000 square feet of green space. In option one, McAleer Creek is day lighted and rerouted through a center courtyard. This

option features four separate buildings, which form a square, with small shops oriented to open space in the center courtyard.

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After the task force's recommendation was presented to the Council, some members had questions and concerns

Council member Dwight Thompson was wary of changing the 30 feet height limit to 50 feet.

"How will the community feel about a five-story development?" Thompson asked.

Task force member Lloyd Skinner replied that his impression from the community forums was that there was support for five-stories, although it would have to be done carefully.

Thompson also was concerned about the recommendation for 200-270 residential housing units, as was Council member Mary Jane Goss. Goss said not enough outreach was conducted to some of the most affected neighborhoods, such as the Sheridan Beach area.

Council member Alan Kiest also mentioned that the designs showed an aerial look, rather than a vertical picture.

"If we could have drawings to look at an elevation view," Kiest said. "Then we could see if it fits into the context."

Berk then mentioned some uncertainties regarding development at the center, including how Third Place Books, Rite Aid and Albertsons all have long-term leases. This will require the future developer to work closely with these tenants in particular.

Berk also reminded everyone that this project will likely be a long-time coming.

She said it would not be economically feasible for the developer to start from scratch, but it would be possible to develop half of the property at a time.

Kiest also questioned what the overall goal of redevelopment is, and asked if it is primarily for economic pursuits.

"The impact on city revenue is not the reason to develop the property," Council member Ed Sterner said. "The reason is to have a gathering place."

Although the task force submitted their final report, the members have agreed to meet once more to further discuss two topics: housing density, specifically capping the number of units, and the possibility of having a park and ride facility.

The Council will not be taking action on the final report until January 2005.

*Published: Friday, October 24, 2003*

## **LFP to study mall viability**

*By Pamela Brice  
Shoreline / Lake Forest Park Enterprise editor*

The city of Lake Forest Park is in the process of hiring a consulting firm to study ways to enhance the economic viability of the city's mall, Towne Centre. It is not the city's plan to buy the mall, said Mayor Dave Hutchinson.

"No, at this point the city is not going to buy Towne Centre," he said. "The city's plan is to do a study of what things could happen at that mall."

The mayor recently appointed 15 citizens to a task force to help select and then work with a consulting firm on a study of ways to strengthen the city's commercial areas and increase housing options there. The city plans to spend between \$60,000 to \$80,000 on the study and is in the process of applying for grants to pay for it.

Hutchinson said the concept of the city purchasing the mall could come up as a part of that study, but that idea is just as remote as another option to expand the footprint of the mall west into the residential area of Brookside.

"These are certainly options for the study to consider, but the odds of either one of these options occurring are pretty slim," Hutchinson said.

Roger Olstad, Lake Forest Park City Council member who chairs the citizen's

task force, said the point of the study is to look at many options.

"We want to look at all the pros and cons of all the options. There is no hidden agenda here, our intent is to be as transparent as possible in this process," Olstad said. "Towne Centre is reaching close to the end of its useful life, and what it will become in the next five to 10 years will be dependent on what this community wants and what a consultant suggests might work on that site. It could involve different tenants or different ownership, and the possibility of housing, and we will look at all of these."

Olstad and Hutchinson said the city wants to get involved in studying economic development and housing options for the mall site for several reasons.

"Towne Centre is the commercial center of our city and we know we lose sales tax revenue because many Lake Forest Park residents spend their money outside of the city," Olstad said. "It's in our economic benefit to examine that and potential for changes. Further, there is no adequate housing for seniors in our city so we want to look at that as well."

Hutchinson said, "the bottom line is that the owners have told us they want to sell it within a year. We want to conduct this study so that to the degree we can influence whoever purchases that property is more responsive to what the community is looking for in its center."

Other cities have invested in buying commercial real estate, including Kenmore, which purchased a strip mall for \$5 million where its Town Center is now located, and University Place, which spent \$11 million buying an area adjacent to its city hall and fire station.

For the city of Lake Forest Park to make such a purchase would require a public process and City Council authorization, Olstad said.

"Just because we are going to study it, doesn't guarantee we will do it," Olstad said.

The Citizen's Task Force met last week to finalize the city's description of the study and the city sent out the Request for Proposals to prospective consulting firms Oct. 17.

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