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DeLand city commission to decide fate of decades-vacant Volusia County Jail

Court order forces city's hand on stalled redevelopment

DELAND, Fla. — The future of the old Volusia County Jail in downtown DeLand is in the hands of city commissioners once again.

The jail, located on New York Avenue in the heart of downtown, has sat empty since closing in 1987. Monday's rezoning hearing marks the first public hearing on a redevelopment project in two years — and local business owners are ready for change.

"If we're not going to use it for anything, why not make it a beautiful green space that we can all enjoy — but especially for families, because we don't have a ton of spaces for families to enjoy downtown," said Christa Yates, owner of Ms. Preppy Pants, a downtown DeLand shop.

Local developer Glasshouse Square submitted plans to transform the structure into a plaza featuring two mixed-use buildings and green space with a splash pad for families.

[WATCH: DeLand commissioners debate future for old Volusia County jail (from 2024)]

"At this point, it's got to go, so regardless, we're looking to the future instead of just being stuck in the past," said Taylor Bass, owner of Bake Chop restaurant.

The road to Monday's vote has been anything but smooth. The city took possession of the building in 2018 and selected Glasshouse Square as the developer. The COVID-19 pandemic then slowed the process. In 2023, city commissioners rejected the developer's application to rezone the property — effectively halting the project. Glasshouse Square responded by taking the city to court, and a court order is now requiring the commission to reconsider the proposal.

"I understand it takes time. Now, this was extraordinarily more time than it should have taken," said Jeff Shepherd, owner of several buildings in the neighboring Artisan Alley.

[WATCH: Construction to begin on affordable housing at old Putnam Hotel site in DeLand]

Shepherd has submitted his own proposal to purchase the property and rehabilitate it into a mixed-use living space and market with several vendors. He said he remains interested if the commission denies Glasshouse Square again.

"We paid for an architect to come in and look at the building to determine if it was feasible to reuse the building, and the answer was yes," Shepherd said.

If the commission denies Glasshouse Square's rezoning plan again, the project will not move forward. Glasshouse Square did not respond to a request for comment. The DeLand City Commission meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday.

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