

BUSINESS

New hope for stalled Garden Grove Galleria structure

By **CHRIS HAIRE** | chaire@scng.com | Long Beach Press-Telegram
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GARDEN GROVE – The steel skeleton still looms over Garden Grove Boulevard, a sign of economic and legal turmoil.

Though there is still uncertainty over what will become of the unfinished, 90-foot-tall framework of steel beams that was supposed to become the Garden Grove Galleria shopping center, there is a glimmer of hope that it may soon become something the city can be proud of.

After years of legal and economic tangles, the eight-level structure near Brookhurst Street now has seven developers vying to build something – from a commercial space to a mixed-use property – and the two biggest pieces of the puzzle, longtime property owner the Hoag Foundation and Cathay Bank, the lender for any project, are now cooperating.

“We’re on the same page now,” said Scott Weimer, vice chairman of the board of directors for the Hoag Foundation, a local charitable group that wants to use the rent money it would receive from an eventual developer to help fund the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove. “We hope to have a developer soon.”



But first, the city needs to be persuaded not to enforce a demolition order that was supposed to go into effect Dec. 1. City leaders have chosen not to execute it because they want to see how much progress Hoag and Cathay Bank can make toward bringing in a developer.

“The rusty skeleton has been there for a long time now, and it’s just sitting there,” Mayor Bao Nguyen said, noting also that he doesn’t want the structure to become high-density housing. “It’s something a lot of residents want see a resolution to. It’s an eyesore, and it affects businesses and future development.”

Hoag representatives asked at Tuesday’s City Council meeting for a one-year extension.

No decision was made, though the council had a lengthy discussion about what recourse it had. It decided to talk again at a future meeting, most likely April 7.

“We would more than likely have to go to court to enforce it,” Interim City Manager Allan Roeder said of the demolition order, “because Cathay Bank and Hoag would probably contest it. It’s an option of last resort.”

Councilman Phat Bui, though, said after years of looking at the eyesore and hearing about numerous potential developers, he wants to know for sure whether a project will happen if he is to vote to extend the demolition order for a year.

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