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Hotel eyed for Bennigan's site

Centers plans also include expansion of Zolo, Full Moon

By Alicia Wallace

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Having a Sunflower Farmers Market sprout in place of the now-shuttered United Artists Village 4 movie theater was step one in the revamp of the Village Shopping Center.

Steps two and three include proposals to expand existing restaurants and to build a 46-room hotel, shops and a restaurant in place of the Bennigan's Grill & Tavern building that has sat vacant for the past three years.

The potential for new development has increased with the theater's closure, which generated a surplus of parking, wrote Bray Architecture Inc. in the amended proposal for Gart Properties' Village Shopping Center redevelopment.

The proposal is in the midst of a review process with Boulder's Planning Department staff, which could take a few months, said Karl Guiler, the planner assigned to the proposal.

Mark Sidell, Gart Properties president, could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Gart plans to replace the movie theaters, which closed two weeks ago, with a 24,510-square-foot Sunflower market and a neighboring space for a store. It would be the first Boulder location for Longmont-based Sunflower.

Additional plans call for the expansion of Zolo Grill and Full Moon Grill. Under the proposal, Zolo would add 1,700 square feet, bringing its seats to 110 from 66. Full Moon Grill, as part of the plan, would not only expand to 112 seats from 70 seats and by 794 square feet, but also appears it would relocate within the center.

The third phase of the plan includes the razing of the 2550 Canyon Blvd. building — a Bennigan's restaurant for 25 years — to make room for a three-story, 60,000-square-foot building where ground-floor shops and a restaurant would be topped by two floors of hotel rooms.

While development plans could change during city review, Gart Properties' proposal would be positive for the area, said Lou Della Cava, a Boulder developer who built the Canyon Gate Plaza next door off 28th Street and Canyon Boulevard. Creating larger-scale buildings through redevelopment is a smart move for a city that hopes to recapture sales tax dollars, he said.

Additional hotel rooms also are needed, he said, noting a proposed development that would replace the nearby Best Western Golden Buff Lodge at 1725 28th St. with a mixed-use retail, office and condominium building.

"Any time I see people willing to risk their families' dollars into a community, I'm thinking, "This is a good thing." Della Cava said. "It just makes us more appealing."

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