

KENNEWICK MULLS PROPERTY PURCHASE



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The Port of Kennewick has an option to buy a key piece of property on Columbia Drive that would tie together other property it already owns. It's part of the port's efforts to redevelop Columbia Drive between the Cable Bridge and entrance to Clover Island.

Key to the future

Port seeks parcel between cable bridge, Clover Island Drive for development

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The Port of Kennewick soon may become the owner of what officials say is a key piece of property for the redevelopment of Columbia Drive between the cable bridge and Clover Island Drive.

The port has a one-year option to buy two acres that include the Chieftain Apartments, Labor Ready and The Pawn Shop.

Owning that property would provide a link to another three acres the port already owns along Columbia Drive, said Larry Peterson, the port's director of planning and development.

The Columbia River is one of Kennewick's major assets and that portion of Columbia Drive could become a more appealing and viable area, said Skip Novakovich, port commission president.

A vision for revitalizing Columbia Drive was part of the Bridge-to-Bridge, River-to-Railroad study created in 2003 for the Downtown Kennewick and Columbia Drive Association and the city of Kennewick.

Novakovich said the plan essentially sat on a shelf until the port decided to focus on the area north of Columbia Drive, from the cable bridge to Clover Island Drive. The port hired Arculus Design and Technical Services of Kennewick to come up with a redevelopment vision for the area.

The port already owns 13 of the 28 acres in the area, purchasing its first property, the former Willows Trailer Court, in 2007, Peterson said.

The port is in the process of readying properties it already owns for redevelopment, Peterson said.

The Willow Trailer Court has been vacated. The Beaver's Furniture building has been vacated and asbestos has been removed, making it ready for demolition, Peterson said. The buildings that used to house a tire store, fabrication company and heating, ventilation and air conditioning repair already

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University of California, Berkeley, to the city next month to complete a study that will be the start of a master plan for the property, Novakovich said. The process will include public involvement.

Some of the ideas include a public market, a small amphitheater and a winery incubator building.

The former mobile home park property has real potential because of its proximity to Clover Island, said

have been demolished.

Novakovich said the port already has heard interest in investing in the area from the private sector, including wineries and a hotel owner, but the area needs to be improved first.

Planning for the nearly seven acres that was the Willows Trailer Court will begin this summer.

The port is bringing Gary Black from the

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Kennewick City Manager Marie Mosley. The city will participate in the upcoming study.

Mosley said the city hopes to support the port's efforts on Columbia Drive, including helping to identify zoning and design standards that could help with the redevelopment project. She also hopes they can help identify a catalytic project to jump start redevelopment.

The port may need to build one of the buildings to get the private sector to invest in the rest, Novakovich said.

“We need to help take some of that risk that the private sector is concerned about out of the equation,” Peterson said.

The zoning and design standards portion

could be completed as soon as this year. City staff are working on the project now, said Jeff Kossow, Kennewick planning and economic development executive director.

The port has put a lot of effort into improving Clover Island, Mosley said. It only makes sense to spread that redevelopment to Columbia Drive, which acts as an entrance to the island.

This area really is the only location in Kennewick where riverfront development could happen, Kossow said. Most of Kennewick's shoreline comprises Columbia Park, which is under lease with the Army Corps of Engineers. And the shoreline east of the cable bridge has industrial uses.

The port has until June 2012 to purchase the two acres that include the apartments. The

property, owned by Jose Mejia, would cost \$800,000. Peterson said the option gives the port time to survey and inspect the property, as well as locate money for the purchase.

The port has purchased occupied commercial buildings in the area before. Peterson said with properties that are in use, the port would honor the current lease in place.

The port likely would remove the apartments so that Duffy's Pond would be visible, Peterson said. The pond is the original Kennewick shoreline.

Port plans also include tying together the Sacajawea Heritage Trail, which has a break in it near Duffy's Pond.

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