

Lauderhill wants homes, not school offices, at S.R. 7 site

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LAUDERHILL · In a maneuver to control the future of a 32-acre parcel along State Road 7, city officials plan to rezone land the Broward School Board wants for office space to make way for town homes.

City commissioners, who are on summer break, will conduct an emergency meeting at 9:30 a.m. today to vote on a resolution stating the city's intention to rezone the former WorldCom site from industrial to residential.

The move sends a "good faith" message to potential developers that the city supports a residential use for the site, said Earl Hahn, the city's planning and zoning director.

Commissioners would rezone the land when they reconvene in late August.

The School Board was negotiating to buy the land for administrative office space and had a contract to buy it. That option expired on July 6, meaning the property owner is now free to sell to another buyer.

Marc Brown, director of real estate for the School Board, said Wednesday he was not aware of the city's rezoning plans for the parcel and indicated the school system was still interested in the site.

"I really can't comment due to the sensitivity of the negotiations," Brown said.

Fort Lauderdale developer Arvid Albanese purchased the parcel at 1352 N. State Road 7 for \$3.25 million through bankruptcy court last year.

Albanese has since had talks with the city about the best use for the site, said City Manager Chuck Faranda.

"It's perfect for residential," said Faranda, noting its proximity to a regional park planned for the corner of State Road 7 and Sunrise Boulevard. Nearby, Coral Springs developer George Rahael plans to develop the long-vacant Kmart site as a Caribbean marketplace.

Albanese stands to gain if the land is rezoned, since it will likely draw a higher sale price, Faranda said. The city also stands to gain, in that residential use will draw more in taxes than industrial.

"If they were to give it up to the School Board, the city gets no tax revenue," said Adam Von Romer, a senior investment associate with Fort Lauderdale-based real estate firm NAI Rauch, Weaver, Norfleet, Kurtz & Co.



"The best bet there would be residential, for the developer and the city. If they allow an industrial development, it's less tax revenue. Residential might be the answer," Von Romer said.

A few weeks ago, Brown went to City Hall to discuss the School Board's intentions for the parcel, Faranda said. Brown was told the land was not zoned for office space and that the city preferred homes be built there to take advantage of the nearby park.

"We didn't get much of a response," Faranda said.

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