MOTEL 1/30/17 L. ERICKSON

Numerous people have come forward with ideas for the vacant lot where the River Falls Motel used to be. The property on South Main Street is just one block from the University of Wisconsin. Lisa Erickson has the story.

MP3 RUNS: 1:36 O/C …I’M LISA ERICKSON

LISA ERICKSON: THE CITY OF RIVER FALLS HAS BEEN TRYING TO DEVELOP THE SOUTH SIDE OF TOWN WITH MORE COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES. ONE PLACE HAS BEEN ON THE MINDS OF MANY PEOPLE OVER THE YEARS—THE RIVER FALLS MOTEL. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR BUDDY LUCERO SAYS THE PREVIOUS OWNER DID HAVE PLANS.

BUDDY LUCERO: HE WAS TRYING TO REDEVELOP THE SITE USING THE EXISTING BUILDINGS AND WHEN WE TOOK A LOOK AT THOSE BUILDING THEY, THOSE BUIDLING WERE SO FALLING APART. THEY WERE BUILT PRIOR TO 1978, WHICH MEANS THEY HAD ASBESTOS. WE DIDN’T ISSUE A BUILDING PERMIT. WE SAID NO.

LISA ERICKSON: THE CURRENT OWNER OF DICK’S FRESH MARKET, DOUG RINEHART, WHOSE BUSINESS IS ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE OLD MOTEL SITE, SAYS HE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO MORE COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES COMING TO THE AREA NOW THAT THE MOTEL IS GONE. LUCERO SAYS THE CITY HAS PLANS.

BUDDY LUCERO: WE RECENTLY DID A STUDY FOR THE WHOLE SOUTH SIDE. THEY TOOK A LOOK AT ALL THE CORRIDOR AND THE DEVELOPMENT ALONG THAT CORRIDOR. AND IT RECOMMENDS THAT IF IT MOVES FORWARD TO A PLAN OR DEVELOPMENT OF THAT CORRIDOR THAT REALLY TRY TO GET MORE INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT TO COMPLEMENT THE NORTH SIDE IN PROVIDING COMMERCIAL, BUT ALSO TO COMPLEMENT WHAT’S HAPPENING AT THE UNIVERSITY WITH ITS TOTAL REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTER THERE.

LISA ERICKSON: RINEHART SAYS HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A FAST FOOD PLACE LIKE CULVER’S OR CHIPOTLE. HE AND HIS FATHER, DICK RINEHART, THE PERVIOUS OWNER OF DICK’S FRESH MARKET, HAVE TRIED TO GET THEM TO COME TO RIVER FALLS. LUCERO SAYS THERE HAS BEEN A STRONG INTEREST IN THE PROPERTY AND HAS BEEN CONTACTED BY DEVELOPERS ALREADY.

BUDDY LUCERO: 2016 WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST YEARS FOR THE CITY IN BRINGING NEW INDUSTRY INTO RIVER FALLS AND I THINK YOU’RE GONNA FIND THE SAME THING IN 2017.

LISA ERICKSON: FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M LISA ERICKSON.

According to Lucero, the water and sewer lines still need to be removed, but otherwise the property is ready for something new. The lot is 1.6 acres and is listed with WESTconsin Realty for $500,000.

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