

Editorial:

Signs of life at Courtyard

Word that someone has proposed what sounds like a viable plan to revive The Courtyard comes as welcome news for West Franklin Street.

The smallish retail, restaurant and office complex is attractive and situated in a good location. In its history it has been home to some excellent and successful shops and restaurants; the late, lamented Pyewacket, for example, was a dining and late night institution in town for many years.

Although the Panang restaurant in the 'Wacket's former space is a welcome streetfront success, The Courtyard has struggled ever since Spencer Young bought the property in 2005.

He feuded with tenants and became embroiled in a long, bizarre duel with P.H. Craig over the status of a portion of the parking lot belonging to Craig. Craig refused to sell it to Young, Young refused to pay Craig rent for it, and Craig eventually barricaded it off with railroad ties. The ridiculous fiasco dragged on for months.

By 2008 Young was facing lawsuits from contractors and Wachovia Bank. Ultimately he went bankrupt and Wachovia foreclosed on the property.

All the problems took a toll. A number of businesses have closed up shop at The Courtyard, including the 3Cups coffee and wine shop (which reopened on Elliott Road), Sandwich (recently re-opened next to McDonald's) and Locopos (now on East Franklin Street).

Now a company called Franklin West has submitted a plan to renovate and expand The Courtyard, adding 19 apartments and a small parking deck.

That plan is a long way from completion and will require more review, but we're glad to see

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that someone intends to try to bring The Courtyard back to life. A revitalized Courtyard would make West Franklin Street even more lively than it already is.

Now if we can just get something going in the old University Chrysler space...

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