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# New vision for The Courtyard

## Plan includes new retail space

By [GREG WHITEHEAD](#) | The Daily Tar Heel

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A shopping center on West Franklin Street that was once a site of controversy might soon be the home of a new development that could potentially alleviate downtown's lack of parking.

The concept plan for The Courtyard shopping center consists of a mixed-use development adding levels to existing buildings.

Franklin West, LLC, proposed the development to include 19 residential units, a 90-car parking deck and retail and restaurant space.

The Courtyard was formerly owned by Spencer C. Young Investments Inc. For years the Courtyard struggled due to frequent disagreements about rent payments between owner Spencer Young and his tenants. The conflict eventually led to several businesses relocating.

All of the businesses pretty much left. There are only a few that are still doing alright," said P.H. Craig, owner of The Courtyard parking lot. But despite past problems, Craig said he is hopeful about the proposed development.

It's like a black cloud that has been over the courtyard for years now, so anything in the form of development would be great. I am delighted from what I hear," Craig said.

The parking deck included in the plan is intended to provide sufficient parking space for residents, diners and shoppers.

I think that it would be very beneficial for The Courtyard customers and their tenants, especially in light of past issues with having two different owners for parking and buildings," said Chapel Hill Parking Superintendent Brenda Jones.

Former tenants have shown support for the plan.

Based on what I know, I think the proposed new buyers will do an amazing job, and I trust they will make it beautiful," said Janet Elbetri, co-owner of Sandwich, a restaurant formerly located at The Courtyard.

Project manager John Weigle said there has been an excellent reception to the concept plan.

We have heard from a number of people who are interested in relocating their businesses there, as well as from community leaders who believe the plan will brighten up West Franklin Street," he said.

The Town Council will review the plan Wednesday.

This is really the first stage of the process, the applicant is basically asking, "are you on board with this'," said Kay Pearlstein, senior planner for the town Planning Department. You want whatever is going to be there to add to the vitality of downtown," she said.

Weigle said he hopes the redevelopment process can begin in July.

We are prepared to address any concerns the Community Design Commission or the Town Council has. Our style is to be transparent and open," Weigle said.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

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