

WEDNESDAY
JULY 18, 2007

\$1.00

A GATEHOUSE NEWSPAPER

Journal Star

SERVING CENTRAL ILLINOIS SINCE 1855

www.pjstar.com

LOCAL & STATE

JournalStar • pjstar.com

Revitalization initiative targets Cohen's

Peoria Heights board hopes to turn old warehouse into mixed-use development

BY DAVE HANEY
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

PEORIA HEIGHTS — A brew pub and restaurant, meeting and banquet hall, family recreational center and residen-

tial living all tied into one are part of a revitalization project laid out for the former Cohen's warehouse.

Whether those plans are able to transfer from paper into reality hinges on several things, including finding developers and tenants interested in the 127,000-square-foot cement and brick structure, as well as public support.

"We believe the Cohen's warehouse property offers one of those unique

opportunities to bring prosperity to the community," planner Tom Tincher told the Peoria Heights Village Board Tuesday night during an update of plans for the property and the "Prospect Corridor."

Not wanting the building to sit vacant, the Village Board in March made the area part of a new Peoria Heights "revitalization initiative" and hired longtime economic developer Tom Tincher at a

cost of about \$19,000 for six months.

Tincher said he's heard from some who have expressed at least initial interest in the building, adding the next two months may tell whether those interests are real, hoping to come back to the board with letters of intent.

Tincher handed out a site plan showing what he called "mixed-use"

Please see **HEIGHTS**, Page B5

HEIGHTS

Continued from Page B1

development with an indoor aquatics center, office space, a family fun and fitness center, children's day care, retail space, restaurant and more.

"I like the idea, but I see tens of million of dollars," Trustee Bryan Harn said of the plans, adding he would be behind the project more "when someone actually steps up with the money."

To develop the entire property as proposed could cost an estimated \$35 million, Tincher said.

Trustee Eric Todd likens the concept for the Cohen's warehouse to that of the McCormick Place in Chicago, with hotel, dining, retail and entertainment all under one roof.

In September, Cohen's Furniture announced it would close before the end of the year because of the pending retirement of its top two officers and the lack of a buyer. The 127-year-old Peoria mainstay closed its four stores and warehouses, including the 1203 E. Marietta Ave. warehouse it has owned for more than 17 years.

The building previously was part of the Pabst complex that at one time occupied about 17 acres in the village.

Development of the warehouse comes about two years since Heritage Square opened less than one block away across Prospect Road where there are still only a few businesses.

"If we don't do anything, then nothing will happen," Mayor Mark Allen said of the revitalization plan.

Dave Haney can be reached at 686-3181 or dhaney@pjstar.com.