

# Norfolk seeks proposals to purchase or redevelop Selden Arcade

- By Tim Eberly  
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- Steve Earley | The Virginian-Pilot

Work at Selden Arcade in Norfolk continues after the April 2015 explosion that damaged the building, photographed on Friday, Aug. 14, 2015.



- Vicki Cronis-Nohe | The Virginian-Pilot

Scaffolding has recently gone up on the east side of Selden Arcade in Norfolk, seen Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015.

NORFOLK

The city of Norfolk is interested in selling the Selden Arcade.

Or maybe not.

Confused? Here are the details:

On New Year's Eve, Norfolk requested proposals from the public about "suggested space use, purchase, lease, development and other options" for the Selden and some other property on Granby Street.

But, on Wednesday, a city spokeswoman said that the city does not plan to sell the historic building that has served as the city's cultural arts center for more than a decade.

Spokeswoman Lori Crouch said in an email that “the intent of the [request for proposals] is not to sell the properties but to throw a wide open net in order to generate ideas for these two strategically located properties.”

In a phone interview Wednesday, Deputy City Manager Peter Chapman, when asked repeatedly whether the city was open to selling the Selden, would not say.

“Dude, you’re getting ahead of us,” Chapman said. “We are trying to begin a conversation with the private sector.”

But when asked if the city does not want proposals from those who might want to buy the Selden, Chapman said no.

When pressed further, Chapman said he was going to end the interview, in part because he wasn’t feeling well.

The city’s request states that it wants proposals that “enhance the use” of the Selden and other nearby, city-owned property on Granby Street, and “to attract entrepreneurs and millennials.”

“The revitalization of these properties will spearhead the continued growth of each respective sector and give rise to enhanced place making as part of downtown’s evolving development and growth,” the request states.

Councilman Barclay Winn, who represents the ward in which the Selden is located, said he was “kind of blindsided” when he heard Tuesday of the city’s request for proposals. He said Mayor Paul Fraim told him that the city wants to rent out the Selden.

“I would be really shocked if we thought about selling the Selden Arcade,” Winn said Wednesday. “That’s a historic building. But I think if somebody came up with a good use to rent it for – maybe the whole thing or a significant part of it – I think that’s what they’re trying to do.”

Councilwoman Theresa Whibley, whose ward also includes the Selden, said she knew that City Manager Marcus Jones was interested in finding better uses for the building.

“I’m an advocate for this property being a fabulous use, however it’s done,” she said.

“And, without question, there can be no change in its historic character. I’m open to all kinds of opportunities, but we can never lose the historic character.”

In addition to considering purchase or leasing proposals, the city also would welcome “public/private partnerships” and other financial scenarios, according to the request.

The property mentioned in the request is located from 103 to 123 Granby St. and consists of 13,248 square feet.

The city’s attempt to revitalize the Selden comes after the site has faced major setbacks over the past year.

In April, an explosion there forced the city to relocate the artists who had studios and shops in the building.

Then, in October, an engineering firm discovered structural damage to the building’s eastern wall that forced emergency scaffolding and bracing to be installed.

Selden Arcade opened in April 1931, and was purchased by Norfolk in 2003. It officially reopened as the city’s cultural arts center in 2005.

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