

Grocery store expresses interest in downtown Norfolk

By Patrick Wilson
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NORFOLK

A grocery store is interested in opening downtown, Development Director Steven Anderson said Monday.

Anderson talked about the possibility during a development update he gave to the Downtown Norfolk Civic League on Waterside Live, the Hilton and other plans. He said details of a grocery store are proprietary.

"We're looking at one for downtown," said Anderson, who has been in his role with the city for nine months. "It'll be walking distance, I'll put it that way."

Downtown has been without a grocery store since a Farm Fresh store called The Market at Harbor Heights closed in January 2011. But downtown now has hundreds of new apartments under construction. Some have opened, such as those in the Wainwright Building. Other buildings will be developed, including the former Union Mission building and Trader building off Granby Street.

Anderson in May attended the International Council of Shopping Centers conference in Las Vegas, which had 30,000 attendees, he said. He played a video that was shown at the conference by developer The Cordish Cos. of Baltimore to market Waterside Live, the name chosen for the soon-to-be revamped Waterside complex.

Anderson said he thinks Waterside Live and the new Hilton, scheduled to open in 2017, will spur other downtown activity.

Construction on Waterside Live is supposed to begin before the end of the year, Anderson said, and is estimated to last 12 to 14 months. The Hilton is scheduled to open in 2017.

City development officials met with Cordish officials "at length" in Las Vegas, he said.

"We visited with 40 to 50 developers and at least 20 or so individual retailers," he said, "especially those who might be interested in certain parts of the city - downtown, as well as out along Ocean View and different segments."

City officials also met with Dollar Tree. The Chesapeake-based company is considering opening a store downtown in a building across from Urban Outfitters on Granby Street. The proposal was met with concern that a chain dollar store wouldn't match downtown's direction.

"They actually have an interesting design concept," Anderson said. "If they move forward with the project... it's going to be an interesting approach. It's not going to be your typical big green Dollar Tree store signs. It's not going to be signs and labels in all the windows."

The company, he said, would work with the Downtown Norfolk Council on a suitable design.

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