

Sale of Norfolk's Union Mission nearing completion

NORFOLK

The contract on the old Union Mission Ministries building in downtown Norfolk has lingered in real estate purgatory for more than three years.

But late last week, some players involved in a proposal that would turn the building into apartments said they're hopeful that the deal will be finalized soon.

Columbia, S.C.-based U.S. Development entered into a contract to buy the building at Boush Street and Brooke Avenue in 2009. The company has yet to close on the purchase.

Representatives from U.S. Development, Union Mission and Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate met Thursday to discuss the project's status.

U.S. Development co-founder Tom Prioreshi said Friday that his company is hoping to close on the sale in the next several weeks. The company had to hire a new contractor - Norfolk-based Virtexco Corp. - and they're preparing cost estimates based on current construction prices.

"We've had plenty of hurdles to overcome over the years, but we've managed to get by them one at a time," Prioreshi said. "We're still making progress."

The building formerly housed Union Mission's homeless shelter. In 2009 the group relocated to 5100 E. Virginia Beach Blvd. in Norfolk.

Prioreshi said the city has approved plans to turn the downtown building into 126 apartments and one small retail space that would face Tazewell Street.

Linda Jones, the nonprofit's public relations director, said proceeds from the sale, which she estimated at about \$6 million, are needed to help finish the men's shelter.

"The number of people coming to us for help has increased dramatically in the past couple of years," Jones said. "We're definitely ready to see the end of it."

Each night, 100 to 115 people sleep on mats because there aren't enough beds, Jones said.

"If this thing goes back on the market, that's not going to be good," said J. Lindsay Bilisoly of Harvey Lindsay, the firm representing Union Mission.

Despite their need for money, the nonprofit "has been very calm through this whole process," Bilisoly said. "Calmer than I would be, that's for sure."

Sarah Kleiner Varble, 757-446-2318, sarah.varble@pilotonline.com

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