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## Havana's disconnection

*Economic woes stifle renovation plans for Fan Fare building on Havana*

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The Aurora Sentinel

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**AURORA** | The old Fan Fare building on Havana Street won't be razed and replaced with fancy condominium towers anytime soon.

And it won't get a touch-up and become a storage facility, either.

Instead, for at least the foreseeable future, the odd and dilapidated building with the bulbous roof near Havana and East 4th Avenue will remain what it has been for years: an eyesore for business owners along the busy drive and a ongoing challenge for local politicians.

"It's just not a good image," Gayle Jetchick, executive director of the Havana Business Improvement District, said of the Fan Fare building.

But, Jetchick said, there is at least one positive recent development with the building.

Business owners in the improvement district have been working with city officials in recent weeks, Jetchick said, in an effort to find an answer to one of the city's seemingly oldest questions: What should come of Fan Fare?

The hope, Jetchick said, is to find a way to redevelop the Fan Fare property and that stretch of Havana.

Officials from the city's Development Services office and the business improvement district are about a month into developing a vision for that area that will mean some kind of urban renewal, Jetchick said.

One possibility, Jetchick said, is approaching the federal Environmental Protection Agency to see if there is some federal money to help with asbestos removal at Fan Fare, she said.

The area around Fan Fare is particularly important because it is north of The Gardens on Havana, which is the redevelopment of Buckingham Square Mall near Havana and East Mississippi Avenue. It is also south of the Anschutz Medical Campus, which is the redevelopment of the old Fitzsimons Campus near East Colfax Avenue and Potomac Street, Jetchick said. And the property is near the Lowry redevelopment in Denver, she said.

"That is kind of the missing link connecting Anschutz, Lowry and The Gardens on Havana," she said.

Andrea Amonick, acting director of the city's Development Services office, echoed Jetchick's comments about the area.

"That property is part of the Havana Business Improvement District and is a major gateway that remains undeveloped," she said.

There have been a host of plans in recent years for the Fan Fare building, but nothing has ever come of them.

The owners of the property planned a few years ago to raze the building and build two condominium towers on the property. Early plans for that project called for the buildings to be the two largest in the city.

But the project never came to pass.

Michael Sheldon, a representative of the group that owns Fan Fare, said the project fell through because of economic woes.

Another plan for Fan Fare — though the ownership stressed that this was only supposed to be a temporary solution — was to spruce it up a bit and use the massive building as a storage facility.

But like the plan to build towers on the property, the storage facility idea, too, was ill fated.

The problem with that idea was that it didn't make financial sense, Sheldon said.

"The kind of improvements we had to make didn't make economic sense for an interim project," he said. So, Fan Fare continues to sit empty near Havana and Fourth. The building, which was once a sprawling indoor specialty market, has been fenced off for years. Weeds poke up from every crack in the asphalt and some weeds have even managed to grow out of the building's decaying roof.



The Fan Fare building is shown Feb. 2 near East 4th Avenue and Havana Street in Aurora. (Heather A. Longway/The Aurora Sentinel)



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Sheldon said the owners of the property are working with the city and the business improvement district in their efforts to come up with a plan for Fan Fare.

"We're hoping that as time progresses, we'll be able to come up with something," he said.

As for the rest of Havana, Jetchick said things continue to improve.

The Gardens on Havana project is coming along as planned, she said, and the Kohl's department store, one of the anchor retailers for the \$110 million redevelopment project, is scheduled for a grand opening next month. Other stores, including a Dick's Sporting Goods are scheduled to open later in the year and officials hope to have plans for residential properties complete this year as well, she said.

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