# Dallas Armory property sale falls through

By Jolene Guzman

The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Risks outweighed advantages in the proposed purchase of the former Dallas Armory property by the Dallas Urban Renewal Agency.

Long on a list of projects for the urban renewal district, the sale was rejected by agency directors — members of the Dallas City Council — on July 18.

The Urban Renewal District Board of Directors followed the recommendation of the agency's advisory committee that urged the agency board to decline the Oregon Military Department's (OMD) \$120,000 sale offer. OMD sent the sales contract to the city in May.

Concerns included potential environmental issues,

lack of time to profit from the agency's investment, and a perceived lack of buyers for the site.

Talk of purchasing the property began in the 2010-11 fiscal year, before the old armory was demolished. During deconstruction of the building, an oil storage container was found underground, requiring removal and monitoring.

The discovery delayed the sale, and the earliest the district could take possession of the site would have been spring 2017, after the Department of Environmental Quality issued a "no further action" letter.

Now agency leaders believe it's too late for the property to be a worthy investment.

Jason Locke, Dallas' community development direc-

**Dallas Armory** 

• The Urban Renewal District Board of Directors declined

the Oregon Military Department's \$120,000 sale offer.

• Among the concerns raised included potential environmental issues, lack of time to profit from the agency's in-

vestment and a perceived lack of buyers for the site.

• Talks of purchasing the property began in the 2010-11

tor, said when discussions began, the district was less than half way through its 20-year lifespan. Dallas' urban renewal district includes the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods and began in 2004.

"Now it's 2016-17. The life of the district has gotten a lot shorter, for the ability to potentially recoup some of that investment," he said.

A "no further action" letter doesn't give the site a clean bill of health, environmentally speaking, Locke said. That means a future owner could be on the hook for more cleanup costs if the site is slated for redevelopment.

"All that means is that they are not requiring any further action on the property. It doesn't necessarily mean that the property is clean," he said. "It doesn't deal with anything related to liability or future liability."

Locke and the advisory committee also had con-

cerns about the changes to neighboring properties since 2010-11. The armory site, located at 817 SW Church St., is surrounded by vacant buildings, including those that once housed the downtown Safeway, the Dallas Super Market, and local Department of Human Services offices.

The advisory committee concluded nearby empty buildings and possible environmental issues could make it difficult to attract a buyer to redevelop the site in partnership with the district, Locke said.

One benefit of purchasing the site would be that the agency could actively seek partnership opportunities, but the question to the agency was if that was worth spending \$120,000 that could be used on other projects.

"The advisory committee didn't feel like it did and, as staff, it's hard to make that argument," Locke said.

argument," Locke said.

With the district turning down the offer, OMD will surplus the property and try

to find another buyer.
Director Kelly Gabliks said
the drawbacks were too
much for her to consider the
purchase, even with the
knowledge it could be vacant for some time.

"It will be state-owned, state responsibility, so we don't have to take on that liability," she said. "Maybe if it was closer, right across the street or part of downtown, it might worth the gamble, but I would accept the recommendation of the committee."

The board voted unanimously to decline OMD's offer.

# Hawaii: Dallas firefighters honored

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With more than 100 entries all decked to fit the theme, the event puts Dallas on display. That is most true of the choice of grand marshal.

This year, the honor goes to Dallas volunteer firefighters.

Dallas is the largest city in the state to be served by an almost entirely volunteer fire department, and those volunteers respond to more than 1,000 calls each year, according to department officials. That required more than 8,000

hours of training collectively by volunteers in the last year.

Metcalfe said the Summerfest board takes suggestions for grand marshal and considers which of those is most worthy of recognition. She noted, given the amount of time volunteers have to train, it takes extraordinary dedication to be a firefighter in Dallas.

"It's a life commitment to volunteer for the fire department," Metcalfe said.

Dallas Fire spokeswoman April

Welsh said the department was extremely proud to have its volunteers showcased in the parade.

"We are very excited for them," Welsh said. "I think our community is incredibly fortunate to have the volunteer fire department we have."

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