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Legal hurdle cleared for mall makeover

City officials informed project ready to go

By **ROBERT BAUN**
The Coloradan

Legal bickering over control of the University Mall appears to be resolved, allowing DPC Development Co. to move ahead with plans to remake the state's oldest covered shopping center.

DPC has recently alerted Fort Collins city officials that it's ready to move forward on the project, which would convert the mall into a "big box" center.

DPC, which paid \$5.25 million for the mall, also intends to expand from 150,000 square feet to 200,000 square feet. Redevelopment could cost \$7

million, DPC has estimated.

University Mall was built in 1964, but has struggled throughout the 1990s to keep tenants.

Plans for the overhaul have been public since late in 1995.

Then-owners John and Marilyn Stodderd initiated the improvements.

Later the Stoddards put the mall up for sale, leading to the legal entanglements.

K&F Development Co. said it cut a deal with the Stoddards in the summer of 1996, to be finalized in November of that year. The Stoddards later an-

nounced they were selling to DPC.

K&F sued the Stoddards and DPC for contract violations; the court action chilled any work on the project.

Then last month officials for DPC resumed talks with city planning officials, indicating a settlement in the case.

Steve Olt, a city planner working on the project, said he expects DPC to file an updated plan for University Center — its future name — "any day."

Existing plans are to carve the mall into five tenant spaces, including the existing King Soopers.

New statements from DPC indicate the plan could be revised to six spaces.

The University Mall does not include Montgomery Ward's, which is attached to the mall but owned separately.

DPC's ownership also includes the vacant Skipper's restaurant building and Bennigan's restaurant.

DPC officials were not available for comment.

Even if DPC submits its new proposal to the city this week, the project isn't likely to receive a public hearing from the Fort Collins Planning and Zoning Board until February, Olt said.

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