

# Condo critics: Make park out of McCowans

**SAN PEDRO:** Partnership is considering 15 to 18 units for first-time buyers on market site. Neighbor says green space would be a 'dream' but residents want houses if it's not possible.

By Donna Littlejohn  
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A barrage of criticism over building condominiums on the former McCowans Market site has spawned something of a "dream" alternative for the land. How about a neighborhood park on the residential corner in San Pedro? But with Los Angeles city's projected \$75 million budget shortfall, it's a safe bet there's no money to buy the land.

"I am willing to discuss all of the options for this piece of property," said Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn in a statement. "I continue to believe that the best use of this property is as a market. The community loves McCowans Market.... It is unfortunate that we are losing this piece of San Pedro history."

Mike Popa, a spokesman for the new partnership that's taking over the property, said various options continue to be discussed.

"This is a project we'd love to develop," he said of the plan for 15 to 18 condominiums at the corner of 20th and Walker streets. "But we'd also congratulate the community if they could develop a park."

Popa said Hahn's office contacted the partnership about the park, but the council office said it was the other way around — the developers approached the office about the possibility of the city buying the property

No sale price has been determined, but city sources say it would be unlikely the city could afford to purchase the 15,000-square-foot lot in light of the projected budget deficit.

The market closed earlier this month after the new owner, Michael Rosenthal, said it was losing too much business.

The market's parking lot across the street already has been graded in preparation for two \$899,000 custom single-family homes. A third will be built on a parcel next to the market that was also used for parking.

But the market parcel itself is being eyed for a condominium complex.

Neighbors have mobilized to oppose the plan, saying the hillside residential neighborhood is not suited for condominiums. They will bring their case to the Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council when the council meets Monday night.

"I think it's horrible," said Charley Pallares, who lives across the street from the market. "I share the same view as a lot of my neighbors: Let's have single-family homes and keep our neighborhood the way it is. We're overcrowded as it is."

Popa, a Los Alamitos resident, said the condominiums right now are only in the "planning stages" with regard to how many units would be built and what zoning regulations they will be required to meet.

The condominiums would be priced for first-time buyers, he said. "We're not looking to make a killing, we're looking to be fair within this market," he said. "This would be very affordable housing for the community."

The property is "slowly" being transferred from Rosenthal to the new limited-liability corporation that will do the development, he said. "Everything is being handed over to me at the moment," he said.

Pallares said a park would be "a dream" solution, but added it appears unlikely. "A park would be great but that property is too valuable, as we all know."