



Azusa shelves renewal project

Target store OK'd; council kills 'village' plan for downtown

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AZUSA - The city's Block 36 redevelopment project proved to be another casualty of a faltering housing market, but officials said the approval of a commercial project proves the long-awaited downtown revitalization is still viable.

The City Council last week gave the go-ahead for Target to move forward on Azusa Avenue and 9th Street. However, it terminated Block 36, a redevelopment project slated for the southeast corner of Foothill Boulevard and Azusa Avenue.

Block 36 - also known as Azusa Village Center - would have been a mixed-use project, consisting of floor-level retail with 66 residential units above, a type of vertical building often seen in dense areas like New York City.

Buildings at the site have already been demolished in anticipation of the project, which was meant to be a transit-oriented complement to the Metro Gold Line extension, which is also on hold due to funding.

Officials from Lowe Enterprises, the Los

Angeles-based developer, blamed economic conditions for halting the Block 36 project in an e-mailed statement.

"We think the project we planned is the right thing for the City of Azusa and regret that we cannot move forward at this time," the statement read. "Unfortunately, the current national economic climate has made it impossible for us to obtain construction financing for a project that includes for-sale residential product."

City Manager Fran Delach said Lowe had suggested making the residential units rentals, but the City Council declined the idea.

"The general feeling was that there are a significant number of apartments in Azusa currently," Delach said. "The desire was that this downtown area have more owner-occupied product."

Delach said construction on the Target project, at the site of King Ranch market, will begin about this time next year, with a grand opening projected for late 2010.

"It's a strong, viable market here, despite the residential downturn," Delach said. "We're happy (Target) is moving along. It's going to be the department store anchor to our downtown development."

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