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**LOCAL**

# City eyes Fourth Avenue site for development that could include a parking garage

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The city of Olympia wants to turn a downtown building — the former home of Ben Moore's Restaurant & Pub and current home to an Indian restaurant — into a mixed-use development that could including a parking garage.

The City Council unanimously authorized the city's purchase of the building at 112 and 116 Fourth Ave. W for \$950,000 at its meeting Tuesday. Officials hope to close on the purchase by the end of the year.

The [city already owns parking lots](#) next to and behind the building. The purchase would give it control of half a city block for a future development that could include housing, commercial or civic uses, and parking.

Officials said such a project would likely involve a public-private partnership. Council members called it a good opportunity to increase density downtown and have a say in what is built there.

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The city's comprehensive plan and downtown strategy both address parking. The latter calls for "redeveloping unattractive surface lots to a higher and better use."

The building for sale is near other parking lots and single-story buildings. It is in a historic district and any development would require review by the Olympia Heritage Commission.

"Ultimately if we want to see density occur in our downtown core, we're going to need to see some of those surface lots and single-story buildings get redeveloped into something larger..." said Mike Reid, the city's economic development director.

The building's owner, Minh Smith, used to own Ben Moore's, a downtown staple for decades. She sold the restaurant last year to a couple who [turned it into an East African restaurant](#) that shut down at the end of August.

Next door is Great Cuisine of India. Owner Mukesh Singh told the council his lease expires next year but that he has the option then to renew for five years.

"This is kind of scary for me. ... I don't know what I'm going to do," Singh, who has owned [the restaurant for about 15 years](#), said before the council meeting.

Reid said officials will review existing leases on the property during a 60-day feasibility period and that ultimately the city could help Singh move to another location or include him in the future use.

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