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Empire Development wants to replace the dirt parking lot at the corner of Dawson and Davie streets in downtown Raleigh with a mixed-use building. aspecth@newsobserver.com - Paul A. Specht

BUSINESS

Empire Development wants to build tower in downtown Raleigh's Warehouse District

BY PAUL A. SPECHT aspecth@newsobserver.com MAY 08, 2017 01:22 PM UPDATED MAY 08, 2017 08:54 PM

RALEIGH — One of the city's biggest downtown landlords wants to replace a dirt parking lot with retail, office and living space.

Empire Consolidated Development, founded by Greg Hatem, is asking the city to rezone land on South Dawson Street to allow for a mixed-use building up to 12 stories. City rules currently allow up to four stories on the site, which spans about one-fifth of an acre and is located next to [Crank Arm Brewing](#) on Davie Street.

The request could pave the way for the third major construction project in downtown Raleigh's [Warehouse District](#) in as many years. A couple blocks to the northeast, Kane Realty is building a 17-story tower and Raleigh is building the Union Station transit hub, both of which are on pace to open early next year.

The district - roughly defined as the area east of Boylan Heights and west of Dawson Street - is already home to Citrix, HQ Raleigh and CAM Raleigh, a contemporary art museum.

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For years, downtown's dense development was centered around Fayetteville Street. But the Warehouse District is poised to become a more lively place.

"The district has a strong core of art galleries, along with locally owned restaurants and retailers, with an architectural style that stands out from the rest of downtown, which give the area a distinctive vibe that is attractive to new tenants," Bill King, director of planning and development for the [Downtown Raleigh Alliance](#), said in an email.

"Developments like this proposed one help add density to other parts of downtown, which can help better sustain retail with stronger daytime population and more storefront space," King continued.

[Empire](#) owns several properties downtown, including the Raleigh Times building on Hargett Street and the L Building on Davie Street. Empire Eats, a branch of the company, also owns The Pit barbecue restaurant on Davie.

Empire's specific plans for the corner of Dawson and Davie are unclear. Company representatives didn't respond to requests for comment Monday afternoon. But documents filed with the city show that Empire hopes to start construction on a building with retail, office and residential space as soon as next year.

There's already interest in the proposed office space, according to the documents.

"One prospective tenant for this site is a company headquartered in downtown Raleigh seeking to expand their campus," Empire wrote in the request.

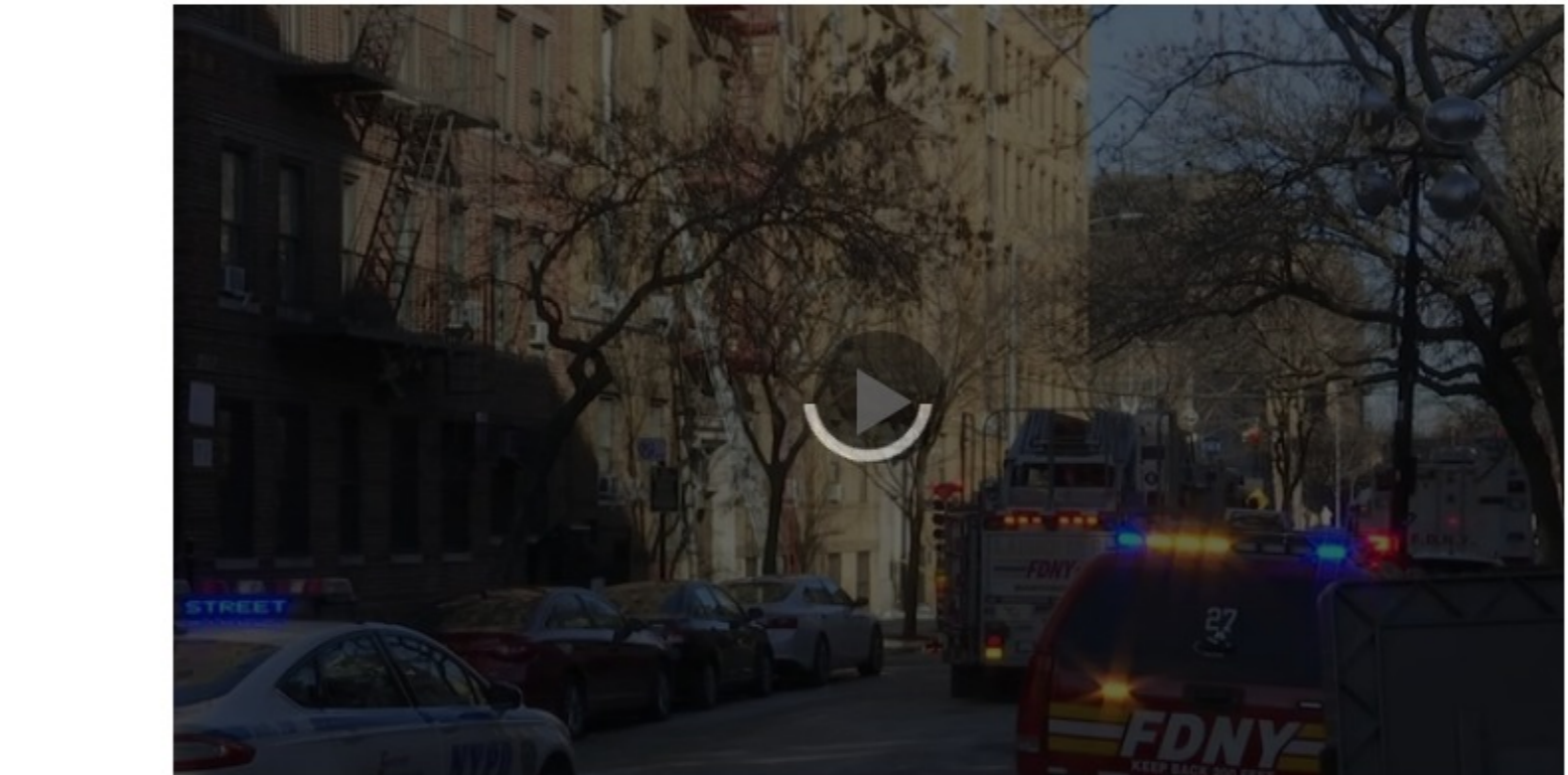
Empire would eliminate the parking lot and encourage the building's tenants to walk or use local transit options. The request notes the property's proximity to Union Station.

City staff is reviewing the rezoning request and is expected to tell Empire sometime after May 15 whether it will need to make changes or conduct a traffic study, said John Boyette, a city spokesman.

The City Council will ultimately have final say over the request, but it's too early in the process to predict when the council may review it.

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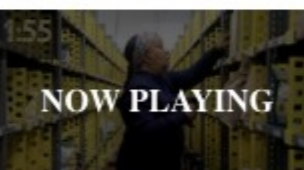


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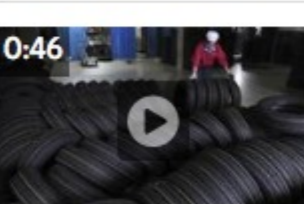
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