

Architects compete for redesign of block in Portland's Old Port

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Architects for three Portland firms are competing to redesign a block of commercial buildings on Fore and Wharf streets in the heart of Portland's Old Port.

The buildings, which were foreclosed on in 2011, were purchased in an online auction a year ago.



The building at 25 Wharf St., seen in this July 2011 photo, is one of the buildings involved in the architecture competition. 2011 Press Herald file photo/John Ewing

Dream Port 3 LLC, the investment and development arm of New Jersey-based U.S. Real Estate Advisors, Inc., bought the buildings at 432, 434, 436 and 446 Fore St. and 42 and 50 Wharf St. for \$5.6 million.

The owner will unveil the winning architect's plans at a cocktail party on Oct. 17 at Hyatt Place, across Fore Street from the buildings.

Steve Wolgin, managing member of Dream Port 3, said the buildings haven't been renovated in 200 years and are in need of an upgrade that he hopes will bring new energy to the area.

"We want the tenants to be mixed and diverse. We don't want it to be just a place for kids to go and drink

from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m.,” he said. “We want it to be a 12-months-a-year type of scenario where people welcome the shopping along with fine food and dancing and music and all those things.”

The buildings, which together have nearly 50,000 square feet of space, are now home to bars, restaurants and shops, including Buck’s Naked BBQ, Oasis, Fore Play, Gorgeous Gelato and Blazin’ Ace smoke shop.

The “re-imagining” of the buildings will stay true to the historic architecture of the area, according to Dream Port 3.

The competing architects are Brian Curley of PDT Architects, David Lloyd of Archetype and Patrick Costin of Canal 5 Studio.

Alex Caisse, owner of Buck’s Naked BBQ, said he’s heard the building owner is in the planning stages of a project for the site but doesn’t know much more than that.

He said he’s had a good relationship with the owner and isn’t concerned about what might be in store for the home of his restaurant.

“I’ll be just as excited as anyone to see what’s coming down the pike,” he said.

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