

Tenants for South Lake

Officials hope to reinvigorate area hit hard by recession

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PASADENA - Some long-vacant, high-profile storefronts in the South Lake Avenue Business District will soon get new tenants.

And local officials are hoping they reinvigorate an area hit hard by the recession.

Pacific Sales, which offers high-end bath, bed and kitchen products, will move into the 16,000-square-foot vacant former Strouds department store, at 440 S. Lake Ave., in the early summer, city officials said.

The move could help bring back foot traffic to an area where store vacancies have risen as the recession has taken its toll.

The prospect of having any new business is a very positive signal," said Gina Tleel, executive director of the South Lake Avenue Business Association. "It's sending it out to the residential community, brokers and potential tenants that there's something new and fresh."

Officials at Pacific Sales - owned by Best Buy Co. Inc. - could not be reached for comment. But Norm Sauve, partner at Pasadena-based Sauve Riegel Commercial Real Estate, is seeing that signal.

"That's really going to help out South Lake," Sauve said. Having a high-end, high profile store coming into a long-vacant space can be a talking-point when trying to attract other businesses to the area, said Sauve, a veteran broker in the area.

Sauve's firm is working on a deal to bring a business to the vacant former Shoe Pavilion building at 270 S. Lake Ave. Despite a rough economy, Sauve's firm is looking at three or four offers for the building, which stands at the corner of South Lake and east Del Mar Boulevard.

"Everyone is coming out of the woodwork for that corner," Sauve said, adding that interest has come from a range of potential tenants, including banks, food businesses and furniture stores.

The high-profile corner location, in a building that sits on a relatively open space, trumps the economy for interested business, Sauve said. He'd like to have a deal made with a tenant within a month, and a move-in between one and three months after that.

It's the kind of activity city officials and local business leaders are hoping to see in an area suffering from several vacancies.

Just along South Lake, between Del Mar and San Pasqual Street, several businesses stand vacant along with the former Strouds and Shoe Pavilion. Signs offering 3,000 to 7,000 square feet of space dot a couple of vacant store fronts. Others, inside of the Shops on Lake, are empty.

"South Lake has a few vacancies that are unfortunate," said Eric Duyshart, Pasadena's economic development manager.

Slow sales, coupled with retailers' opting not to renew leases has depressed the South Lake Business District, one of three in Pasadena. Those rents, in some cases, reflected not the current sagging market, but the market of the last 10 years, which was a better time for business, Duyshart said.

It wasn't that long ago, when South Lake - which in '60s was dominated with upscale shops - was coming back to life in the 1980s and 1990s, with discount retailers such as Strouds, Ross and Shoe Pavilion.

But now, officials and local business leaders are gearing up for another resurgence.

A streetscaping project is in its final phases, and the building that houses retail anchor's Macy's was recently revamped. Tleel hopes to announce more new tenants by the summer. She and others also touted the avenue hot spots like the Magnolia Lounge, the new Breakthru Fitness and the still-in-the-works Granite Park condominiums development.

"It's a tough time, but South Lake avenue has a lot activity," Tleel said.