

Whittier council chooses firm to develop former Alpha Beta property

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WHITTIER - The City Council voted 3-1 with one abstention to select a Beverly Hills firm to develop the city-owned, 3.4-acre former Alpha Beta property along Hadley Street between Comstock and Milton avenues.

Council members said they chose HDS Group because it proposed significantly more commercial space than the other development team of Uptown Whittier Partners, a partnership of Creative Housing Associates of Marina del Rey, Lee Homes and Frank Hill and Co. of Whittier.

"I like the idea of being more aggressive," Councilman Joe Vinatieri said.

"The risk can be dealt with as we go through the process," Vinatieri said. "This is the lead-off batter for the Uptown. I'd like to go out in a way that puts something on the table people can look to as a model." Each firm was required to propose two plans - one with a library and one without. In its library plan, HDS proposed a 15,000-square-foot park, 34,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space and 118 housing units. In its non-library, HDS proposed 75,700 square-feet of retail.

Uptown Whittier Partners proposed only 3,750 square-feet of retail in both options.

Councilman Bob Henderson, who supported the Uptown Whittier Partners proposal, said he didn't think the area would support that much retail, especially if there's no library.

"It's in an area that's never been successful for retail," Henderson said. "It's off the beaten track and would be very difficult to phase in."

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