

■ GUADALUPE



Jeffrey May/Times

Just as the marquee reads, local residents hope Guadalupe's Royal Theater is alive soon and back to its glory days. Developer Ron Holland wants to renovate the theater and make it a going concern again.

Mr. Holland's Movie Theater

Developer to restore structure as part of town renovation

By John A. Read
Times Business Editor

GUADALUPE — City officials here are guardedly enthusiastic about a plan to put the old Royal Theatre in Guadalupe back to its former glory.

Development of the now-defunct building could be a "real important start in the renovation of the downtown with the idea of bringing people back to downtown," said City Manager Henry Lawrence Jr.

The item is before the Guadalupe Planning Commission Monday at 6 p.m. in City Council chambers. Ron Holland of Holland Construction is to make a presentation to commissioners in the hope of getting a reading from the city as to what the government requirements would be before he closes a deal with building owner Hank Garcia.

Neither Holland nor Garcia could be reached for details, but a city staff report indicates Holland redid the Fox Theater in Taft into a combination discount theater and community meeting hall.

"Our people here really need something," said Shirley Boydston, a current planning commissioner who worked at the theater's candy counter while attending high school around 1943.

Boydston said other businesses in town have redone their places beautifully and the senior lodging project for the old Basque House has one more chance in March to become reality.

She noted that parking would be a problem, but city staff is recommending that parking requirements be waived, according to Lawrence.

He said some work would have to be done on the 530-seat theater

such as making the restrooms suitable for persons with disabilities, with the "big question mark right now" being retrofitting the building for earthquake safety.

"I think it's in pretty good shape," Lawrence said of the structure.

Historical information is sketchy. The theater, like many others, fell by the wayside when television and home videos became popular. For a time the movie house showed Spanish-language films only, then shut down entirely, Boydston said.

The theater probably dates to the late 1930s, Boydston said. She recalls it once had a window to the outside so that people on the street

could buy candy and popcorn even if the pedestrians didn't want to go to the movies.

Movie houses once gave away dishes to encourage people to attend. Boydston said she remembers hearing the sound of dishes breaking in the middle of one show.

She said at one point the building was offered to the Foursquare Church as a possible youth center, but apparently nothing came of the offer.

However, there is a sign on the marquee, possibly dating from the Foursquare proposal, that proclaims "Jesus is alive."

Some in Guadalupe hope the theater will soon be, too.