



## Towne Centre conditions OK

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Developers who want to build an upscale, \$100-million-plus shopping center in East El Paso don't see obstacles for the project on a list of requirements suggested by a mayor's committee of five El Paso businessmen.

So says Dick Greco, senior vice president of DeBartolo Property Group of Tampa, Fla. It, along with **Fortis Advisors** of Scottsdale, Ariz., want the city to provide a \$25 million financial package to help them build the proposed Towne Centre at Cielo Vista on a site now occupied by a vacant factory building.

"We don't see anything on there (committee report) that can't be resolved to everyone's satisfaction," Greco said Friday. Those are the first comments from the developers since the committee report was issued March 3.

"We're looking forward to moving forward with the project. We don't see any obstacle," Greco said.

"We analyzed it (committee report) and we think they did a great job. ... These are good questions that need to be answered and we'll do it for" the City Council at a special meeting to take place soon.

The developers are also expected to give Mayor Joe Wardy a written response to the committee report by early next week. Wardy asked the committee to review the proposed project and proposed financial package and recommend how the city should proceed.

The proposed financial package has drawn opposition from some El Paso shopping center operators, who have argued that the proposed project would hurt existing shopping centers.

Artemio De La Vega, developer and operator of Las Palmas Marketplace in far East El Paso, said, "The committee is saying you have to justify why you need tax dollars. In my mind, that's the whole issue. ... I don't think they (developers) can provide a good answer for that."

Representatives of Hunt Building Co. Ltd., another opponent, were not available for comments Friday. The committee listed 19 requirements that it recommended be met before the city provide financial help.

"I don't see a deal killer in there (committee report)," Wardy said Friday. "This committee made some pretty significant recommendations that would enhance the quality of the project and give citizens a better feeling that their tax dollars are being used wisely. I would hope they (developers) could meet all the requests."

Wardy wants the city to provide the project \$12 million in bond financing paid with project property taxes and give the developers \$13 million in center sales taxes if certain conditions are met.

South-West city Rep. Anthony Cobos said one thing that stood out for him is the committee's recommendation that the developers donate \$200,000 annually to local charities.

Among other recommendations: The developers must detail why they need the \$12 million in bond financing, and they must provide a more detailed site-development plan, including names of potential tenants.