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## Austin developer now has 'potential plans' for Petroleum Building



By [Jimmy Isaac](#)

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**Editor's Note:** A previous version of this story did not include comments from Mason Hughes, also an Austin developer who six months ago expressed interest in restoring the Petroleum Building. This story has been updated with his comments.

One Austin developer is out, and another Austin developer is in pursuit of the Petroleum Building — and possibly the Weaver Building — in downtown Longview.

Megan Lasch of Pinroc Construction, LLC, said on Friday that she has “potential plans” for the Petroleum Building on N. Fredonia St. She declined to release details on those plans but said they will be discussed at the city’s Downtown Small Area Plan Committee meeting at 2 p.m. Thursday in the Development Services Training Room, 410 S. High St.

Mason Hughes, also an Austin developer who six months ago expressed interest in restoring the Petroleum Building in a mixed-use residential and commercial concept, said on Friday that he's no longer seeking to buy the building.

Hughes declined to say why he backed out of negotiations for the Petroleum Building, saying that he didn't want it to impact Lasch's plans.

Lasch is the developer for Edgewood Place, an apartment complex planned for Clinic Drive using federal tax credits. Lasch said her deadline to apply for the credits is March 1, and that won't begin until after Oct. 1.

Her plans for the Petroleum Building are separate from the Clinic Drive development, "but we are pursuing a similar funding source," Lasch said. "We are still moving forward with the Clinic Drive location. We believe this is an excellent site for our proposed development."

She added that she's still working on how the Weaver Building, at 208 N. Green. St, would be involved in her plans.

"We have worked in Longview since 2012 and we have had an interest in the Petroleum Building for several years," Lasch said. "We think it would be a really neat project and restoring it to a high quality residential development could bring a lot of value to downtown."

City Assistant Development Services Director Ingrid Self said there is no limit to the number of applications that a developer can make to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs for the nine percent tax credit program, but only one will be awarded per region.

"I believe we will be go back to Council to ask for support of any of the projects that meet zoning requirements and, where applicable, have support from committees such as the Downtown Small Area Plan Committee," Self said.

District 3 Councilwoman Kasha Williams said she's spoken with Lasch about bringing affordable housing to the 61-year-old Petroleum Building. The idea, should it become reality, would address several needs in the city's Comprehensive Plan — specifically downtown revitalization, additional housing units, and historic preservation — she said.

"Bringing more people or having more people downtown will absolutely encourage additional development in the downtown area," Williams said. "Thriving communities have thriving downtown areas. That's just a fact."

In August, Hughes expressed interest in buying the Petroleum Building when he attended a substandard buildings hearing at Longview Municipal Court. At the time, Hughes said he envisioned a multi-use facility of residential, dining, parking and other options to serve what he estimated were about 1,500 people working in downtown Longview.

Hughes has declined to comment to the News-Journal about his interest or negotiations about the building.

Dallas-based Rainier Capital Management owns the Petroleum Building, which was deemed substandard in August by Municipal Judge Larry Merriman after a city demolition officer noticed graffiti on two floors, unlocked doors, a breached chain-link fence, broken windows, no utilities and an unsecured elevator shaft. Under the judge's order, Rainier had a 13-foot-high wall built around the building's garage entrance to keep out vagrants.