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Frat house flagged for redevelopment

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A developer is proposing to raze the boarded-up former Sigma Alpha Epsilon house at the corner of Howes and Laurel streets, across from the CSU Oval. (Trevor Hughes/The Coloradoan)

A boarded-up former fraternity house next to CSU's Oval is slated for a major makeover, with a developer proposing to transform the old Sigma Alpha Epsilon building into a four-story facility with shops and "flat-style" apartments.

The building will not serve as a fraternity house for the SAEs, although they will lease meeting space in it like other tenants.

SAE abandoned the site in 2006 after the fraternity was barred from the Colorado State University community. But the house at the corner of Laurel and Howes streets remained property of the fraternity's housing arm.

"You're looking over the Oval and looking over the mountains. The views are going to be incredible," said Kevin Brinkman, a principal at Brinkman Partners, which is developing the site. "We think it's one of the best corners in town. It's a great location."

Area residents are being invited to a neighborhood meeting Tuesday so Brinkman and city planners can listen to public feedback about the project, which he hopes to complete in about two years.

Brinkman said he was reluctant to discuss project specifics in advance of that meeting, out of deference to residents.

But he said he envisions the building offering apartments of multiple sizes, done in a style that suggests a flat, rather than a dorm room, with decks and large windows.

And he reiterated that the building will not be a fraternity house, although he is working with SAE to develop the 19,000-square-foot site.

SAE has reformed with "colony" status on CSU's campus, working toward full recognition. Sonja Jensen, CSU's Greek Life director, said many fraternities and sororities lack a house.

"It helps encourage the fraternal experience, but we have nine other organizations that are doing well without houses," she said. "It's not a make-or-break."

Last week, several passers-by said they welcomed the redevelopment of the site. Incoming CSU freshman Marquise Law said he's been wowed by Fort Collins overall but thought the house makes the neighborhood "look bad."

"It's just a waste of space," the Miami native said.