

Hayti Fight Coming Between City And HDC

By Donald Alderman
The battle of just what role, if any, Durham's black community will play in Hayti's redevelopment effort is slowly taking shape, and a test of the Hayti Development Corporation's strength looms on the horizon.

The fight scene will likely be the Durham City Council Chambers in City Hall.

According to city planners and officials of the Hayti Development Corporation — the opponents in this public, private fight — a feasibility study that will help determine just how Hayti will be developed could be underway by month's end.

HDC was formed about a year ago when several blacks decided to spearhead Hayti's return to its former prominence as a mecca for black economics. The group has been successful in getting the black community to take a more active role in Hayti's redevelopment.

The loss of Hayti, plowed under during the urban renewal campaigns of the 60s, represents a major financial setback to the black community, and stands as a major barrier to trust and friendship between the black community and city officials.

City planners with input from HDC have almost completed the process of attracting bids for the study, and will recommend a consultant to the city council within the next two weeks.

The long-awaited study sets the stage for Round One.

That round, according to HDC officials, will involve making sure the study answers the right questions.

The trick is agreeing on which questions are the right ones.

The "two part" study

will first examine what's best for Hayti overall. The second part of the study will suggest which specific "land uses" or developments are likely to work best.

White said city planners appear to be looking at why developments that HDC favors won't work rather than looking for innovative ways of making them work and of returning Hayti to its former prominence.

"We're looking at implementation," said Nathaniel White, Jr., HDC president. "The study should say how a particular development can be made to work rather than simply saying it won't work."

But while HDC officials argue for former prominence, city officials want a new prominence. The prize: a valuable piece of property — 54 acres of prime real estate just south of downtown, with easy access to the city's major universities. Research Triangle Park and Interstates 40 and 85.

This is a battle of power and money. The stakes are high. To city planners, the area complements plans to rebuild downtown. In their judgment, the old Hayti is fertile ground for planting houses to give the revitalized downtown people a 24-hour life.

But to HDC and the black community, Hayti means business development. It is a chance to erase some of the embarrassment that came when a multi-million dollar economic base fell prey to hollow promises. It represents a chance for blacks to operate their own businesses, and to let black business dollars circulate in the black community.

In another point of friction that illustrates the coming fight, Melvin Walls, a city planner in charge of the Hayti pro-

ject, says HDC and the city are "working for the same thing the same way."

But White says city planners have already objected to letting HDC view a draft of the feasibility study before its put into final form. Thus, the fight continues to develop.

Interestingly, Walls was hired by the city's planning department after working with HDC for six weeks. Having been privy to the high level thinking of HDC officials, his hiring raises the question of whether he's still supportive of the HDC approach.

Walls, who is black, says that HDC and the city planners hope the feasibility study will recommend development that both parties have previously agreed on — a so-called compromise development proposal. But White, Walls' former boss, says HDC hopes the study shows promise for development like its original plan.

At any rate, White says HDC will begin to line up developers before the study is complete because the study could be a delay tactic to thwart HDC's plans.

White added that more emphasis should be put on financing Hayti's redevelopment than studying it.

And so it is clear that the fight centers around the input of blacks into Hayti's redevelopment.

Getting that input has always been a fight for blacks.

From the beginning, HDC envisioned Hayti in light of its past, a bustling commercial and residential district, sprawled in the city's heart and consisting of over 100 black businesses and 600 homes.

In their original Hayti redevelopment proposal, city planners placed heavy emphasis on hous-

ing, consistent with the city's long range development plan written in the early '60s as the urban renewal bulldozers began to roll through Hayti to carry out plans to revitalize downtown.

A few months ago, the two sides compromised in a development proposal that the City Council accepted in concept, but didn't approve.

That acceptance, which amounts to a municipal thank you, came at the eleventh hour as the council struggled to save its "pet" — the downtown civic center bond referendum — from apparent defeat. That leverage was garnered when HDC officials and many other black leaders held downtown development — the city's centerpiece for downtown redevelopment, the civic center — hostage to Hayti redevelopment support.

The council accepted the compromise plan and gave HDC \$65,000, as well as limited say in the development process. Then, the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, in a special meeting and after a bitter struggle, endorsed the referendum, and the thousands of votes that followed gave city officials the \$10 million they needed for the civic center.

All of this is to say that the city council and city planners have always been reluctant to let blacks have a say in how their former black community should be rebuilt.

If blacks hadn't had the civic center to bargain with, one must wonder just how much, if any, input blacks would have in Hayti's redevelopment. It is clear that even with that bargaining power, city officials gave up as little as possible.



THE CAROLINA TIMES ROUNDTABLE — In their first meeting, four members of The Carolina Times Roundtable of Sports Experts pause for a picture. They are: (l-r) Elson Armstrong, Jr., chairman; Jimmy Green, Angela Sanders, and Bernard Dawson (standing). Photo by Silas Mayfield

Local Democrats (Continued from page 4)

the good ole boys have been caught with their pants down this time. Becky Heron has made it clear that she will not smoke cigars and cut deals as they have been cut for so long in Durham County and also she has endorsed an affirmative action program that the current board had refused to consider for the county.

Rod Adams, a lifetime Democrat and businessman, was unsuccessful during the Democratic primary for a county commission seat.

Housing Vs. Business

(Continued From Front) Martin Rigsby, a local merchant, Rigsby says that the plan is not feasible and that it will just bring more people into a neighborhood that is "already over-

populated." He said that many of the merchants in the neighborhood are concerned that the addition of low and moderate income in the area will in-

crease crime and vagrancy. He also said that Pou's only concern was to make money. Pou was out of town and could not be reached to answer that allegation.

Glass reject the low and moderate income concern. He said that low and moderate income people already populate the neighborhood.

"I think that they have some legitimate con-

cerns," Glass said, "but Durham is in tremendous need of redevelopment housing and that is exactly what Mr. Pou is attempting to do."

Rigsby said that the business people would prefer that additional commercial establishments be built in the neighborhood. He said that low to moderate income housing would discourage that type of develop-

ment. "The business people know that there is a need for housing," Rigsby said, "I don't know what the answer is. I know that the people have to go somewhere, but this is just not the place."

According to Glass, the city council has tabled the issue and is expected to take action on the matter before too long.

She said that after the Democratic primary, she sent out letters to party leaders and other candidates asking them for support. "I have not heard from any of these gentlemen," she said during an interview. "I would appreciate their visible support."

"They have nothing to fear," she said, "I am for open government and an accessible commission. That is the platform that I ran on during the primary and that's where I stand now."

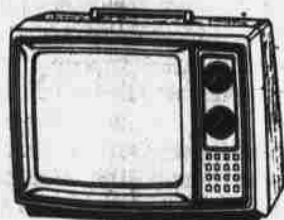
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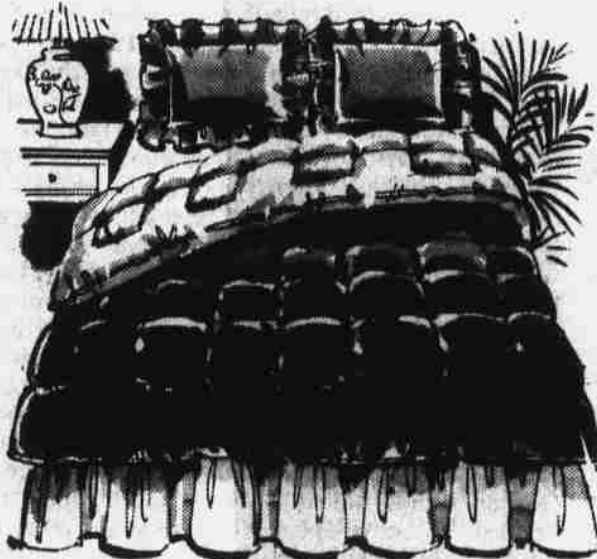
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