

Residents excited about proposed plans

HAWS wants to use federal dollars to jump start economic development in the area

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Residents of the city's East Ward listened last Thursday as Larry Woods, CEO of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, discussed a strategic plan that could drastically change the look and vitality of their community.

Woods, who has led the Housing Authority for more than three years, detailed the plans for the Cleveland Avenue Neighborhood Transformation Initiative that the Housing Authority has devised in conjunction with a variety of community partners during a meeting at the 14th Street Recreational Center.

City Council Member Derwin Montgomery praised the plan, saying it is "absolutely wonderful," even though funding for the project has not been secured.

Last week's meeting was a followup to a Blueprint for the East Ward gathering Montgomery had convened in August to look at strategic plans in the city and discuss their progress. Woods believes the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative could help bring new commerce to the area, which has been plagued by inactivity and stagnant growth in many areas, compared to other regions of the city.

"When I came here, one of the major complaints or concerns that I kept hearing over and over again was no one was paying economic attention to the East Ward," Woods explained. "(This plan will) use the resources of the federal government to try to stimulate economic growth in the East Ward for the benefit of the entire community."

To facilitate the plan, HAWS will sell some of its properties, including Cleveland Avenue Homes, a large low-income complex, which will be demolished to make way for a new development with smaller, more attractive living spaces with tree lined connector streets that would broaden accessibility to and from the area.

"Since we know that we're part of the problem," he said, referring to the high concentration of crime in the Cleveland area. "We're willing to give up some of our land - about a third of it - and turn it into a park that would include a swimming pool. If the city agrees to develop it, we will turn it over to them."

Woods says breaking up



Larry Woods addresses the audience.

large concentrations of poverty such as Cleveland, which houses nearly 250 families, is a strategy that the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is pushing housing authorities across the nation to implement. He assured those present at the meeting that none of the residents will be displaced as a result of the Transformation Initiative.

"By federal law, we cannot displace people," he stated. "We will have to ensure that they have a place to live ... plus cover moving expenses."

Although it is currently at the forefront of the initiative, and plans to use its resources to help secure funding for its implementation from the HUD and other sources, the Housing Authority's role in the transformation will be relatively small, Woods said.

"Once the property is sold, the Housing Authority will be out of there," he said. "The people that are going to make sure the investments are made are going to be you, the community."

Beautifying the area will have no impact if its people - who are disproportionately uneducated and low income compared to other wards in the city - are not also empowered to better themselves and their neighborhoods, Woods said. The Cleveland Avenue Plan would address these issues by involving partners like the school system, the city and the Urban League to aid in education, job placement and other support initiatives for East Ward residents, he said.

The Housing Authority hopes to secure a \$250,000



Dorothy Bonner

planning grant early next year. The project would require a total of around \$30 million in grants to complete, Woods estimates, but he is confident the plan has the potential to spark the interest and financial support of HUD and other grantors.

"There's not another Housing Authority that has a plan as thorough as ours," he declared. "There's a good chance that we can get this money."

Citizens responded positively to the plan overall.

"That's very exciting. I think it could put a great impact on the residents of public housing," Dorothy Bonner, a resident of the neighboring Northeast Ward, said of the plan.

Bonner was especially pleased with the idea of breaking up Cleveland Avenue Homes in favor of smaller communities dispersed throughout the area.

"Everybody needs their freedom," she said. "In order to be successful, you've got to have space (to grow)."

Marva Reid, a community activist and longtime proponent of building a swimming pool in the East Ward, said she is thrilled with the

proposition that could allow her dream to finally come true.

"You know I'm excited; I'm looking forward to the swimming pool coming to fruition," she said. "The overall plan is very good, but the social issues is what we're going to have to address as a people."

Montgomery also briefly discussed the East Ward Development Coalition, a collaborative of concerned citizens and community agencies he is trying to organize to help increase the quality of life for citizens in his ward.

"It's going to take all of these individuals and organizations to leverage the capacity that they have to drive projects and things forward in this community," Montgomery said.

During a meeting in late August, Montgomery heard the concerns of several of his constituents, who complained that bulletproof barriers that had been installed in the Wachovia on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and the BB&T on New Walkertown

Road gave the community the appearance of being unsafe. Montgomery had said he hoped to convene a meeting where officials from each bank could explain the logic behind the barriers, which are found exclusively in the East Winston branches, to the community. To date, Montgomery has not been able to entice either bank to participate. Montgomery said Tuesday he will remain diligent in his pursuit of information for the community.

"I do believe that it's probably a thought of 'Let's see if this blows over.' That's probably the feeling of the other side," he said. "But I do think that it's something that needs to be addressed. I'm going to keep pushing to get some answers and get (the banks) to answer to the community as well."

Residents of the East Ward will gather for their regular Town Hall meeting on Thursday, Nov. 4 at City Hall. For more information, contact Montgomery at derwinm@cityofws.org.



Duane Cyrus

UNCG

from page A8

Registration is \$175 for all attendees.

The Literary Café on the evening of Oct. 16, organized by Cyrus, will combine readings and dance, and will be held at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum, where tours will be available and a reception will be held. Admission to the Literary Café is included for those who are attending the conference. For those who wish to attend only the Literary Café, admission costs \$25.

For more information, visit www.uncg.edu/afs, email afs@uncg.edu or call 336-334-5507.

IT'S A BOY! JODY ADONIS WHITE

PFC Ronald (RJ) and Brittney White (RJ previously stationed Ft. Hood, TX - now on Army deployment in Mosul, Iraq) announce the birth of their son Jody Adonis White delivered at UNC Women's Hospital in Chapel Hill, NC; 12:56 a.m. - Sept. 13, 2010, 8 lbs. 15 ozs, 19 3/4 inches.



First time proud paternal grandparents Ronnie and Brenda White, Winston-Salem, NC, maternal grandmother Judy Rogers, Durham, NC, paternal great grandparents Lewis and Sarah White, Jefferson, VA, paternal late great grandmother (our angel smiling from heaven) Dora Robinson, formerly of Culpeper, VA, paternal Aunt Robyn (Western Carolina Univ.-Cullowhee, NC), paternal twin Uncle Ryan White (NC A & T, Greensboro, NC), paternal Uncle Randall White (Winston Salem State Univ.) and maternal Uncle Anthony McFadden, Washington, DC, paternal great Aunt Linda Arrington, Woodbridge, VA, paternal great Uncle Fred and great Aunt Denise Robinson, Dumfries, VA are all rejoicing at his arrival.



Tia Norfleet poses with members of her family, her race team and local supporters.

Norfleet

from page A1

The benefits of sponsoring the fledgling team could be great, according to Allen Ellison, founder of the Washington, D.C.-based Platinum Sports and Entertainment Group and sports agent for Team Norfleet.

"NASCAR is one of the biggest marketing platforms available," he noted. "It can bring a great deal of exposure for companies looking to expand their brand."

Tia Norfleet began racing on the go-cart circuit around the age of nine.

"I love racing; it's exciting, it's an adrenaline rush and it's a challenge all at the

same time," she declared. "I'm very competitive, so I fit perfectly in this equation."

The second of four children, she says she is undaunted by the field of mostly white, predominantly male competitors she faces.

"I don't let that intimidate me," remarked the Suffolk, Va.-native. "It motivates me to work just as hard as they do."

Bobby Norfleet, owner of Bobby Norfleet Racing, says his daughter is a talented songstress who has turned down several recording contracts to pursue her dream of racing. Though racing has consumed much of her life in recent years, Tia Norfleet says her first love was

singing.

"Before I would drive, I would sing. It's just something that is natural; It's God-given," she related. "I'm a very emotional being, and that's how I express myself, through writing and singing."

Though much of the attention her team has received thus far has stemmed from the fact that she is an African American female, Norfleet says she hopes that her fans and others will soon learn to judge her by her record, not her looks.

"I just want to race," she commented. "It's not necessarily about making history. I just want to do what I love to do."

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