



Photo by Todd Luck

Money to upfit the dilapidated tennis courts at Carver High School and the Carl Russell rec has been allocated in the proposed bond packages.

## Voters may be asked to consider millions for new construction, upgrades

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

The City Council is deciding on whether or not to place a bond referendum on the ballot in November to finance improvements, repairs and new projects around the city.

The Council is weighing two possibilities: a \$125 million package that would require a 1.5-cent tax increase per \$100 of assessed property value and a \$200 million package that would call for a 3.5-cent tax increase.

Both packages include \$17.5 million in upgrades to the Benton Convention Center, but a different kind of bond, one that does not require voter approval, will cover that. The rest of the money would address needs in transportation, economic development, recreation and public safety in various parts of the city. The projects and repairs, some long deferred, do not fit into the normal city budget.

"Every so often, when you look at the needs for a city, the Council will come together to discuss things that are needed to be done and where we're going to get the money from," said Mayor Pro Temp Vivian Burke, who represents the Northeast Ward. "...It's one way to assist a City in helping to provide better opportunities for citizens in the city."

Based on estimates, the Northeast Ward would receive either about \$14 million or \$20 million, depending on the size of the bond packages. Burke said many sites in her ward would benefit from improvements, including recreational facilities at Carver High School and tennis courts that belong to



Burke



Taylor

the school and the Carl Russell Sr. Community Center.

Parks would also get needed repairs. Blum would see improvements to lighting, shelters and the playground, while Bowen/Thomas Park would get restroom renovations. Fairview Park would see improvements, too.

Burke said that improvements in any one ward will benefit the whole city as citizens from all over will use the roads, parks and other facilities that are improved.

Southeast Ward Council Member James Taylor said Salem Lake is definitely a place used by all city residents. It would see upgrades if a bond referendum is successful. An updated playground, a new water park, renovated and expanded lake fronts and a new marina center for aquatic vehicles are among the improvements proposed.

In all, the ward could see between \$15 million and \$24 million in funds that Taylor said would be put to good use in road construction, water, sewer and grating projects and other improvements. It would also fund the creation of a new park at the former Piedmont Quarry off of Reynolds Park Road. The site was donated

to the City by Vulcan Materials in 1998. The quarry included a crystal clear, 12-acre lake surrounded by steep, towering cliff walls. Turning the lake, which is home to fresh water jellyfish and other marine life, into a park "has a chance to pretty much revolutionize the way we do things in the Southeast Ward," according to Taylor.

"It's probably the most gorgeous thing you've ever seen, I'd say, probably on the East coast," said Taylor, who added the initial transformation would include the construction of family shelters, a boardwalk, parking facilities and roadways into the quarry.

"We want to make it an attraction that brings economic development to the Southeast Ward," said Taylor. "The more people that come and relax in our ward and the more money that's being spent there, the more jobs that are being created and the more money that's recycled."

The East Ward would benefit the most from a successful bond referendum. Estimates call for the ward to be infused with either \$24 million or more than \$40 million. Attempts to reach East Ward Council Member Derwin Montgomery before press time were not successful.

## Diggs elected to chair N.C. United Way Board

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Brenda Diggs was elected chair of the United Way of North Carolina Board of Directors during the organization's recent annual meeting in Pinehurst.

Diggs, a retired Wachovia executive, is an independent consultant who advises about matters of leadership and board development, operational and financial management, organizational planning and strategic management. She is a former executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County and last year launched an unsuccessful bid for City Council.



Diggs

"Brenda's leadership and strategic thinking will help sharpen our focus and provide members with the highest quality services in this challenging economic climate," said Jim Morrison, president of United Way of North Carolina. "The board seeks to increase the capability of the United Way system to improve the quality of human life in North Carolina. With Brenda at the helm, we will be well positioned to creatively address the unique challenges facing the United Way system and identify strategies to address our issues."

Diggs is a current member of the United Way of Forsyth County Board of Directors, a trustee of North Carolina Baptist Hospital and is chairperson of the Winston-Salem Police Officers Retirement Commission.



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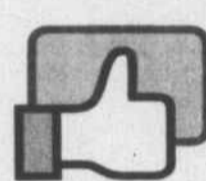
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