

Greensboro may host fashion shows

By **LEE ANN NECESSARY**
Staff Writer

A recent decision to relocate fashion shows from Charlotte to Greensboro will generate approximately \$100 million for the downtown Greensboro area by the end of the 1980s.

This decision by the 20-member Carolina-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors, a Charlotte-based women's apparel trade group, will go before

the general membership at a meeting in October.

If the board's decision is passed, five women's trade shows will be held in Greensboro beginning in January 1989, each running Friday through Tuesday. It is estimated that 4,000 extra people will be in the downtown Greensboro area on the weekends because of the shows.

The Carolina-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors currently have 600

members who sell women's clothing and accessories at the Carolina Trade Mart in Charlotte. The Tri-States Children's Market and the Men's Apparel Club of the Carolinas also hold their shows at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart, five miles away from the Carolina Trade Mart.

In 1961, all three shows were held at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart. Due to a disagreement in show dates, the women's group left this mart in 1971 and moved into the Carolina Trade Mart.

Recent problems, including limited parking and small office spaces, spurred the women's group to look to the Triad cities, after conducting a survey to find promising new areas that would fit their needs. They narrowed their choices to Greensboro and Winston-Salem, after both cities put together proposals including new marts, better parking facilities and a commitment to promote the trade shows.

The major factor in choosing Greensboro was the "proximity to major textile manufacturers commit-

ted to the apparel mart," according to a report in The Greensboro News & Record.

John Connaughton, an economics professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and coordinator of a study involving the Charlotte apparel shows, said, "Greensboro promised the women's apparel group more than Charlotte (did)."

In a study he worked on six months ago, Connaughton estimated that, altogether, the apparel markets bring an estimated \$383 million to Charlotte over a five-year period. Because the study was conducted a few months ago, Connaughton said he could not estimate how much Charlotte stands to lose with the departure of the Carolina-Virginia Fashion Exhibitors.

Other factors that may have influenced the group's decision to move was the enthusiasm and support of the local textile executives in Greensboro and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. According to the News & Record article, the UNC-G department of

clothing and textiles will conduct fashion merchandizing and other educational programs in cooperation with the apparel group.

Yet, many fear that the division of the markets in North Carolina will send buyers to the competing fashion market in Atlanta, Ga.

Atlanta's market has shown considerable growth in the past few years, and according to Connaughton, "Atlanta has a whiz-bang operation."

"The reason for the growth of Atlanta's market is due to its city and county's cooperation with each other to help build up the apparel market," Connaughton said.

But Connaughton said he believes the market's being located in different cities will not affect the Charlotte market. He disagreed with the complaint that the Charlotte shows were losing business because they were not held simultaneously.

"The Charlotte shows benefit from having the shows at different times, because the city can handle the crowds better with the shows going on at different times than if all three shows were going on at once," Connaughton said.

The project Greensboro has proposed includes a \$62 million exhibition hall, \$10 million parking garage and 12-story office and showroom.

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