

Liberty

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as Hanes Mall Boulevard — where retail development is booming — it will take many years and a steady flow of dollars, according to officials in the city manager's office.

Allen Joines, assistant city manager for economic development, said contrary to widely held beliefs, the city has not done anything special to promote the thriving Hanes Mall area.

"There are more people near Hanes Mall Boulevard than there are on Liberty Street," Joines said. "There is nothing the city is doing to cause this development on (Hanes Mall Boulevard), it's all private money."

Joines did concede that the Hanes Mall area is benefiting immensely from the millions in public money spent to create the near-by addition to Interstate 40.

The corridor may benefit from plans to expand and convert U.S. Highway 52 — which forms a semi-circle around Liberty — into Interstate 74, Joines said.

While the overall population of the city grew almost 10 percent between 1980 and 1990, East Winston had a negative population growth during that same period.

The latest information available from the city's planning office also showed that nearly 50 percent of the area's population had household incomes below \$20,000.

Derwick Page is heading the city's development efforts on Liberty Street and other parts of East Winston. Page said in order for Liberty Street Corridor to become economically viable, it must overcome a long list of negative stereotypes that many potential investors have about the thoroughfare.

"Private businesses already have perceptions of the area. They look for certain income and social criteria when they evaluate potential sites. They don't feel they can make the same profit on Liberty Street that they could on Hanes Mall Boulevard," Page said.

Although Page said he gets support from officials in the city manager's office for each project he's attempting, he admits that "not a whole bunch" is happening currently on Liberty Street.

However, the old Lowe's building has finally been leased to the county after years of laying barren.

"We don't have the money... The city and the Chamber (of Commerce) can do some things, but until you start getting private dollars coming in, it's going to be an uphill battle," Page said.

There are still no grocery stores, shopping centers or movie theaters anywhere within the vicinity. And even though the city did vow to help secure a grocery store for Liberty Street four years ago, Page says such an initiative is virtually out of the city's hands.

"We can do everything in the world, short of building a grocery store," Page said. "The city can't operate a grocery store on Liberty Street. Only private developers can do that."

There are no firm commitments from a grocery store or any other type of business for

Liberty Street in the near future, according to parties familiar with the project.

"I don't have anything I'm working on involving Liberty Street right now," Bob Leak said, president of Winston-Salem Business Inc.

Winston-Salem Business Inc. — the industrial business recruiting arm of the Chamber of Commerce — targets companies around the nation, and then tries to lure them to Forsyth County by promoting the strengths of the region.

Leak said there are few sites in the county suitable for industrial type industries and almost none on Liberty Street.

Nor is there much space for expansion on the street.

Liberty Street Corridor was once part of historic Wachovia Tract, the 100,000 acre area of land purchased by the city's original Moravian settlers. Over the centuries the area modernized into a vital industrial center, with a railroad and a major highway springing up around it.

But today the old Norfolk Railway tracks and U.S. Highway 52 have land locked Liberty Street. Demolition could also be problematic since several buildings on the street — like Canaan Baptist Church and Shields-

to the corridor by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Many potential businesses have also avoided Liberty because of a popular notion that the lots on the street fall short of EPA regulations; the Brownfield Grant will be used to help investigate potential environmental problems along Liberty Street.

Johnson — who has already been instrumental in turning Lowery Street into an economic powerhouse — said she wants the revitalization of Liberty Street to become a private and public sector issue.

"Since we did not get the bond money, finances will always be a concern because we have to do things piece by piece... (Aldermen) do have some power, but for this to be successful it is going to take an ongoing community effort," Johnson said.

Johnson said she would like to see the street resurfaced in the next year or two, a task that can be accomplished with funds through the state's Department of Transportation.

State Rep. Pete Oldham said although he personally supports the corridor project, he is not working to secure state dollars for the effort.



Photo by Bruce Chapman
An exit from Liberty Street to US-52 is still incomplete. Plans to convert the highway into I-74 could bring improvements to the area.

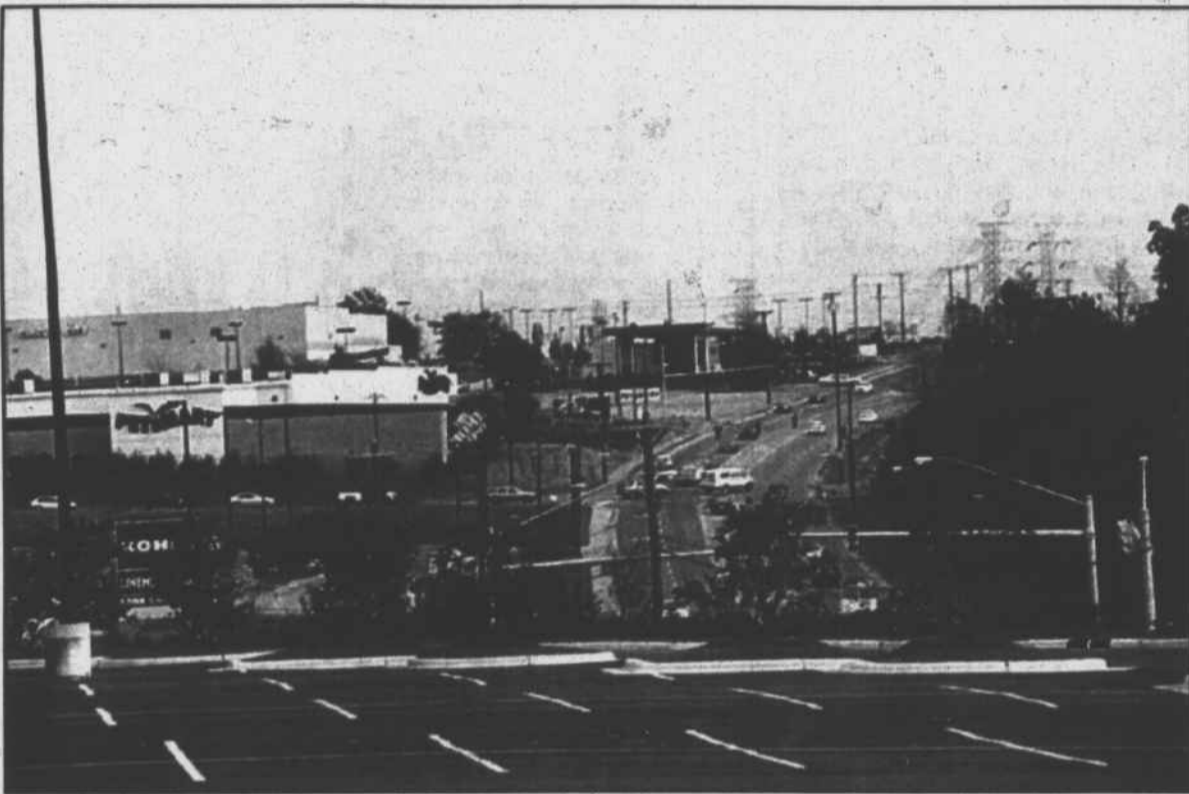


Photo by Bruce Chapman
While efforts to revitalize Liberty Street have languished, Hanes Mall Boulevard has flourished. The street boasts a number of shopping centers and is bolstered by its proximity to I-40.

Jarvis Furniture Co. — have been designated as historical sites.

"We are going to show (potential) businesses everything we have to offer, but I simply don't have anyone interested in that area because the product is not there," Leak said.

Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson has worked to improve conditions on Liberty Street and elsewhere in her East Winston ward.

Johnson readily admits that progress on Liberty has been tedious, but she says even though the project suffered a crippling blow when the bond referendum failed, it is by no means dead.

"While the successes have not been astronomical, there has been movement, stuff is happening," Johnson said.

Johnson points to the fact that lighting has recently been improved in some areas, and to a recent Brownfield grant awarded

"No one ever approached me about getting involved in the project," he said. "If the local state legislators are asked to be involved, I'm sure we would do it."

Both Womble and Oldham say local elected officials must first take the initiative in the matter.

"It would first have to come as a special request from the board of aldermen or the county commission," Oldham said. "We just can't jump into the project as state legislators, the aldermen have to ask us to get involved."

Oldham said the board has made many "special requests" to state representatives in the past, but none involving Liberty Street has come to his attention yet.

Johnson said she is unfamiliar with such requests.

Alderwoman Vivian Burke — who is involved in one of the many groups devoted to improving Liberty Street and other

parts of East Winston — said although she only represents a small portion of the corridor, she decided to become involved with the project anyway. Burke said Oldham can do the same thing.

"He can take the initiative himself to work with the Department of Transportation," Burke said. "He's seen the need... don't let him pass the buck."

Burke said the answer to Liberty Street's problems may lie in taxes.

The city receives an abundance of tax revenue from businesses that already exist on Liberty Street, Burke said.

She said if more of that tax money is returned to the area and used for improvements, it would greatly help the corridor effort.

The city has only invested about \$200,000 in the project, Page said, some of which is being used for grants to give perks to existing businesses on Liberty that choose to expand.

The city will also be applying for a \$25 million federal grant to construct an airport business park near the end of the corridor.

Page said although he is finding that he has to educate many potential business, he is optimistic about the future of Liberty Street Corridor.

"Slowly but surely, we are showing private developers that they have to look at more than median income when they choose a site to bring their businesses," he said.

Johnson — who speaks with excitement about plans to connect Martin Luther King Boulevard to University Parkway and other strides that have been made in East Winston — said Liberty Street is one dream she won't let die.

"It is our responsibility as elected officials to make sure that this is not put on the backburner," Johnson said. "As long as we keep talking about what the area doesn't have, we can't talk about all the things we do have to offer businesses."



File photo
Few businesses call Liberty Street home. Four years after a revitalization program was begun, the area still has no grocery store or shopping centers.

NOTICE OF AN OPEN-HOUSE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE SEVEN ISLAND ROAD BRIDGE OVER THE DAN RIVER

Project 8.2640501 B-2639 Stokes County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will hold the above open-house public hearing on Tuesday, November 17, 1998 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Stokes County Government Center - Commissioner Chambers - located on highway NC 8/NC 89 in Danbury. Interested individuals may attend this hearing at their convenience between the above stated hours. NCDOT Division of Highways personnel will be available to provide information, answer questions, and take comments regarding this closure. No formal presentation will be given.

The proposed action consists of closing - without replacement - the Seven Island Road Bridge (Number 133) over the Dan River. This action is proposed due to the high replacement cost of the structure and the relatively low traffic volume utilizing the bridge. The closure would necessitate a permanent traffic detour route around the site approximately 6.6 miles in length. Based on the location of homes and businesses within the area, the detour is estimated to add 4.9 miles of travel for motorists accessing this route. Several service roads in the vicinity of the bridge provide access to the Dan River for recreational activities and will remain open following removal of the existing structure.

Plans setting forth the bridge location and detour route and a copy of the environmental document - Categorical Exclusion - are available for public review in the Stokes County Government Center - County Manager's Office - located on NC 8/NC 89 in Danbury.

Representatives of the Department of Transportation will be available to discuss the proposed bridge closure with those attending the Public Hearing. Anyone desiring additional information may write to Mr. Len Hendricks, Citizens Participation Unit, P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh, NC 27611; telephone (919) 250-4092; FAX (919) 250-4208; or email lhendricks@doh.dot.state.nc.us.

NCDOT - in compliance with the American's With Disabilities Act - will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled persons who wish to participate in the hearing. To receive special services, please call Mr. Hendricks at the above number to give adequate notice prior to the date of the hearing.

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