

Public input sought for plans to create new downtown

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

City officials say they have a great plan for downtown and surrounding areas. The process of convincing the wary public — which has seen various plans for downtown come and go over the last 10 years — of the plan's potential for greatness began Monday night as a group of city and business leaders did their best to sell the idea of a new downtown.

About 115 people came to the Benton Convention Center to voice their opinions on the

plan for downtown, a vast plan that officials say could take up to 10 years to fully complete and cost hundreds of millions of dollars, most of which would come from private sources. Bits and pieces of past plans to revitalize downtown are contained in the new plan, which city officials described with words such as "comprehensive" and "inclusive." A group of city, civic and business leaders is credited with spearheading the new plan through a series of weekly meetings. Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson and Larry Weston, who heads the Goler-Depot Commu-

nity Development Corp., were among the group.

The Goler-Depot CDC has just begun to implement a major revitalization around Goler Memorial AME Zion Church — located on the periphery of what is considered the heart of downtown — that will include the construction of a seniors facility and single-family homes. Weston said the new plan will unify a variety of projects that are already under way around the downtown area.

"It does begin to connect some of the dots. In the past, we have looked at downtown to be

just this area," Weston said, pointing to Fourth Street on one of the many diagrams on display.

The new plan still gives a lot of attention to Fourth Street, which is expected to benefit from the first wave of projects expected to be completed by Fall 2002. The projects include a restaurant row and entertainment district.

The second phase of projects, expected to be completed within the next five years, include a children's museum off Brookstown Avenue, a 3,000-seat amphitheater and major

changes to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive that could include rerouting the street so that it would no longer divide the campus of Winston-Salem State University. Projects expected to take longer than five years include the possible relocation of the city-county school system administrative offices to downtown from the current Miller Street location and a new Central Library building closer to the heart of downtown.

Residents voiced concerns about the completion order of the projects. Some thought the new library and street improve-

ments should be put on the fast track. Others needed to be convinced that this plan won't be abandoned in the near future like past plans.

Though officials say the plan has something for everyone, meeting attendees were overwhelming white.

Alderman Fred Terry said he expects more minorities to get involved with the planning as it proceeds. He suggested that churches, students and civic groups be briefed on the plan by officials.

"That will open the doors to allow more dialogue," he said.

Homeless

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homeless people roofs over their heads, the money will also allow for services such as job training and employment assistance, said Bill Adkerson of the Bethesda Center.

"What this allows them to do is get on their feet and stabilize themselves," Adkerson said. "In the past, we have not had the funds to assist these persons with this cause."

In this case, the disabled will include people with substance abuse problems, mental problems and medical conditions such as AIDS and HIV.

According to Tim West of the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department, about 30 percent of the city's homeless population suffers from mental illness; 33 percent, substance abuse problems; and about 8 percent, HIV/AIDS. Many of the people have a combination of all the conditions, West said.

While Adkerson is happy to receive the grant, he doesn't want the public to get the impression that the federal money can do it all. The funds will sustain the program for only five years, and can be used only for the new program, not for the many other services the center provides.

"We still need the support of the community to keep our doors open," he said.

Kernersville-based Next Step Ministries, a ministry of First Christian Church, will receive a \$37,800 slice of the pie. The organization has housed women victimized by their spouses, along with their children, for the past three years. Currently, four women and six children are provided for by the organization at an undisclosed safe house in Kernersville.

Pete Kunkle, president of Next Step Ministries, said eventually the ministry would like to build a full-fledged shelter to assist women with nowhere else to turn. For now, though, Kunkle

said the HUD money will be used to provide the women with education, job training and other essential skills needed for independence.

"This will allow us to give them some skills so that they can start living again," he said.

The Experiment in Self-Reliance and the American Red Cross will receive a \$37,309 grant for a joint effort to help local people who find themselves homeless as a result of catastrophic events such as fires or storms.

The two agencies often join forces to help find shelter for victims of catastrophic events. But in the past, ESR has had to turn away people referred by the Red Cross because of limited space at the four housing facilities ESR runs.

"The grant will allow us to make available three apartments specifically for people who have experienced catastrophic losses," said Twana Wellman, executive director of ESR.

Marcia Z. Cole, executive director of the American Red

Cross of Northwest North Carolina said the grant will cut back on the Red Cross's use of hotel rooms to accommodate fire and storm victims.

"We are thrilled about the grant because now we will have a place for our fire clients that need a more permanent residence than what we provide through out hotel accommodations," Cole said.

ESR is not expecting its other housing units to have any vacancies in the near future. In fact, Wellman said, ESR has seen an increase in the number of clients it serves. The agency specializes in

helping the working homeless.

"We have seen an increase in homeless families who have been evicted for a number of reasons," Wellman said.

Adkerson said the Bethesda Center has been referring more single women with children to other agencies lately. The center serves only single people.

Tim West of the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department said the relatively large number of agencies in the city that serve the homeless should not be seen as a sign that Winston-Salem's homeless prob-

lem is worse than other cities.

"Some places have centralized services to help the homeless... We have decentralized our services so that there are more agencies that serve different populations," West said. "The various agencies are custom-tailored to serve all the groups affected by homelessness."

Next Step Ministries is looking for volunteers and donations. For more information, call (336) 996-7388. The phone number for ESR is (336) 722-9400. The Bethesda Center can be reached by calling (336) 722-9951.

Corridor

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• **Brownfields:** Two Phase I assessments have been completed within the last six months and a Phase II assessment will begin this fall. Upon completion, this site just north of Fairchild Drive may be developed as a convenience store/restaurant.

Also at the town hall meeting, police officials gave reports on "hot spots" in the East and North wards.

Capt. Jerry Jones of the North Ward 100 Sector reported on calls and arrests between June 1, 2001, and Nov. 15, 2001, in:

• 4200 block of Brownsboro Road (the number of calls is listed first, and the number or arrests is listed second): disturbance/fight 147 calls, one arrest; assault 53/7; illegal weapon 32/0; breaking and entering of a residence 25/1; larceny from auto 17/0; traffic collision 20/1; larceny 11/0; suspicious person 14/0; trespassing 14/3; vandalism 15/2; runaway 11/6; alarm 7/0; violation of city ordinance 8/0; violation of controlled substances act 17/7; fraud 5/0; violation of prohibition law 5/2; vehicle theft 5/0; obscene/threatening calls 6/0; suspicious vehicle 3/0; missing person 3/0; overdose 1/0; robbery 5/0; suicide attempt 1/0; suspicious biological 1/0; traffic violation/complaint 3/64; gambling 5/0; forcible rape 2/0; driving while impaired 2/2; stolen property 1/0; other miscellaneous calls 90/0; other criminal calls 3/24; other sexual offense 2/0; totals 534/120.

• 900 block of Thurmond Street (the number of calls is listed first, and the number or arrests is listed second): disturbance/fight 22 calls/0 arrests; assault 9/2; illegal weapon 5/0; suspicious person 3/0; trespassing 2/2; vandalism 1/0; alarms 7/0; violation of city ordinance 3/0; violation of controlled substances act 13/7; suspicious vehicle 1/0; traffic violation/complaint 0/37; stolen property 0/1; other miscellaneous calls 4/0; other criminal calls 0/4; totals 70/53.

• 1400-1700 block of North Cherry Street (the number of calls is listed first, and the number or arrests is listed second): disturbance/fight 44 calls, one arrest; assault 23/2; illegal weapon 7/1; breaking and entering a residence 1/3; traffic collision 10/0; larceny 2/1; suspicious person 11/0; trespassing 3/1; vandalism 3/0; alarm 1/0; violation of city ordinance 4/2; violation of controlled substances act 90/39; violation of prohibition law 0/8; vehicle theft 1/0; suspicious vehicle 1/0; robbery 1/0; traffic violation/complaint 0/227; gambling 0/2; driving while impaired 0/6; prostitution 1/0; stolen property 0/1; other miscellaneous calls 27/0; other criminal calls 0/37; totals 230/331.

In an effort to address the high volume of calls for service on Brownsboro Road, a SACSI (Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiatives) response was conducted on Aug.

16 along with a stationary license check. The stationary license check yielded eight citations and five warning tickets. In October, Squad 102 distributed a flyer in both English and Spanish that addressed tips on how to increase home security due to the volume of breaking and enterings occurring in this area.

100 Foot Patrol has been actively working toward reducing the high volume of calls in both the North Cherry Street and Thurmond Street areas by conducting surveillance (both covert and overt), take-downs, undercover drug buys and stationary license checks. The tactic of high visibility patrol was utilized as well. One hundred and forty man-hours were expended during the monthlong investigation of this area. During October, 100 Sector Foot Patrol made 14 arrests in the Cherry Street area. During November, 100 Sector Foot Patrol is scheduled to conduct numerous hours of surveillance and foot patrol in areas of North Cherry Street and Thurmond Street.

Capt. Fred Jones of East Ward 200 Sector gave this report on East Ward hot spots:

• **Third and Jackson Avenue:** Citizens and the City Manager's Office have expressed complaints of drug activity in the neighborhood of Third and Jackson Avenue. Uniformed officers and undercover detectives have worked together to abate this problem. Officers have canvassed the neighborhood to reassure the residents the police presence will not end until the drug dealers are arrested.

Results: two arrests for possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine, seizures of 9.7 grams of cocaine and \$1,350 cash, evictions at 1514 E. Third Street.

• **Atkins Middle School, 12th and Cameron Avenue:** Since the beginning of this school year, the Police Department has had reports from school officials of fights involving students as they walk to and from Atkins School. Jones has attended meetings with school officials and worked with them to implement school bus service, which had not been offered before. Two buses are now provided for students living in the "no bus zone." VisionWork "street workers" are riding the buses and walking the neighborhood streets. Ten fights were reported to police between Aug. 15 and Oct. 27. Only one fight involving students has been reported since the buses began transporting students living within the "no bus zone."

• **Lakeside:** Officers have met with Lakeside property management and expressed concerns about loud music and littering complaints. Jones has met with property owners surrounding the Lakeside community and implemented patrols to stop the illegal activity. Management has worked with the police, sanitation and zoning to improve overall appearance. There have been three homicides (one Sept. 2 and two Oct. 15). On Sept. 2, Frank Myers was found beaten to death in front of 309 Walkertown Ave. The sus-

pects are not believed to be Lakeside residents. On Oct. 15, two Hispanic males were shot to death at 406 Lakeview. Detectives believe these homicides are revenge murders and the suspects probably returned to Mexico.

Calls from June 1 to Nov. 14 are: 89 traffic, 14 alcohol, one littering, six drugs, four noise, two burglary, two resisting arrest, one drunk and disruptive, six miscellaneous, one communicating threats, seven assaults (total calls: 135).

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