

At 7th And McDowell

Two "Good Guys" Vying For Site

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

It would be a lot easier to make a decision on the use of available land at 7th and McDowell - land owned by the City - if both sides weren't "good guys." Vying for the site are, in one corner, the County and United Way, who want to build one unified services center convenient to clients; and in the other, Vinson Realty, who wants to develop the land for use by Federal Express, which would potentially provide 100 new jobs for area residents.

What's a City Council to do? Councilman Ron Leeper, who chairs the Community Development and Housing Committee, is in favor of selling the land to be used by Federal Express. "I believe the opportunity for employment has a more direct influence on the residents of First Ward," Leeper contends. His committee came to a two-two tie on the issue and will therefore not be making a recommendation to City Council.

Jim Boatner, project manager for Federal Express, explains that his company focused in on the 7th and McDowell area as its site of choice through the use of a computer, which analyzed such factors as travel time to customers and accessibility to the airport in pinpointing the best area in which to locate a new facility. Most of Federal Express' customers are either downtown, at UNCC, or near the hospitals.

According to Boatner, his company has been trying for almost a year to get approval for the 7th and McDowell site. The plan has the endorsement of Little Rock AME Zion Church, which is across the street from the now-vacant land. "We didn't know we were competing with United Way until recently," Boatner notes, adding that Federal Express has always been "a supporter and big contributor to the United Way. We're not a heartless organization trying to push poor people out on the street."

Describing Federal Express as a "people-oriented company," Boatner emphasizes that the company's policy is to hire as much as possible from the local community. Job opportunities at a new facility would include a station manager, four or five other managers, customer service agents, and couriers.

"These are not menial tasks," says Boatner. "They're highly desirable jobs. The average salary range for a courier is \$10-\$12 an hour after only a couple of years in the job." He adds that the company has excellent benefits and that management is considerate of the needs of workers.

Federal Express already has about 150 employees working in Charlotte, excluding those at the district office. The company is growing at the rate of 60 percent a year nationwide, says Boatner.

Then, there's the other "good guy." Kathryn Norman, who chairs the Human Services Planning Board of the United Way, explains why that umbrella agency and the County also want the 7th and McDowell location: "It's highly visible, it's near other social service agencies, and it's accessible from the Brookshire Freeway." Referring to the contest with Federal Express, she remarks, "I feel like I'm going against motherhood and apple pie."

The County and the United Way want to bring together a number of community crisis agencies, including Crisis Assistance Ministry, Crisis Clothing Closet, Metrolina Food Bank, Travelers Aid, the Christmas Bureau, and the Commodities Distribution Program, formerly known as the cheese program. Bringing the agencies to one central location would help clients who utilize the programs, she points out.

Norman says her committee has been trying for a year to find a suitable site. "We tried to get the old Midwood School but the neighborhood didn't want us," she recounts. Committee members looked at other sites before Community Development steered them to 7th and McDowell. "We both got steered toward the same site unbeknownst to the other," she says ruefully.

"We really hate that this is hap-



Charley Dannelly
.....Voted for United Way
pening," she adds. "I support Federal Express and what they want to do. They've been a good corporate citizen. We just can't afford private land costs." Councilman Dannelly, also on the Community Development and Housing Committee, agrees. "I voted for United Way

because I feel that's where the facility ought to be. Transportation is accessible to clients and volunteers prefer that location."

It has been suggested that many volunteers on whom the social programs depend might drop out if the facility is built at an alternate proposed site at N. Graham St. and Statesville Avenue.

Leeper has trouble with that as a valid reason. "I find this unacceptable," he comments. "They're willing to help but not go where (the people they're helping) live."

He adds, "If we want a diverse downtown, we really ought to have diverse employment opportunities. You can count the number of blue collar jobs we've encouraged to locate in the inner city. All the white collar jobs do nothing for residents of the inner city."

The issue is on the agenda for the August 12 City Council meeting. "Our plans," says the United Way's Norman, "are to present why it's important for us to have that site."

No doubt Federal Express and Vinson Realty will do the same. So what's a City Council to do?

Sexual Trauma

Breaking free of psychological pain of sexual molestation is opening the future up for many women today.

WomanReach will offer a Panel Discussion on "Surviving Sexual Trauma" at the WomanReach Center on Monday, July 29, from 7-9 p.m.

The WomanReach Center is a United Way Agency, where the facilities are handicapped accessible and services are freely given and freely received.

For more information, call a WomanReach peer counselor, Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., at 334-3614.

Inner Resources

WomanReach is offering a seminar called "Journeying for Self-Discovery" on August 6 from 4-6 p.m. at the WomanReach Center, facilitated by Frankie Shelley.

The WomanReach Center is a United Way Agency, where facilities are handicapped accessible and services are freely given and freely received.

For more information and to register, call a WomanReach peer counselor, Monday through Saturday, at 334-3614.



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NCAE Members Help

With Boys Town Auction

Several NCAE members helped with WBTV-3 Boys Town Auction the weekend of July 13-14. Members found the experience not only enjoyable but also very exciting.

NCAE director Hiawatha Foster said that even though NCAE's main function is dealing with teachers' professional and educational rights, our members also are concerned about community affairs. Participation in the Boys Town Auction would certainly fit in that category.

Foster also stated that NCAE has flyers out dealing with missing children, child abuse and neglect, multi-media training programs, and building community alliance for learning.

Foster said the statement by W.W. Snyder, executive director of Boys Town, is certainly appropriate: "When you give to help a child you give for always."

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