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Wider Beatties Ford Road will bring changes

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The widening of Beatties Ford Road will drastically change the appearance of its intersection with Oaklawn Avenue.

At least three commercial buildings on the north side of Beatties Ford will either have to be torn down or "altered," according to Dick Williams, Charlotte's senior project manager. Williams said exactly what will be required won't be known for another year, as the road project is designed, based on citizen input at a

meeting last week at West Charlotte High School.

Ike Heard Jr., who pushes northwest Charlotte development as head of Northwest Corridor Community Development Commission, thinks the new plan is best.

"I think it will benefit the corridor, in light of the recent and projected economic growth there," Heard said. "With careful attention to design and streetscape detail, I believe that the widening can be accomplished with a minimum of disruptions to existing businesses, and without destroying those sections which retain their basically

residential character."

Actual construction won't begin until 1998 at the earliest, Williams said. The original plan was budgeted at about \$1.5 million, but the new proposal will cost more since additional right-of-way will be required, the buildings may have to be torn down, and landscaping added.

Williams said the widened stretch of Beatties Ford Road, between Oaklawn and Russell Avenue, would include trees along the roadway and underground utility lines.

Community residents indicated at a meeting last week that a wider, more attractive

widening was preferred over an earlier, less ambitious proposal. The earlier proposal would have required taking about four feet from each side of the current roadbed. The new proposal would require 16 feet, 8 feet from each side.

"We got what we think is a good consensus of what the people wanted," Williams said.

J.C. Cousar, who owns one of the buildings that will be directly affected by the widening said he favors the new plan. Cousar owns Ceasar Corporation at 1120 Beatties

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PHOTO/ CALVIN FERGUSON

This intersection of Beatties Ford Road and Oaklawn Avenue will be drastically different after Beatties Ford is widened about 16 feet. Three buildings on right will be razed or "altered."

Commerce Secretary feared dead

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown was presumed dead Wednesday after the Air Force plane he and his party were flying in went down in Croatia.

The plane, an Air Force version of the Boeing 737, apparently crashed into a hillside in inclement weather. There were 30 people aboard, including Brown and his Commerce Department staffers, several U.S. business executives and the military crew. Brown was on a mission to develop economic ties with the feuding former Yugoslav republics, now separated by American and other U.N. troops.

President Bill Clinton praised Brown, who chaired the Democratic National Committee from 1989-92, including Clinton's election campaign. He said Brown was excited about the opportunity to help use the American economy to foster peace in the Balkans.

After visiting Brown's wife, Alma, Clinton said, "He was one of the best advisors and ablest people I ever knew and he was very, very good and everything he ever did, whether he was commerce secretary or civil rights leader or something else."

A wave of sympathy and praise for Brown flowed from various political and business leaders who have worked with him over the years.

U.S. Rep. Mel Watt of Charlotte called Brown a friend whose death is shocking and saddening.

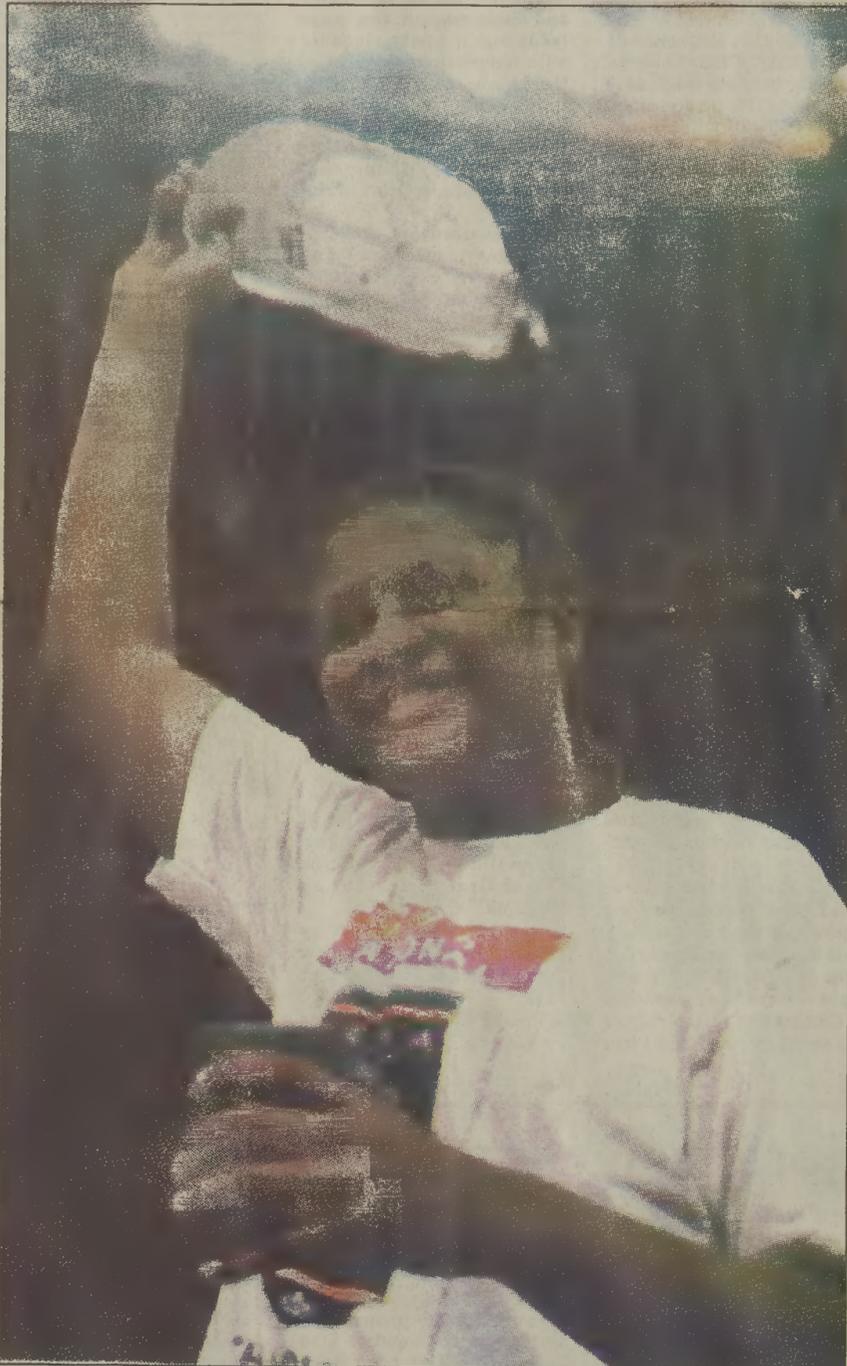
"The tragic deaths of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and others represent a shocking and saddening loss for our country," Watt said.

Watt credited Brown with rebuilding the Democratic Party.

"Ron Brown was the architect of the plan which revived the Democratic Party and

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ROCKY TOP OF THE WORLD



PHOTO/ WADE NASH

Charlotte native Tiffani Johnson waves her cap to the crowd after helping Tennessee to an 83-65 win over Georgia in the NCAA women's basketball championship Sunday at Charlotte Coliseum. Johnson, who starred at Garinger High School, scored 16 points in the Lady Volunteers' victory. More in Sports on page 8B.

South Africa's future relies on racial unity, young Mandela says

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Blacks and whites are trying to get along, after a period in which whites - legally and economically - dominated blacks.

In a radically different government, the majority is trying to roll back some of the gains made by the minority.

America today? No. That's South Africa.

But, Makaziwe Mandela, the daughter of the leader of that new majority government, says she's confident the post-apartheid South Africa will be successful, if whites are willing to accept required changes in the economic system.

Speaking Sunday at Johnson C. Smith University's Founders' Day celebration, Mandela said: "Ending apartheid requires more than the institution of participatory democracy. Participatory democracy is necessary, but it is not the sole condition required."

Mandela, a Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Fellow, is nearing the end of a tour of historically black colleges. The tour is hosted by the United Negro College Fund and sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency, which funds the Fulbright program.

Mandela has a doctorate and a masters degree in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and a degree in social work from the University of Fort Hare. She has an honors degree from the University of Natal.

In South Africa, she is affirmative action and equal opportunity advisor at the University of Witwatersrand, where black student registration has increased from 4.3 percent in 1976 to 40 percent in 1995.

Mandela said she has no interest in following her father, Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela, into the political leadership of South Africa, saying there are other strategic roles to be played in the new South Africa.

In a lecture which lasted less than 30 minutes, Mandela chal-

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PHOTO/ CALVIN FERGUSON

Makaziwe Mandela challenged Johnson C. Smith University's 1996 graduating class to use their degrees for good of the community. She said peace in South Africa will require economic justice for the nation's African majority.

Genesis Park opens doors for would-be homeowners

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Matthew Jackson had to be talked into buying a house in Genesis Park, the redeveloped community off Oaklawn Avenue once a haven for drug dealers and violence.

"I was aware of the history," Jackson said. "I was sort of skeptical at first about moving over here, but my wife said everything was going to be OK. She talked me into it."

"I haven't been displeased," he said. "It has been real nice over here."

The Jacksons were the first family to move into the redevelopment spearheaded by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership, which is

renovating duplexes into single-family homes for ownership in an area which once included notorious Kenney and Way streets.

In April 1992, they moved into a renovated duplex on what was once Gibbs Street, but has been renamed Genesis Park Place.

"The Mustang Gang (convicted drug dealers) was living down the street when we moved in," said Marlene Jackson, now president of the Genesis Park neighborhood association. "I knew it was a challenge. The neighborhood was not renovated, but I thought it was possible."

More than 50 families live in Genesis Park now. Another 42 homes should be ready for

occupancy by this summer, according to Kathy Williams of the N.C. Housing Partnership.

The Jacksons have four children, ranging in age from 12 to 2.

"I think the neighborhood is great," Matthew Jackson said. "It's coming along fine, with all the new renovations that are going on. This is a great neighborhood. It's one of the top neighborhoods people will want to come live in."

Williams and others involved in the intense neighborhood re-creation project hope so. Construction is underway on projects that will add more than three dozen

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PHOTO/ PAUL WILLIAMS III

Rehabilitated homes Genesis Park are attracting families like Marlene Jackson's, the first to move in after redevelopment.

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