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The Charlotte Post

VOLUME 21 NO. 33

MAY 2, 1996

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NationsBank buys City View apartments

Purchase is part of bank's plan to remake First Ward into mixed-income community

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hugh McColl's vow to remake First Ward moved forward a bit with NationsBank's recent purchase, for \$400,000, of the aging City View apartments adjacent to Brookshire Freeway.

McColl, NationsBank CEO, said Tuesday he wants to turn Earle Village and all of First Ward into a mixed-income neighborhood with thousands of new homes, apartments and shops.

The 48-unit City View complex, sited on 2.2 acres, will be razed and the land held for

redevelopment later, said NationsBank spokesman Jan Boylston. Many of the City View units are empty, their windows boarded.

The purchase is in line with the bank's aid of the Charlotte Housing Authority's renewal project in the 430-unit Earle Village public housing complex. Earle Village is being downsized by nearly 50 percent, with nearly 100 units being reserved for senior citi-

zens and participants in a self-sufficiency program leading to home ownership.

The complex will shrink to a small area at the intersection of Seventh and Davidson streets. The housing authority hopes to sell or lease the vacated acreage for additional low- to moderate-income housing.

The authority will spend \$41 million in federal dollars on the project, called Hope VI,

which includes an economic development component and the self-sufficiency program's counseling and training components.

However, city officials are considering a plan to redevelop the entire First Ward area, a mammoth effort that would involve public and private partnership. NationsBank is positioned to be the major player, via its involvement

with the housing authority project and its previous community development efforts in Fourth and Third wards and in the uptown center city.

"There's a plan before the planning commission that will go before the city council," Boylston said. "That is the definitive redevelopment plan."

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Achievement is top priority



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Kenneth Burnley (right), a candidate for the vacant Charlotte-Mecklenburg school superintendent's job, toured the district as part of his interview. He met with West Charlotte High School principal Kenneth Simmons Monday on the Senior Drive campus. Burnley, superintendent in Colorado Springs, Colo., is the only African American among four finalists.

Superintendent finalist focuses on results

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Kenneth Burnley compared the process of interviewing for Charlotte-Mecklenburg school superintendent to getting married.

"It was a serious meeting" with school board members, Burnley told reporters at a brief press conference.

Burnley, from Colorado Springs, Colo., is the lone African American among four candidates who visited Charlotte this week. The board hopes to pick one of them by June to replace John Murphy, who resigned in

November.

Other candidates include Eric Smith of Newport News, Va., Patrick J. Russo of Savannah, Ga., and Cheryl Wilhoite of Madison, Wis.

All expressed interest in the Charlotte position and positive feelings toward the community. They also talked about student achievement and discipline, key areas high on the list of concerns by Charlotte parents and officials.

Another challenge for the incoming superintendent will be maintaining an integrated school system, while the county grows rapidly outward, leaving a stagnant inner city, which is pre-

dominantly African American.

Burnley said his focus is student achievement. "You have to be student focused," he said. "You can't lose sight of that."

His tenure in Colorado Springs School District No. 11 has been marked by household visits by he and his staff to improve the public's perception of the public school system, Burnley said.

He said the system hired marketing consultants to discuss ways to deal with what he called public misconceptions about how well the schools are

See BURNLEY on page 2A

Gantt-Sanders tops primary election slate

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Under a barrage of political missiles tossed about in the Harvey Gantt-Charlie Sanders race for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate, other primary races will be decided Tuesday.

Vilma Leake, a longtime Charlotte-Mecklenburg school teacher, is making an at-large run for the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners.

Also on Tuesday's primary ballot is the intense, if quiet, contest between longtime friends Hoyle Martin and Sarah Stevenson in the County Commissioners District 2 race.

Stevenson, a former school board member, announced and filed first. Martin, who lost the mayoral race last year to Republican Pat McCrory, soon followed. Stevenson's been endorsed by the Black Political Caucus and The Charlotte Observer, while Martin, a former Charlotte city council member, has the backing of the Westside Political Action Committee.

In other endorsements, the Black Political Caucus endorsed Gantt in the Senate primary contest with retired Glaxo executive Sanders for the chance to face Republican incumbent Jesse Helms in November.

In other Democratic primary races, the Caucus endorsed Harry Payne Jr. for labor commissioner, Valeria Lee for secretary of state, Michael Weisel for treasurer and Linda McGee for the



Gantt

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Valeria Lee runs for a piece of history, N.C. secretary of state

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Valeria Lee says she isn't campaigning for a piece of history.

But winning the May 7 Democratic primary for N.C. secretary of state would move her a step closer to it.

Lee, who's on leave from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation where she's program officer, is trying to become the first African American woman to be nominated for a statewide office. If she wins next week, Lee could wind up facing stock car racing legend Richard Petty in a battle to become only the second black to take a seat on the Council of State.

Auditor Ralph Campbell was the first, elected in 1992. She would also be just the third person to hold the job in the last 60 years, following the legendary



Lee

Thad Eure and Rufus Edmisten, who stepped down earlier this year after allegations of fiscal mismanagement and cronyism were made public.

"I'm aware (of the historical implications)," she said. "If you are at all attuned to history and the role we play,

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Diverse group join hands to refurbish Grier Heights' Rosenwald School

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

More than 70 years ago, Edward Wallace helped build a brick schoolhouse for African American children in what's now Grier Heights.

Now his grandson, George Wallace, is part of an effort to renovate and re-use the 3,000-square-foot structure now on the Billingsville Elementary School campus. The building will be used as a community center, Wallace said.

Edward Wallace, a concrete contractor, joined with Sam Billings, Arthur Grier, Booker T. Washington and Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald in the \$10,000 project to build the original Billingsville schoolhouse in the early 1920s.

Wallace gave money to help match Rosenwald's grant for

Billingsville school, one of more than 5,300 aided by Rosenwald's gargantuan effort to build schools for African American children in the south.

Billings, a landowner and farmer, donated the land. Rosenwald gave money which was matched by residents of the Billingsville community and the state to build the 3,000-square-foot brick schoolhouse.

Rosenwald's grandson, Peter Ascoli of Chicago, visited the old schoolhouse last week to mark the partnership of Temple Beth El congregation with the Grier Heights' residents in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

The building was used up until about five or six years ago, according to Wallace, executive director of the Grier Heights Economic

Foundation. The foundation, started in 1985, is a community development corporation, similar to but older than the Reid Park and Northwest Corridor community development corporations, Wallace said.

The renovation of Billingsville is being financed with a \$25,000 grant from the City of Charlotte and matching labor and materials and other in-kind help, including volunteers from Temple Beth El.

"When we move in, it will be used exclusively as a community service center," said Wallace, who has lived in Grier Heights all his life.

He was board chair of the community's economic development organization before becoming executive director

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

George Wallace, grandson of one of the builders of a Rosenwald School in Grier Heights, is helping with efforts to turn the site into a community center. Temple Beth El is forming a partnership with the community to help out.

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