Thursday, May 13, 2004

Initiative boosts Brooklyn spirit

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Park University Neighborhood Association and chairman of New Brooklyn's stakeholder committee. "What we're trying to do is focus on how to revitalize that area. Rarely do these people have a chance to sit down and discuss how all this impacts on the area."

Although Beatties Ford Road is historically underserved, there are signs of growth. A shopping center at the corner of



Mitchell

homes are being built for working-class families

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New

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And churches are driving evelopment. Friendship development. Missionary Baptist Church plans to provide housing and amenities on 110 acres across from its sanctuary on Beatties Ford Road. The United House of Prayer for All People bought the property where the former McDonald's Cafeteria, Fun City amusement site and hotel sat beside Interstate 85. The restaurant is being upfitted; the hotel has been converted into housing for the elderly, and Fun City is slated for single-family housing

University Park Baptist Church added AmeriCare at The Park, a community-ori-ented healthcare center.

"This is churches making our communities better said City Council member James Mitchell, who represents the area and launched the initiative earlier this year

While corridors like Plaza-Midwood and South End are flourishing with shops, restaurants and new housing, northwest Charlotte is trying to catch up. The area closest to uptown, anchored by Johnson & Wales and Johnson C. Smith universities, is in the process of major revitalization programs. Further out, however, growth has been slower.

There are still a whole lot of things you have to trek outside the immediate area for," Alexander said, noting that amenities like sit-down

HBCU fair

Thinking about enrolling at a historically black col lege, or sending your student to one?

Carmel Baptist

dining are in short supply. NBI also connects communities to city staff members to discuss matters ranging from building codes to apply-ing for neighborhood grants. "We're making sure we reach out to developers and

make sure we're on the same page," Mitchell said. "We want to make sure the city is engaged, that we have correct zoning on the ground so we can have the kind of corridor we want.

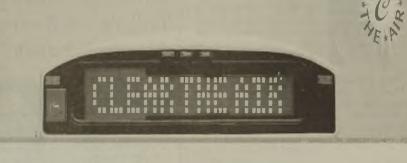
Bringing disparate groups together - including five community development corporations - better serves the overall community, said Powell, a former president of the Historic West End Business Association. Sharing information benefits everyone.

"That was a problem for a long time," she said. "It was like the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing. There is strength in numbers."

And the collective will to bring ideas that will make northwest neighborhoods more than an afterthought.

"Nothing happens unless it's pushed. That's the Charlotte way," Alexander said. "Unless something else is done, you're not going to be able to realize that potential. This shouldn't be the Bermuda Charlotte." Triangle

Adds Powell: "We're trying to say someone's accomplishing something. People are always saying 'they're not doing anything.' But we're 'they



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Church is hosting its second annual HBCU College Fair Saturday at 10 p.m. Representatives from more than 30 colleges have confirmed their presence, including Hampton Morehouse University, College and Savannah State University. North Carolina HBCUs will also be repre sented, including Johnson C. Smith University.

"It's grown tremendously," said the Rev. E. Shon Hagwood, an associated minister at Mt. Carmel and organizer of the fair. "Last year, 25 institutions showed up. This year we have at least 30 institutions and we may get as many as 50."

The fair has also be extended to students beyond the Charlotte area.

"We want to reach as many people as we could and we sent letters to as many churches and institutions in the southeast as we could," Hagwood said.

For information, call the church at (704) 394-3525. Herbert L. White

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