

# Agency boosts West End

Continued from page 1A

principal at Neighboring Concepts, an urban planning and architectural firm that has worked on projects with NWCCDC. "I think going forward they're looking at strategic partnerships, so the impact will be even greater."

Challenges remain before the Northwest Corridor can meet its potential. Poverty and crime, while muted, are issues to recruiting developers and retailers. But with more families and disposable income moving in, Historic West End, as the CDC calls the corridor, will attract more people and businesses.

"A lot of people want to make synonymous African American and poverty," said Isley, who worked in Charlotte's neighborhood development department before joining the CDC in 2004 as economic coordinator. "They don't realize African Americans have income and African Americans on Beatties Ford Road have income. A lot of times they want to bring out the standard fast food place or shoe

place. There's still a market that's untapped and there's a professional market here ...and we're still underserved."

Recruiting efforts are tempered by potential gentrification, which has already started in historically-black neighborhoods like Wesley Heights, Seversville and Eddleville. As more upper-income residents move in, rising property values threaten to push long-time lower-income folks out. The challenge is to maintain balance.

"That's the thing about gentrification - it's not about white people, it's about money moving in," Isley said. "In order to stabilize a lot of these neighborhoods, we've got to have mixed income."

Said Williams: "The big challenge is making sure we deal with gentrification. It's coming, it's just a matter of how it happens. The key is that a mechanism is in place that the money spent there stays in the community and everybody is involved. It's a thin line. The community needs diversity but you want to make sure it doesn't go from one extreme to another."

The CDC sponsors wealth-building workshops that include homeownership seminars,

estate planning, investing and financial literacy for students. The goal, Isley said, is to improve the financial health of families and businesses along the corridor.

"We want to change the image without changing the faces," she said. "Part of maintaining the community is to make sure the individuals who are here get all the information they can about maintaining and growing their income."

Changing the image of northwest Charlotte starts with its name. The CDC pushes Historic West End to tie in to the area's heritage as the center of African American life.

"The name is what is pushing the attitude," Isley said. "When you say west Charlotte you get this stigma of negativity and we get the media's perspective of gunshots, prostitution and things like that. But when you say Historic West End, people think of something more cultural, it's a little softer. That's the branding effect of having it called Historic West End."

The CDC's community ties have served neighborhoods well over the years, Williams said. As the area has grown,

the agency's board, made up of development professionals and neighborhood leaders, continues to build bridges with developers, government and financial sources such as banks and non-profit foundations.

"They have a good foundation," he said. "The other point is having leadership that understands development. Some CDCs are set up to fail because they have people who don't have that expertise. You have to run a CDC like a business."

On the Net:  
Northwest Corridor Community Development Corporation  
www.charlotteswestend.com  
www.jcsu.edu/nwccdc

# Push for extension of Voting Rights Act moves to Senate

Continued from page 1A

in the House. The measure was held hostage by a group of Southern lawmakers who objected the extending key sections of the Voting Rights Act. In a compromise with House leadership, they were allowed to offer and vote on four amendments that would have weakened the legislation.

Hilary Shelton, executive director of the NAACP Washington Bureau, says he has received reports that senators may offer similar amendments. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has reportedly expressed concerns about the pre-clearance clause of Section 5. However, Cornyn's staff members said he has not yet decided whether to propose an amendment. Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama is among those who claim the law unfairly targets the South and is said to also be considering whether to author an amendment.

The "Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization Amendments Act" is still in the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has yet to vote to send it for a floor vote. The Senate, heavily debating a bill to expand stem cell research this week, was not expected to take up the Voting Rights this week. However, civil rights leaders are hoping an unnumbered bill is passed before the August recess.

A spokeswoman for Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), said that Frist is committed to the renewal. But she declined to say whether he was committed to the renewal in the same form that the House passed it - free of all amendments.

"Senator Frist, as an original cosponsor of the voting rights extension, does plan to bring this important issue to the floor once the judiciary committee completes some work," said spokeswoman Carolyn Weyforth.

Sen. Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) has said he intends to send the bill to the House floor by July 20 with hopes that Frist will bring it to a floor vote before the recess. Frist gave committee mem-

bers until this Wednesday to submit any amendments. At press time, no amendments had been submitted.

Bush has pledged to sign the bill into law. Shelton says he is comfortable that the bill will pass with no amendments. "I believe good judgment will win over narrow-minded problematic agendas," Shelton says.

Meanwhile, Gordon and NAACP delegates lobbied the Hill this week to make sure the battle that happened in the House does reoccur. The House passage came after some of the most intense lobbying seen by civil rights leaders since the act was last renewed 25 years ago.

"Today we have measured celebration, and not a victory," says Jesse Jackson Sr., who witnessed the passage from the House gallery. For him the arguments had sounded like echoes of those made by segregationists during a time when he and others fought for the right to vote. "I watched from the House Gallery 41 years later as current Confederates made eerily similar arguments for jurisdictions covered by Section 5. We must not celebrate too early."

Ultimately, the vote of 390-33 last Thursday proved it to be a new day as some ultra conservative Republicans, who consistently make Fs on the NAACP Legislative Report Cards, fought for the measure along with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

House Judiciary Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, normally on the opposite side of the CBC, consistently echoed remarks of the civil rights leaders as he led the bill to passage.

"By extending the VRA for an additional 25 years, H.R. 9 ensures that the gains made by minorities are not jeopardized. I am proud to stand here with my colleagues as I did in 1982, to ensure that voting rights remain protected for an additional 25 years. Congress again made our nation proud today by passing this historic and vital legislation," Sensenbrenner said in a statement.

CBC Chairman Mel Watt (D-N.C.) applauded the House action, but turned immediately to the Senate.

"Passage of the bill with such a resounding

CHARLOTTE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM

## COMMUNITY MEETING

CATS will hold a public meeting to receive feedback on proposed changes to Routes 5 Airport and 2 Ashley Park. If the proposals are adopted, Route 5 would be adjusted to serve the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport utilizing Wilkinson Boulevard and thus would not travel on West Blvd. Passengers desiring to travel to the Charlotte Transportation Center from the West Blvd corridor would be able to utilize Routes 10 West Blvd and 25 Clanton Park. Route 2 would also be adjusted to serve Marlowe to Lumina to Ashley Rd inbound and outbound and thus would not utilize Greenland Ave or Wilkinson Blvd to Allegheny.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>July 26, 2006</b> 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm West Service Center 4150 Wilkinson Blvd Charlotte, NC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>July 27, 2006</b> 6:30 pm-7:30 pm West Boulevard Branch Library 2157 West Boulevard Charlotte, NC 28208</p>
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**Panelists**

- Rai Glover, Senior Vice President, Bank of America
- Bridget Ann Hampton, President, JHR & Associates, LLC, Member of the NC Lottery Commission
- Ramona Moore Big Eagle, Dare to Soar Enterprises, Storyteller and Speaker
- Elisa Rodriguez, Allstate Insurance, Latin American Chamber of Commerce
- Patricia Shafer, President, Compel Consulting International

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