

Center

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with high columns and entrance and covered brick walkways, will draw a lot of looks from passersby, it's the inside that will keep seniors and other community members coming back for years to come.

"The original design was sort of a box design," explained Murphrey. "We kept talking to the architect and looking at it, and we added the walkways and high columns and ceilings for appearance. But we also added a lot of new features inside. The original design didn't have all the openness. We added a lot of new space such as exercise rooms, and expanded the eating area and kitchen."

At the upcoming dedication, Murphrey said citizens will be invited to tour the facility. These are some of the things they'll see:

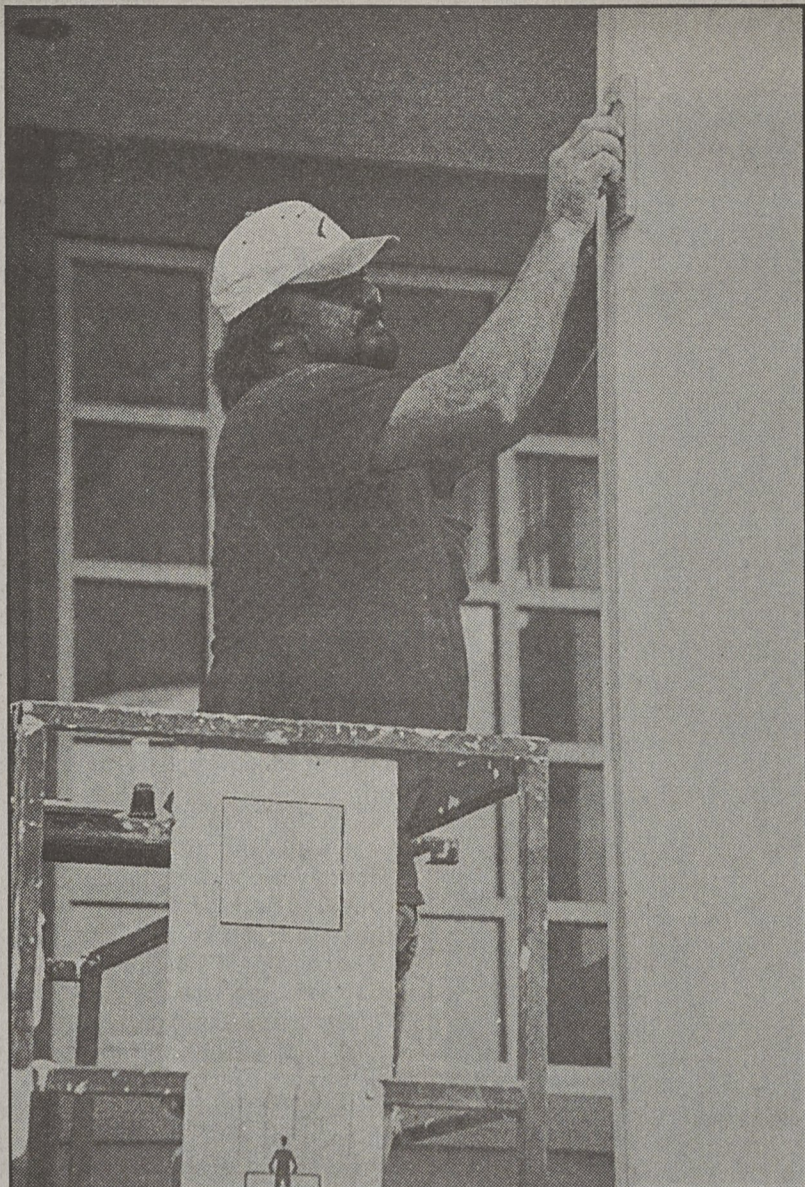
- A spacious lobby, complete with furniture. It will include a gift shop on one side where senior citizens can sell their wares, and a receptionist area on the other. As visitors come through the front door they will see a huge, 8-section art piece with each section depicting a scene from one decade between the 1920s and 2000. For instance, the decade of the 1930s will feature a likeness of baseball great Babe Ruth. In one corner of the lobby will be an 8-foot tall sculpture donated by Gaston County doctor Graham Withers. It is an hour glass with people inside.

- An office wing, which is not elaborate by any stretch of the imagination, but will give senior citizens easy access to services offered by different personnel. Those offices include one for the transportation coordinator (Mattie Scoggins), administrative assistant (Sharon Eaker), program coordinator (Carolyn Bell), Aging Director (Thornburg), and nutritionist and volunteer social worker. Included in the office wing is a small break room, which staff has not had in the current Senior Center, an electronic room for computers, fax machines, etc., storage and rest rooms.

- An educational wing, where seniors will be able to take classes and enjoy leisure time all day long. The wing includes a spacious library, which will be equipped with bookcases and tables and is wired for future internet connection. Thornburg said the room can also be used for bridge and as a Board room. "A lot of people are going to give us books," Thornburg noted, "and a lot of people that have worked at libraries have volunteered to help us set it up."

The educational area also includes rest rooms, storage rooms, a nice craft room, exercise room, ceramics shop, and a billiard and ping pong room for the men. Some of those rooms were added after the original design.

"The craft room will be especially nice for quilting and other activities," Thornburg said. "Quilters can actually leave their quilts set up. Now they have to pack them up every day and take them back home with them. This way they can leave them here until they're finished with them, and then sell them in the gift shop."



GARY STEWART / THE HERALD
Billy Lockridge of Pinnix Construction sands a column to prepare it for painting at the new H. Lawrence Patrick Senior Life and Conference Center. Workers are putting the finishing touches on the building and will then begin paving and landscaping in preparation for an October opening.

Thornburg said donations of billiard and ping pong tables are needed for the men's activity room.

"This should help attract more male participants," said Thornburg. "They can come in all day long if they want to. Now we have to schedule activities at different times because of our limited space. If they'd like they can come in and stay all day and go from one activity to another."

The exercise room, once equipped, will also be impressive. Thornburg said some folks have already made donations of equipment, but more is welcome. The room will accommodate small exercise classes, but the larger ones such as aerobics will be held in one of the bigger rooms.

The ceramics shop was another add-on, and Thornburg said it could also attract new participants to other programs. For the past several years the ceramics room has been a renovated storage shed separate from the Depot Center. He said many persons utilizing ceramics programs came just for that and not for other activities.

"That's fine," he said, "but having the room here in the same building will give them an opportunity to see some of the other activities that they may want to get involved in."

- A large 45 x 90 foot conference room is one area of the building that will probably be utilized by the community. It has a dividing partition which would allow activities in either side at the same time.

"This room will be used for the larger senior center activities such as health fairs, seminars and socials," Thornburg said. The room has a dance floor, which Murphrey kidded may not be large enough for the energetic seniors, and

there's a pull-down screen in the ceiling for movies and special presentations.

Thornburg envisions the room being rented by civic and community groups for meetings, seminars and special activities. He said City Council will adopt a fee schedule, with one rate for non-profit groups and another rate for profit groups.

"Our original thought was to use this room as a gym," he said. "But we added a hall all around the perimeter of the building that can be used as a walking area. We'll just have to figure out how many laps is a mile. We've also discussed using the hall as a gallery where artists can hang their paintings."

- A large kitchen/dining area will provide comfortable seating for 120 persons. Currently, Thornburg said, the senior center averages about 40 to 50 persons a day for its lunch program. An additional 40 persons are served by Meals on Wheels, a program now run by the County Council on Aging but which had its start in Kings Mountain in the 1970s when the senior program was operated out of the community center.

"Currently, we have our meals catered," Thornburg noted, "but eventually we will probably cook them here. We want to work toward having our own kitchen staff. Cleveland County has its own staff of volunteers that come every day to cook. We would look at that, but we would also look at hiring somebody through a joint effort with Isothermal."

The dining room area was also one of the areas that changed from the original design - partly to offer more seating and partly to add win-

dows so participants can see outside.

Right off the dining room are spacious men's and women's rest rooms complete with baby changing stations. Thornburg said the seniors who have already seen the building got a big laugh out of that, but added that they are required by State building standards and will be useful for other groups that use the building.

Although the unfinished outside makes the building appear far from ready for occupancy, Thornburg says upon completion of the inside things will come together quickly.

"We began grading in January," he noted. "Once the metal work went up it went pretty fast."

Murphrey said the DOT recently cooperated with the city in cutting trees along the Highway 74 ramp coming into the city limits "because we wanted to make sure people can see it," and he said once the paving work is complete the DOT will install traffic signalization at the intersection of East King and Canterbury. The speed limit coming off the ramp has also been reduced to 35 miles per hour.

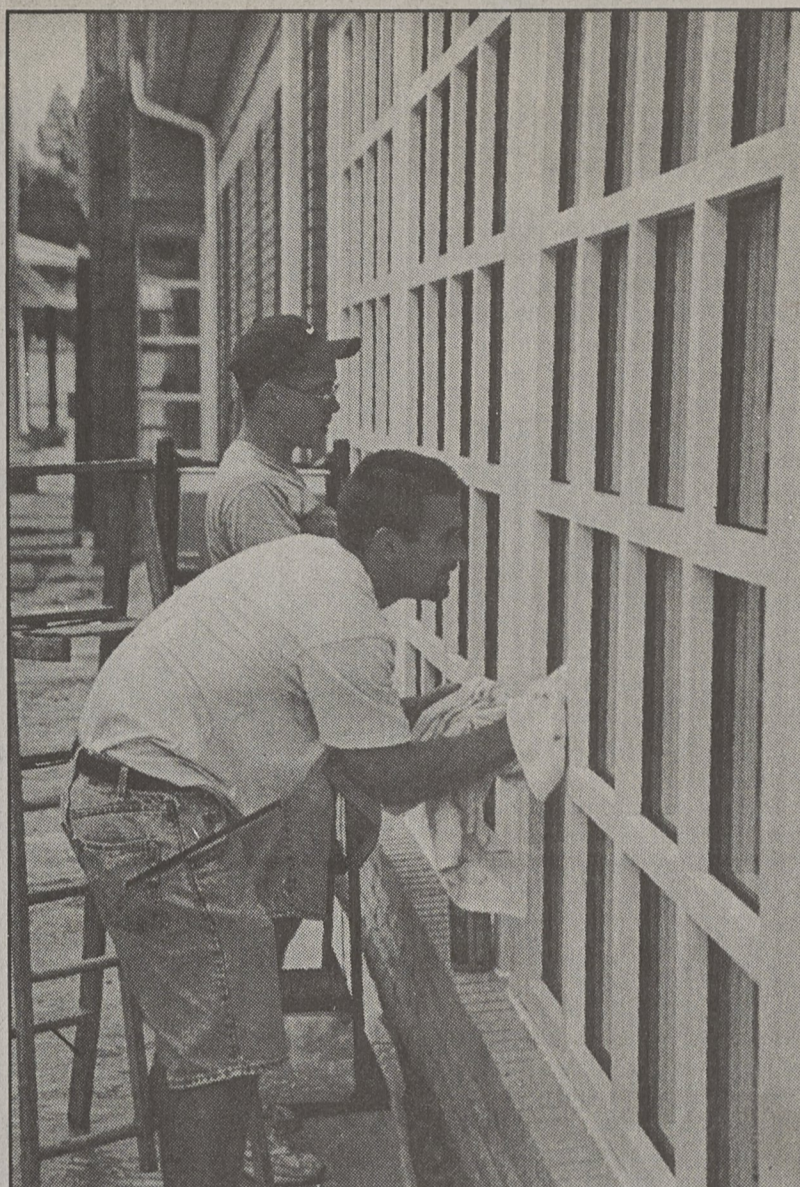
Thornburg said the parking lot will include 99 parking spaces, including numerous handicap spaces, and there are drop-offs at every entrance for the elderly who have to be transported. There is also ingress and egress at the back of the property from East Ridge Street.

"We have quite a few seniors who are feeble or frail and they have to be transported," Thornburg noted. "Coming in for that meal every day is what keeps them going. We have some that are in the beginning stages of Alzheimer's and other diseases, and we're also looking forward to the Life Enrichment Center coming to Kings Mountain so those persons will be able to take advantage of adult day care."

Murphrey said he is excited to see the center nearing completion, and hopes it will result in more people in the Kings Mountain area taking advantage of the services offered.

Murphrey said the facility and the programs, compared to the Depot Center, will be as "different as night and day."

"This is something the people are going to be real proud of," he said.



GARY STEWART / THE HERALD
Randall Wright, left, and Brady Goforth of M&M Commercial Cleaning clean the windows at the dining room area of the new H. Lawrence Patrick Senior Life and Conference Center on East King Street.

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The Herald

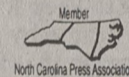
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E-mail: kmhnews@aol.com

Mike Blanton.....Publisher
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- | | |
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