

Taking the Wrecking-Ball to Greenville County Square

Greenville County Square, the seat of county government offices, formerly University Ridge, the one-time campus of Furman University, is located on the most desirable piece of real estate in the city of Greenville. For more than a decade Mayor Knox White and favored developers have attempted to design ways to acquire the property for development. The County Administrator has long been an advocate for such a plan.

Commercial development of the property would greatly increase the tax base of the city and provide lucrative business deals for local insider business interests.

Greenville County has announced that they will accept proposals for redevelopment of the County property in the near future. The use of "proposals" for procurement purposes is a legal, but unethical method of selecting contractors to receive County contracts. Using this method, it is possible that the County Administrator and other individuals may have already decided on a contractor and a plan, and will go through the procedures to create the illusion of appropriateness for the public.

County Council will apparently hold a public hearing on the project before the plans under consideration are made public. If that is in fact true, the public will not have any basis for making comments except of a general nature. No further public input is permitted after the public hearing is held. Therefore, when the chosen plan under consideration is made public, it will be too late under current procedures to provide input or opposition.

Members of Council are being led to believe that the sale of property will provide sufficient funds to build a high-rise building for county offices and parking. Members of Council will find it difficult to object to such a "no-cost" plan. The County office building would be located at what is now County Square along with a variety of commercial developments.

Advocates of demolition of County Square cite the need for a new roof, difficulty experienced by citizens looking for certain offices and the distances to walk inside the building as well as space wasted in wide hallways.

Veterans have expressed concerns regarding the possible relocation of the veteran's memorial wall located in front of the Current County office building. It is possible that the memorial could remain undisturbed, however, no such assurances have been given.

Concerns regarding traffic patterns after the massive redevelopment have not been publicly addressed. Church Street is the only traffic artery leading to the property. Creation of another access route would dump the traffic into the already congested downtown area or into Cleveland Park. Neither would be beneficial.

The County Square project is probably the most lucrative real-estate development project undertaken in Greenville County since the Greenville County School Board circumvented the South Carolina constitutional debt limit provision and borrowed a billion dollars to replace most of the

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County schools. Most of that debt is still owed by the property owners of Greenville County.

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While the interest of citizens is focused on happenings in Washington, D. C., State and county governments will attempt to push through some of their most controversial legislation.

We can expect a gas tax increase to allegedly repair roads unless a groundswell of grassroots opposition develops. In the meantime the wrecking-ball is headed for Greenville County Square.