

Community Meeting
5/30/06
McDonald Hughes Center

Agenda

1. Call to order and purpose of meeting Councilman Howard/Taylor
2. Purpose and history Councilman Howard
3. Intro of City Planner, Mr. Bill Snowden Councilman Howard
4. Questions and answers Mr. Jim Lawson
5. Closing remarks, dismissal

Thank you for coming out, and please try to stay informed.

The speakers present at the meeting were: Councilman Bobby Howard, Councilman Harrison Taylor, City Planner Bill Snowden, and WQZZ Radio Personality Jim Lawson. Some members from the City Board of Education were invited to present, but did not do so.

The Community Meeting began at 7:00 p.m. at The McDonald Hughes Center with Councilman Bobby Howard thanking everyone for attending.

The main purpose of the meeting was to have a dialog from the community on the possibility of placing a mall at the present Central West Campus site and rebuilding a new West Lawn Middle School at its current site. Councilman Taylor did disclose that there were other locations the consultants looked at as viable for commercial property to be placed on the West Side of Tuscaloosa. Those locations included a pecan orchard opposite the Stillman College Campus, which is not for sale, and the Mallisham Parkway. The general consensus of the community is that no one is opposed to commercial property or a mall being placed on the West Side. The only opposition is for the facility to be placed at the current Central West Campus location which is slated to be the new West Lawn Middle School. Councilman Taylor urged the community to seriously think about the opportunity to have some type commercial business on the West Side of town because it's taken 50 years to get the opportunity and it will probably be another 50 years before the chance comes again. Council Howard stated that if the West Side lets this opportunity pass, the Woodland Forrest community is lobbying for such a development in their neighborhood. One member of the community made mention of hearing of plans to close the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School and the Central Elementary School, which is located behind Central West Campus. If this in fact becomes a reality, the only remaining school on the West Side of Tuscaloosa will be Oakdale, which only houses 1st and 2nd graders.

There was another concern voiced about the type of commercial business to be placed in the West Side community. Councilman Taylor stated that he is trying to get the things the community said they wanted: decent grocery stores, a post office, a hardware store, restaurant,

bank, and retail store, so now that the opportunity is here – he doesn't understand what the problem is. He said the developer would be the only one to decide what type commercial business went into the mall if it becomes a reality and is placed in the West Side Community.

Another concern the community voiced is what will become of the current West Lawn Middle School site. Councilman Taylor stated that if West Lawn Middle School is not rebuilt at its current site and moves to the Central West location, the old West Lawn building will stand where it is and will become home to drug addicts, graffiti, illegal acts and activities and be a blight to the community. One solution voiced from the community was to make the West Lawn Middle School an alternative school. The City Councilmen present could not comment on any City Board of Education decisions and no one from the Board spoke at this meeting.

Mr. Bill Snowden, with the Department of Community Planning and Development, presented a presentation on the City's comprehensive plans for revitalization. The PowerPoint presentation with his 5 points of revitalization is attached.

One member of the community mentioned the lack of housing on Tuscaloosa's West Side. Councilman Howard mentioned there are 114 homes to be built between Oakdale and Stillman Heights Elementary School. They would be moderately priced homes between the \$90-130,000 range. And, as far as residential improvement goes, federal funds have been designated for Hope VI and there is a residential incentive plan and there are community block grants available.

Councilman Howard thanked everyone for coming and voicing their opinions, mentioned there would be other such meetings, and adjourned the meeting.