



End-to-end milestones in West End

Although the fate of a proposed baseball stadium looms as a major uncertainty, a couple of other pieces were recently fit into Greenville's West End puzzle. Within one week, the city sold West End Market to a local investor and demolished buildings on South Main Street in an area that will become a stairway and promenade connecting the West End, RiverPlace development, Reedy River and Falls Park. Both actions are part of a detailed city plan for the downtown district. Although Greenville City Manager Jim Bourey says it will be April before demolition of the remaining South Main property is complete and work proceeds on the river walk and \$3.5 million of additional streetscaping, he says the city has made progress. "We're real happy with what's going on and we believe as this work continues it will help to further develop the West End with more new businesses," he says. Bourey says the city met its goals of historic preservation and spurring development with the 1993 purchase and subsequent restoration of West End Market. It followed its original objective of selling the mixed-use commercial center to private owners. A high bid of \$2.626 million by local dentist and real estate investor Dr. Joseph Moon was accepted by the city. The building had listed for \$2.5 million

and Bourey says the city stands to clear more than \$1.8 million on the transaction, some of which will be used for streetscaping in the West End. As the new owner, Moon is required to abide by existing lease agreements for the current tenants, Bourey says, including the Mello Mushroom restaurant scheduled to open soon.

City of Greenville Economic Development Director Nancy Whitworth says additional phases of street enhancements are planned as they relate to specific projects. She says there are “lots of smaller projects and lots of interest” under consideration for the section of the West End stretching past Augusta Street.

“There are a number of buildings — some for sale and some for lease — as well as many vacant lots in the West End, and that’s really where we would like to concentrate right now,” says Whitworth. “We want to see if we can get more productive uses from some of these buildings.”

On the far end of the district, The Randolph Group’s Pendleton West residential and office project may provide an additional spark for growth down South Main Street from Augusta to Pendleton. Groundbreaking is expected to begin next month on 14 single-family homes and two duplex units, with work to follow on a mix of 57 townhouses and condominiums on the former Greenville General Hospital site.

Adjacent to the West End and surrounded by St. Francis Hospital, Greenville High School, doctor’s offices and several churches, the new neighborhood will offer one, two and three-bedroom units ranging from \$90,000-\$140,000. Developer Jeff Randolph says affordability and variety will help to attract young professionals such as nurses, teachers, bankers and attorneys. He says additional living space, along with established businesses and institutions

in the area, should generate continued development.

“ You’ ve got some significant, credible, anchor-type tenants to build around.

Obviously the churches bring people in, the high school brings students, parents and is a source of jobs,” says Randolph.

“ What I think you could see happening — whether a baseball stadium is built or not — is something going in there and I think it will be pretty dramatic.”

Whitworth views the Pendleton West project as an anchor for the far edge of the West End, saying that the city plans to use it as a catalyst for infill development back toward the city.

In June, The Randolph Group will begin work on a three-story, 33,000-square-foot, mixed-use building on the site of the former Relax Inn. In addition to TRG occupying a portion of the space for its own offices, controller David Rosenberg says nearly half of the remaining space already is leased or sold, including office space for local architect firm Johnston Design Group. He says the building will be unique in offering spaces as small as 1,250 square feet for sale to businesses.

Billy Mitchell, who owned two of the now demolished buildings in the 500 block of South Main Street, remains disappointed that his decades-old stereo business was not allowed to continue in its West End location. The city condemned and removed the buildings as part of a protracted court battle.

He says he continues to follow eminent domain issues around the nation, has been invited to relocate his business to many sympathetic communities in the region, and keeps an eye on what else is going on around downtown Greenville.

“ I’ m considering relocating but I haven’ t been able to find anything affordable in downtown Greenville.

Right now I don't have the money to hardly move sideways," he says. " I never wanted to sell or discuss money, but now I have to. It just got to the point where you couldn't keep fighting it anymore."

After pricing available properties around the West End, he says his next fight with the city will be over whether the city's \$350,000 appraised value of his property is a valid offer. Mitchell awaits an April jury trial to determine the value.

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