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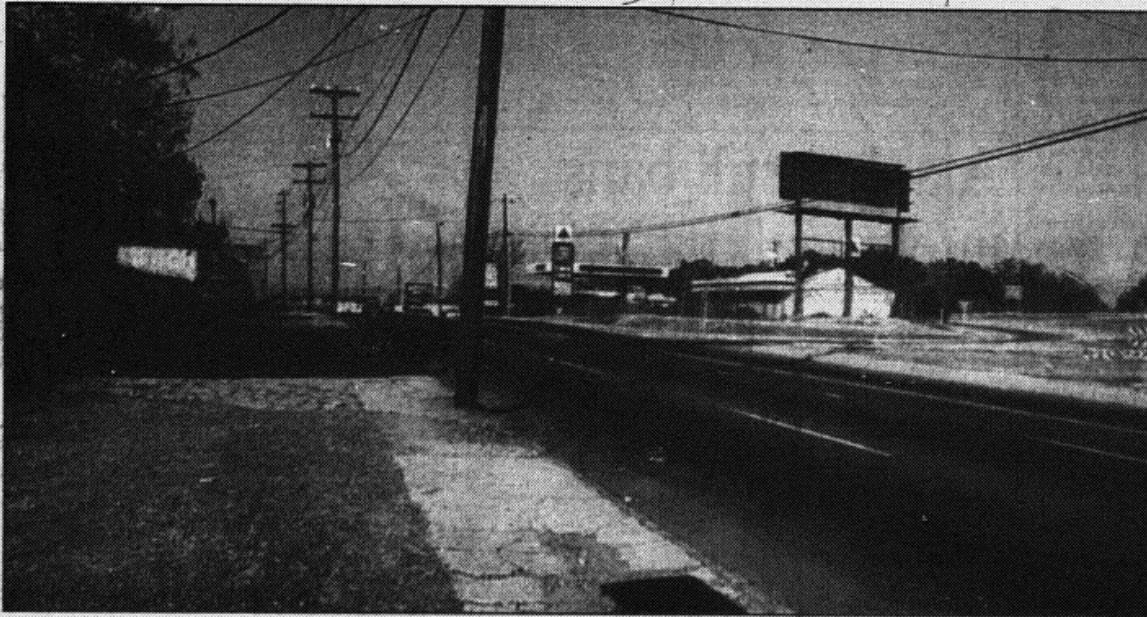
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Liberty Street: A dream deferred?



Over the past few years, the city has completed several studies on Liberty Street, but little has been done to improve the area, some say. "When it comes to East Winston there always seems to be an excuse," says N.C. Rep. Larry Womble. Above, shoppers enter a new store on Hanes Mall Boulevard.

Corridor lags behind in development

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

What happens to a dream deferred?

If the vacant lots, run-down buildings and cracked pavement of Liberty Street could talk, they'd probably answer "not much."

As the Hanes Mall area, downtown and other regions of the city continue to be rezoned and given facelifts, by all outward appearances, activity is stagnant on Liberty Street Corridor, a three-mile stretch of road, expanding from Seventh Street to Smith-Reynolds Airport.

"I'm am concerned that development in parts of the city are put on the fast track, and there is almost a standstill on Liberty Street," N.C. Rep. Larry Womble said.

Redevelopment—a word tossed around freely in the African American community—

was supposed to have occurred along the street a few years back.

One of many studies on the corridor was commissioned by the city's planning department in February of 1994. The lengthy report, prepared by an out-of-state consulting firm, contained grandiose plans for the corridor.

The city of Winston-Salem and the Chamber of Commerce were to immediately begin working to secure a grocery store for the area and to find a tenant for the former Lowe's building, the study states.

Plans also included: planting trees and other shrubbery along the street; developing an African American-themed market with food, crafts and an amphitheater; and making the huge water tank near 15th Street, a landmark symbol for the Liberty Street area by adding graphics and creating a waterworks park.

The study's lofty goals were the types of things that many thought would revive the historic corridor area. But a failed bond referendum in 1997 stopped the project before it even got off of the ground.

Liberty Street was to have benefited greatly from the \$3 million in transportation bonds set aside in the referendum. The total cost of the project was projected at \$7 million by the city—with loans, grants and private dollars going to fund the remainder of the project.

"It seems when it comes to things in East Winston there is always an excuse," Womble said. "Look at Hanes Mall Boulevard and the Gateway development near Salem College, some areas are getting support at a higher level."

If Liberty Street can achieve the same status

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Black voters: power behind party's rise

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

Ninety-nine-year-old Maxwell Banks Grier took her time voting last Tuesday.

Dressed in a beige trench coat and blue cap, Grier, who has been voting since 1947 and will celebrate her 100th birthday next month, cast her ballot—for the "Democrats, of course," she said proudly.

"I usually turn my vote in for the Democrats over the other ones," she said. "If I find someone who will make a better leader, I'll vote the other way. But that's not too often."

Grier was one of a huge number of black voters who went out to the polls for last Tuesday's election to help Democrat John Edwards unseat Republican Sen. Lauch Faircloth. State Democrats gained five seats in the Senate and at least three in the House.

The large black voter turnout also played a role in local elections. Though a number of candidates in the African American community ran unopposed, the black vote helped ensure a victory in the district court race for incumbent Roland Hayes.

"Judge Hayes drew a lot of people," said C.B. Hauser. "We felt he was being mistreated by people, so a lot of people came out and voted."

Hauser, precinct judge for the Hanes Community Center, said he was delighted—but not surprised about the large turnout. More than 900 voted at Hanes Tuesday, including seniors like Grier. In Hauser's precinct, Hayes garnered twice the votes of challenger Michael Hurst.

"I really didn't think we would have that many," Hauser said. "But I was happy to see them. People really wanted to vote last week."

Exit polls found black voters in North Carolina playing a slightly larger role in last week's election than they did in Harvey Gantt's 1996 rematch with Sen. Jesse Helms. Black voters made up a higher proportion of the electorate Tuesday than in 1992, when Faircloth defeated incumbent Democrat Terry Sanford.

Blacks comprised about one of five voters in North Carolina on election day, slightly less than their 22 percent representation in the state's population. They voted about 90 percent Democratic. Typical African American turnout is about 15 percent.

Nationally, blacks made up 10 percent of the electorate Tuesday, and 12.8 percent of the U.S. population.

Winston-Salem State University professor Donald Mac-Thompson said he wasn't surprised by the turnout.

"A few weeks ago, Newt Gingrich said that African Americans don't go out to vote," he said. "It turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It alerted us that we needed to do something. We decided to go out and vote."

According to Mac-Thompson, a number of wide-ranging factors spurred black voters to the polls.

Chief among them was the chance that U.S. Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., could be defeated after his congressional district was redrawn for a second time in two years. The 12th District was originally drawn to

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Historic Lewisville church gets marker