N&C
5/23/83

Feasibility Study For Transforming Manor Planned

By SANDRA BENNETT
Post-Courier Reporter

A feasibility study of a proposal to rehabilitate Robert Mills Manor, a public housing complex, as a scattered site development should begin soon as a result of action taken Tuesday by Charleston City Council.

The concept, proposed by Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr., generated much discussion before funds for the study subsequently were approved by council during its regular session.

Riley is proposing the 269-unit complex generally in the area of Franklin, Cromwell, Magazine and Smith streets be transformed into a mixture of public housing units, privately owned homes and rental apartments.

"Many of the public housing residents who are currently housed in Robert Mills Manor would remain. Their status would be upgraded, however, not only by living in modernized units, but also living in an integrated neighborhood rather than a monolithic project," Riley wrote in a memorandum to council.

Riley said an ad hoc committee he appointed to study the proposal recommended that the firm of Hammer, Siler and George be retained at a cost of $20,000 to proceed with the study.

Robert Mills Manor, the city's oldest public housing complex, is in serious need of repair, Riley said. However, any changes to the complex, managed by the Charleston Housing Authority, will require Department of Housing and Urban Development approval, he added.

Either substantial sums of money would have to be borrowed to rehabilitate the complex and subject it to another long-term federal government obligation or other changes must be made, Riley told council.

He said he based the proposed concept on the success of the scattered site housing program the city has begun in other parts of the peninsula.

The concept was opposed by councilmembers Jerome Kinloch and Robert Ford, who expressed concerns

See Study, Page 3-B

...Study Planned

Continued From Page 1-B

about displacement of current tenants and the possibility of private concerns eventually consuming the public portion of the proposed complex.

Riley said some tenants would be displaced permanently to other subsidized housing and planned scattered site units in the city. However, he assured council the city would guarantee housing elsewhere for all the displaced tenants.

In other business, council agreed to hire an urban design consultant to work with the city Board of Architectural Review. Architect Jonathan Barnett, professor of architecture and director of the graduate program in urban design at the City College of New York, is to be retained by the city at a cost not to exceed $5,000.

In addition, an ordinance to provide for the issuance and sale of $350,000 in general obligation bonds to acquire, construct and equip a new fire station at Fort Johnson and Stone Post roads on James Island was approved by council.

Council also agreed that one-third of all property jointly owned by the city and the Commissioners of Public Works will belong to the city, with 20 percent of the proceeds from the sale of any parcel also being allotted to the city.

Council was presented an extensive list of properties jointly owned by the two entities.

E/P
6-6-85

Renovation Suggested For Manor

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

Robert Mills Manor probably should be renovated and kept as public housing rather than be sold for private dwellings, a committee of city and housing authority officials agreed Wednesday.

The committee met at City Hall to discuss a consultants' study that looked at two plans for the sale of the project. The study showed that sale of the project would not generate enough money to build new public housing for the tenants who would be displaced.

The committee decided to postpone action on the study at the request of City Council member Esther Tecklenburg, who said a workable plan for the sale of the project could come to the fore after the results of the study are publicized.

"There might be resources out there that we don't know about," she said. "Something just might happen."

She said some of the project's tenants are third- and fourth-generation welfare recipients and that their relocation in scattered-site public

MILLS MANOR

Continued From Page 1-B

housing would promote their long-term well-being.

City and housing authority officials had said they hoped that sale of the 50-year-old project would raise enough money to build public housing units at various sites throughout the city.

The city and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city, so its occupants can more easily function as part of the community, rather than be a resident of what is often perceived as a welfare enclave.

"The Hammer, Siler, George study produced in my mind very disappointing results," Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. told the committee. "It appears to me that we cannot move forward on our original hope. We need to look at alternatives to restore, improve and modernize Robert Mills Manor."

The Silver Spring, Md., consulting firm did the study for $20,000.

Housing Authority director Donald J. Cameron and authority commissioners Frank Crawford and Max Kirshstein agreed that the project should be modernized and continue to provide housing for its tenants. Renovation of the project would cost about $4 million.

Its renovation probably would require financing from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. If so, the project would be committed as public housing until the money is repaid, or about 20 years, Cameron said.

The project is now unencumbered and could be sold, if the sale were approved by City Council and Housing Authority commissioners.

The study looked at two plans for the 267-apartment project. Each would have retained 38 units on Smith Street as public housing.

One proposal would have increased the project size by two apartments and would have sold 231 units as townhouses, costing $45,000 to $70,000. That plan would provide 134 parking spaces, insufficient to meet the needs of development.

The second plan would have reduced the density of the project to 165 units through the demolition of several buildings. That decreased density would provide more parking and make the apartments more marketable, the study said. Individual dwellings would sell from $60,000 to $80,000.

The first proposal would provide $5.1 million; the second, $4.2 million. Cameron estimated it would cost $11 million to provide substitute housing for the tenants.

$11,000,
$2.8 million

Kirshstein pointed out that about one-third of the tenants at Mills Manor are unable to pay any rent and, in fact, must depend on the Housing Authority to pay for their utilities.

The authority would be unable to provide that subsidy if they were relocated to new buildings, for which the authority would require rent to help pay the costs of construction, he said.

"You are dealing with people who need us badly," Kirshstein said.

N I C
6-6-85

Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

Robert Mills Manor may be slated for renovation.

Study Says Project's Sale Not Economically Feasible

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

The sale of Robert Mills Manor would not generate enough money to build new public housing for the tenants who would be displaced, a study contracted by the city of Charleston shows.

A committee of city and Housing Authority officials agreed Wednesday that the 50-year-old project in the lower peninsula probably should be renovated at a cost of $4 million and continue to be used as public housing.

The city contracted the study to see if most of the project could be renovated and sold as private dwellings. Officials hoped its sale would bring enough money to build public housing units at various sites throughout the city.

The city and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city, so its occupants can more easily function as part of the community, rather than as residents of what is often perceived as a welfare enclave.

"The Hammer, Siler, George study produced in my mind very disappointing results," Mayor Joseph P. Riley told the committee. "It appears to me that we cannot move forward on our original hope. We need to look at alternatives to restore, improve and modernize Robert Mills Manor."

The Silver Spring, Md., consulting firm of Hammer, Siler, George Associates did the study for $20,000.

Housing Authority Director Donald J. Cameron and commissioners Frank Crawford and Max Kirshstein agreed the project should be modernized and continue to provide housing for its tenants.

The project's renovation probably would require financing from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. If so, the project would be committed as public housing until the money is repaid, or for about 20 years, Cameron said.

The project now is unencumbered and could be sold, if the sale were approved by City Council and Housing Authority commissioners.

The study looked at two plans for the 267-apartment project. Each would have retained 38 units on Smith Street as public housing.

One proposal would have increased the project size by two apartments and would have sold 231 units as townhouses, costing $45,000 to $70,000. That plan would provide 134 parking spaces, insufficient to meet the needs of development.

The second plan would have reduced the density of the project to 165 units through the demolition of several buildings. That decreased density would provide more parking and make the apartments more marketable, the study said. Individual dwellings would sell from $60,000 to $80,000.

The first proposal would provide $5.1 million; the second, $4.2 million. Cameron estimated it would cost $11 million to provide substitute housing for the tenants.

Housing Authority Commissioner Max Kirshstein pointed out that about one-third of the tenants at Mills Manor are unable to pay any rent, and in fact, must depend on the Housing Authority to pay for their utilities.

The authority would be unable to provide that subsidy if they were relocated to new buildings, for which the authority would require rent to help pay the costs of construction, he said.

"You are dealing with people who need us badly," Kirshstein said.

City Council member Esther Tecklenburg said some of the project's tenants are third- and fourth-generation welfare recipients and that their relocation in scattered-site public housing would promote their long-term well-being.

The committee agreed to postpone action on the study for two weeks at her request.

"There might be resources out there that we don't know about," she said. "Something just might happen."

E. P.
6/20/85

Cauthen Advocates Sale Of Robert Mills Manor

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

Residents of Robert Mills Manor and the neighborhood surrounding it would be better served if the public housing project were sold to a private developer, the director of the Preservation Society of Charleston said in a letter to the group's members.

Henry F. Cauthen urged society members to recommend to city and housing authority officials that project tenants be relocated in scattered site public housing throughout the city.

"What a shame not to expand scattered housing to give those people a real chance — not keep them locked into the present project," he said. "And what an opportunity for the preservation of those neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Robert Mills Manor."

A committee studying the future of the housing project generally agreed earlier this month that it should be renovated and maintained as public housing. Donald J. Cameron, housing authority director, said Wednesday that the committee probably will meet early next month and make a recommendation to the Housing Authority and City Council.

Cameron said members of the Preservation Society and residents of Harleston Village have expressed much interest in the project since the committee received a consultant's study that showed that its sale would not generate enough money to build replacement housing.

The study showed that sale of the project would bring $4-$5 million. New housing for the tenants of the 267-apartment project would cost about $11 million.

John Hildreth of the Preservation Society said Wednesday that the organization is concerned about the project's residents as well as the renovation of both the project and houses in the surrounding neighborhood.

"What we want to do is find a better alternative, not only for the neighborhood but for the people who live there (Robert Mills Manor)," Hildreth said.

To renovate the project as public housing probably would require a long-term loan from the federal government, requiring it to remain as public housing for about 20 years, Cameron said earlier this month.

City Council and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city instead of large projects often perceived as welfare enclaves.

Preservation Society Members Urged To Act

Cauthen Seeks Sale Of Robert Mills Manor

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

Robert Mills Manor should not be maintained as public housing, but sold and renovated by a private developer, the director of the Preservation Society of Charleston said in a letter to the group's members.

Henry F. Cauthen urged society members to contact city and housing authority officials to recommend the project tenants be relocated in scattered site public housing throughout the city.

"This renovation is now being considered," Cauthen said in the letter. "If this is done it will lock us into keeping the project as a 'project' for the next 20 years."

"What a shame not to expand scattered housing to give those people a real chance — not keep them locked into the present project," he said. "And what an opportunity for the preservation of those neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Robert Mills Manor."

A committee studying the future of the housing project generally agreed earlier this month that it should be renovated and maintained as public housing. Donald J. Cameron, housing authority director, said Wednesday that the committee will probably meet early next month and make a recommendation to the Housing Authority and City Council.

Henry
F. Cauthen

Cameron said members of the Preservation Society and residents of Harleston Village have both expressed much interest in the project since the committee received a consultant's study that showed that its sale would not generate enough money to build replacement housing.

The study showed that sale of the project would bring \$4-\$5 million. New housing for the tenants of the 267-apartment project would cost about \$11 million.

John Hildreth of the Preservation Society said Wednesday the organization is concerned with the project's residents as well as the renovation of both the project and houses in the neighborhood.

"What we want to do is find a better alternative, not only for the neighborhood but for the people who live there (Robert Mills Manor)," Hildreth said.

City Council and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city so occupants can more easily function as part of the community, rather than as residents of what is often perceived as a welfare enclave.

N/C
6-20-85

THE EVENING POST
Founded Oct. 1, 1894
BARBARA S. WILLIAMS, Editor
W. D. CHAMBERLAIN, Assistant Editor
CHARLESTON, S.C., FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1985

E/P
June 21, 1985

Editorials

Chance Of A Lifetime

The city of Charleston and the Charleston Housing Authority have the opportunity of a lifetime. It finally is within the power of the two public bodies to convert Robert Mills Manor, one of the oldest downtown public housing projects, into a tax-paying asset to the community and, at the same time, improve the quality of life of the current residents. It's an opportunity that shouldn't be allowed to pass without exploring every option.

The chance to do something positive for all concerned is at hand because the 40-year federal debt on the project — built in 1939 — has been repaid. As a result, the obligation to limit the occupancy to low-income families has expired. But if the property ceases to be used for public housing, it reverts to the city. That's why both bodies are wrestling with the decision on the future of the project.

The fact is experience has shown that high-density public housing projects such as Robert Mills Manor aren't in anyone's best interest. Instead, the new approach in the city is a concept called scattered-site housing that involves small-scale projects of 15 to 20 units. The early indications are that this new approach has produced even greater benefits than anticipated. We hear reports of changes in lifestyle that include the decisions by some residents to go back to school. That's the chief reason city council member Esther Tecklenburg is opposed to spending some $4 million on renovations of the crumbling housing project, thus locking the residents into the same kind of environment for another 20 years. There are, she noted at one meeting, third- and fourth-generation welfare recipients in the housing project whose chances of breaking out of that cycle would be vastly improved by relocation.

The problem, it seems, is that a study done for the city on the conversion alternatives showed a big gap between what the project could be sold for on the private market and what it would cost to provide the relocation housing. The study estimates that the preferred alternative — which would reduce the density from 231 to 165 units through demolition of several buildings — could bring the city some $4.2 million. Estimates are that replacement housing for all the residents would cost between $10 million and $11 million.

But not all of those involved are convinced those figures are the bottom line. The estimate on replacement housing, for example, admittedly is on the high side. Further, some also question whether the estimated value of the Harleston Village site (bounded by Logan, Smith, Queen and Beaufain streets) to developers isn't on the low side. We also suspect a whole array of financing options is available for such a worthwhile project, including some private grants.

The study does make one thing clear. The density of the complex needs to be reduced regardless of who lives there. Further, the study anticipates that some of the project's Smith Street units would be retained for public housing as a part of the scattered-site concept. Mrs. Teckleburg advises us she has had more mail and telephone calls urging some positive changes at Robert Mills Manor than on any other issue during her six years on council.

The public interest and concern mandates that officials not rush into anything. There's no reason we can think of that a committee now studying the matter has to make a recommendation immediately. Let's put some of the community's wisest heads to work on coming up with a solution that goes far beyond maintaining the status quo.

N&C 6/26/85

Letters To The Editor

Dilemma Of Robert Mills Manor

According to an article in the June 6 News and Courier by reporter Charles Rowe, a study contracted by the City of Charleston shows that the sale of Robert Mills Manor would not generate enough money to build new public housing for the tenants who would be displaced. The city contracted the study to see if most of the project could be renovated and sold as private dwellings. Officials hoped its sale would bring enough to build public housing units at various sites throughout the city, but they have decided now that the project should be renovated and continue to be used as public housing.

Robert Mills Manor is located in a prime central location in downtown Charleston within walking distance of both King and Broad streets and it would appeal to young middle-income people if the units were sold as individual dwellings. The sale certainly would increase the desirability of the surrounding neighborhoods by creating incentives to restore the historic buildings in the nearby streets and thus cause the tax base to increase.

The city has won national awards for its scattered site housing and by continuing this process we could become a national model. The June 6 article also says that the city and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city so that its occupants can more easily function as part of the community rather than as residents of what is perceived as a welfare enclave. However renovating the Manor for public housing would keep the project as a project.

According to the article in the paper it will cost $4 million to renovate the existing property and $11 million to replace it elsewhere. However, the property could be sold to private individuals for between $4 and $5 million leaving about $2 million needed for replacement elsewhere in a less "tax valuable" neighborhood. In addition, of course, it would be put on the tax books.

The city is proposing to build a Marine Museum for at least $6 to $8 million, though the cost probably will run much higher. Could not this project be put off for a time and some of the money be used to help defray the cost of relocating the Mills Manor residents? Let us take care of our poor people before we consider building a Marine Museum in downtown Charleston. First things should come first.

W. CARSTEN WULBERN
33 State St.

June 20, 1985

Saturday
June 29, 1985

Tenants at Mills Manor oppose sale of project

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

The president of the tenant association at Robert Mills Manor said that group is strongly opposed to a proposal to sell the public housing project for renovation as private housing.

The association believes the project should instead be renovated for its present tenants, Barbara Green said. The association has taken a position against the sale of the project since it was initially proposed in late 1983, she said.

"I think the tenants should have something to say about it," she said. "They had a committee to study this, and it didn't have a single representative from the tenants on it."

"How can somebody recommend what I need when they don't ask me what I need?" she said.

Donald J. Cameron, director of the housing authority, acknowledged that the committee, appointed by Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. to study the sale of the project, did not include a tenant representative.

He said, however, that he has maintained contact with the tenant group during the past year and kept them apprised of the committee's progress. He said tenants were told they would become more involved in plans for the project when the matter was opened for public review.

Mrs. Green has lived in the project for 14 years, and said many of its residents have called it home for at least as long as she has. Most have said they would like to remain in the project if it were renovated, she said.

Cameron said the renovation of Mills Manor would require the authority to make a long commitment to a project of a type it no longer supports. Renovation of the 50-year-old project would cost about $4 million, and would take a long-term loan from the federal government requiring it remain as public housing for about 20 years, he said.

City Council and the Housing Authority are committed to building public housing in small sites throughout the city, instead of large projects that can be perceived as welfare enclaves.

A consultant's study showed that sale of the

See Mills Manor, Page 2-A

...Mills Manor tenants

Continued From Page 1-A

project would bring $4-$5 million. New housing for the tenants of the 267-apartment project would cost about $11 million.

A committee studying the future of the project generally agreed earlier this month that neither the housing authority nor the city could provide the additional money needed for replacement housing, and said the project should be renovated and maintained as public housing.

Following that meeting, Henry F. Cauthen, director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, urged that group's members to encourage city officials to sell the project and build scattered site housing for the tenants.

City Councilman Robert Ford said he has received copies of about 40 letters urging him to support the sale of the project. He said, however, he believes it should remain as public housing.

"I don't think that council would ever go along with the sale of the project," Ford said in an interview this week. "In human terms, you can't sell it."

He said many Mills Manor residents have lived in the project for many years, and perhaps have been in the area longer than the residents of nearby neighborhoods who want them to be relocated.

"At one time a lot of whites left the area, and all of a sudden it was convenient for whites to come back," Ford said. "To them it looks like a plight area." The project's ill appearance could be improved, he said, if the city and housing authority would pool resources for its renovation.

Mrs. Green said Robert Mills Manor is the only housing project not to receive large contributions for renovation. She said that aroused her suspicions about the future of the project.

Ben Tillman Homes, another housing project owned by the Charleston Housing Authority, was sold after officials determined that renovations would be too costly, and could not be repaid with rents generated from the project.

The Tillman project provided housing for low-income residents, but its rents were not subsidized by the federal government, and it was not considered public housing.

Editorials & Comments

'The project'

In Charleston author Josephine Humphrey's prize-winning novel "Dreams of Sleep," one of the principal characters lives in a place called "the project."

As all Charlestonians know, "the project" is the term used to describe a public housing complex. "The project" in the book is not identified by name, but it could very well be Robert Mills Manor, one of the oldest public housing complexes in the city.

Robert Mills Manor is in the news again because its future is being hotly debated. A 40-year federal debt has been repaid. The city of Charleston and the Charleston Housing Authority now have an opportunity to shape a new future for the complex. It is located downtown in Harleston Village and recently became, in the words of realtors, an "extremely desirable" residential neighborhood.

With the debt to the federal government out of the way, Robert Mills Manor need no longer be reserved exclusively for low-income tenants. People are, accordingly, suggesting it be sold and its tenants be resettled elsewhere. However, a study by consultants commissioned by the city over a year ago, came to the conclusion that the sale of the complex would bring only $4 to $5 million. New housing for the residents of the 267 apartments would cost about $11 million.

When Charleston City Council approved the study, several black members expressed alarm despite Mayor Riley's assurances that all tenants would be rehoused and that some of the present residents would be able to remain and reap the benefits of the neighborhood's upgraded status. Councilman Jerome Kinloch said bluntly, "I'm very afraid .... There's no foolproof scheme when it comes to the middle class against the poor."

The fear that poor people, most of them black, would lose their homes also is expressed in a letter published elsewhere on this page, which warns of the antisocial consequences of what is called "gentrification."

Josephine Humphreys' novel makes what seems to us the most important point — the clinching argument in any debate about public housing and Robert Mills Manor, in particular. In the novel, "the project" is depicted as a place where people are imprisoned in an environment which works against upward social mobility and an improved standard of living. To live in a "project" is, in a way, to be doomed to be downgraded and never be upgraded.

One of the great achievements of this mayor and his City Council has been the adoption of the concept of "scattered-site" public housing, with 15 to 20 dwellings in each group. The incorporation of a prize-winning architectural design, based on the classic Charleston single house, has made the concept of "scattered-site" public housing even more attractive. The idea is also a return to Charleston tradition. The city is a patchwork quilt of styles, and, originally, also of residents. It is only in comparatively recent times that blacks and whites in the peninsula city have lived in separate neighborhoods.

.. continue

... "The Project"

That is another compelling reason for transforming Robert Mills Manor from a "project" into an upgraded, mixed neighborhood. It is an exciting challenge that deserves the support of both blacks and whites. By using the "scattered site" concept for public housing, the pitfalls of "gentrification" can be overcome. There is nothing wrong with "gentrification" if it means that poor people can enjoy the benefits of an upgraded neighborhood. It is also worth pursuing a proposal that would get Charleston back to its traditional lifestyle, in which black and white residents mingled together.

Council member Esther Tecklenburg, whose district includes Robert Mills Manor and who knows "the project" well, wants to rescue the tenants from being locked into another 20 years of living in a downgraded environment. She has pointed out that there are third- and fourth-generation welfare recipients living there who would have an opportunity to break out of soul-crushing dependency if they were relocated in "scattered site" housing or could respond to the upgrading of the district.

We have purposely left another strong argument in favor of the city accepting the challenge of transforming "the project" into a vital and attractive neighborhood until last.

Henry F. Cauthen, director of the Preservation Society of Charleston, is urging that Robert Mills Manor should be sold "to give (the current tenants) a real chance" and to provide an opportunity "for the preservation of those neighborhoods immediately surrounding" the project. The prospects for preserving the surrounding neighborhoods would be enhanced if "the project" disappeared as such. It is an important issue, but the major priority is improving the way of life of the people who today live in Robert Mills Manor. The challenge that Charleston faces — not just council but all members of this community — is to come up with imaginative proposals that the current tenants of "the project" will recognize as favorable to them. They must be consulted more than they have been so far and they must be given guarantees.

There can be no doubt that, in the long run, it is to everyone's advantage to upgrade the district bounded by Logan, Smith, Queen and Beaufain. It is in the light of long-term betterment rather than short-term yields of cash to a city treasury that debate on how best to achieve that goal must be cast.

Tending as it does to focus concern on the short-term dollars rather than the long-term betterment, the report of the city's consultants is at best unhelpful, at worst misleading. City residents pondering the future of Robert Mills Manor will have to think more deeply than the consultants have and let their imaginations range much farther if they are to resolve the problems of "the project" in a way that all concerned can cheerfully accept.

Robert Mills Manor

I continue to be perplexed by attitudes such as those expressed by Henry Cauthen, president of the Charleston Preservation Society. Mr. Cauthen suggested that it would benefit the needy of this city to sell Robert Mills Manor. That project, of course, now houses hundreds of low and very low income Charleston citizens. It was suggested that scattered site housing would be more beneficial to the residents of Robert Mills Manor. Mr. Cauthen therefore recommended that the project be sold to private developers. I find that proposal both shortsighted and unresponsive to Charleston's needs.

Likewise, Mr. Wulbern's letter on June 26 stated that Robert Mills Manor is in a "prime central location in downtown Charleston." He is correct. However, he continued that the location "would appeal to young middle-income people." Mr. Wulbern is probably right on that point, too. However, the location also appeals to older, low-income people, most of whom have no private transportation and who have made Robert Mills their home for a decade or more. The tenants at Robert Mills have lived with various degrees of dilapidation for as long. The suggestion of both Mr. Cauthen and Mr. Wulbern seems to be now that the area finally appears to have value; we should clean it up for more valuable people. I find that attitude morally bankrupt.

While scattered site housing is certainly an idea whose time has come, it is hardly economically feasible on a large scale at the present time. The Robert Mills Manor is comprised of 267 family units and generally has less than a 5 percent vacancy rate. All project tenants are of low and very low income. There are literally thousands of eligible people in this city waiting for a vacancy in public housing.

If Mr. Wulbern's and Mr. Cauthen's suggestion is to build enough scattered site housing to shelter not only the people at Robert Mills but all of those on the waiting list, then I applaud their recommendations. However, I gleaned from the article on Mr. Cauthen's proposal and Mr. Wulbern's letter that the idea is more to gentrify the area known as Robert Mills Manor. I also abhor ghettos and believe that all neighborhoods should be racially and economically mixed. However, until such time that there is decent, safe and affordable housing for all members of our community, and society in general, there should not be one more unit of public housing lost. The city has already lost hundreds of housing units with the sale of the Ben Tillman homes. That action pushed families who have been waiting for low-income housing for as long as three years, even further down the waiting list.

I recommend, therefore, that instead of removing the units at Robert Mills from the public purview that the City of Charleston renovate the project to provide adequate shelter for the less fortunate as it was built to do. As new scattered site housing is built, those units should be offered to low income families. But only when decent, safe and affordable housing is available to all members of our community should any thought whatsoever be given to demolishing any units that are now meeting some of that need. While I believe that the Preservation Society does an important job for the community, it is time that each of us realize that Charleston does not belong only to its founding fathers but to all its citizens.

DONNA R. TAYLOR
16 Devereaux Ave.

June 25, 1985

N + C
7/18/85

'The Project'

Deciding the fate of Robert Mills Manor will require some courage and insight on the part of our City Council. Recognizing the greater benefits of opportunity for aspiration by fitting tenants into the greater community in smaller units as opposed to condemning them to the eternal treadmill of living in "The Project" will require council members to defy shortsighted criticism from persons of limited vision.

Fortunately for this community we do have representation of a high caliber on council, both black and white, and the opportunity for such enlightened decision-making is at hand. Financial burdens need to be carefully weighed. However, the longstanding blight on the city from the Robert Mills Manor needs to be eradicated. Too long has the "Project" been a thorn in the side of the city, and too long has the black community been given an ill-deserved black eye because of the many incidents stemming from this area. Now is the time to give the city and these tenants a chance to move ahead.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King and Moses, let's let our people go out into the real world of freedom and opportunity.

FRED WICHMANN
17 Lockwood Drive

July 2, 1985

N/C
July 19, 1985

Scattered Site Housing Eyed For Mills Tenants

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

If Robert Mills Manor were sold, replacement public housing would be built west of the Ashley, on James Island or in the Charleston Neck Area as well as on the peninsula, the director of the Charleston Housing Authority said Thursday.

Enough property is available to build a maximum of 75 public housing units on scattered sites on the Charleston peninsula, according to authority Director Donald J. Cameron. That's about one-third of the apartments that would be needed to replace Mills Manor.

Cameron said additional housing would be built at yet-to-be-determined sites in the other three areas.

There are nine West Ashley public housing units and none on James Island. Also, two public housing projects are located in the Neck Area: a 60-unit development on Mount Pleasant Street and Joseph Floyd Manor, a high-rise project for the elderly and handicapped.

A committee of city and housing authority officials are looking at plans to sell the 46-year-old project for renovation as private townhouses if scattered site housing can be built for its tenants. Mills Manor has 267 apartments, of which 38 would be retained as public housing under the sale proposal.

A study has shown, however, that selling the project would raise less than half of the $11 million needed to build new housing for the tenants, and the committee has tentatively recommended against a sale.

Cameron said there are "prime sites" for 50 to 75 scattered-site public housing apartments on the peninsula. A site is considered prime if it is vacant, zoned for construction of multi-family dwellings and requires no demolition of an existing residential structure, he said.


Donald J. Cameron

A prime site must have no realistic expectation of being developed privately and must be of a size for no more than 20-22 units, Cameron said.

Cameron said the authority could not require Mills Manor tenants to move off the peninsula. "You can't morally force people to move eight or 10 miles from where they have lived all their lives," he said.

If Mills Manor were sold, its tenants who want to remain on the peninsula would be relocated in either new housing or existing projects. Presumably, there would be enough interest among tenants of other projects to move to new scattered-site housing off the peninsula, making existing public housing on the peninsula available to all who want it.

See Housing, Page 2-A

...Housing

Continued From Page 1-A

The housing authority has built 113 public housing units based on the traditional Charleston single house at 10 sites throughout the city. Authority officials say scattered-site housing enables tenants to more easily become part of the community, while traditional projects like Mills Manor can become enclaves of low-income residents.

While the housing authority's board of commissioners supports scattered-site housing, Cameron pointed out that it has not taken a position on the proposal to sell Robert Mills Manor and relocate its tenants.

"The board does support assisted housing for all the tenants," Cameron said.

The Mills Manor tenant association opposes sale of the project, and wants it renovated as public housing. The Preservation Society of Charleston supports the project's sale and relocation of its tenants.

E/P July 20, 1985

Scattered Site Housing Eyed For Mills Tenants

By CHARLES ROWE
Post-Courier Reporter

There is available property on the Charleston peninsula to build a maximum of 75 public housing units on scattered sites on the Charleston peninsula, says Charleston Housing Authority Director Donald J. Cameron.

That's about a third of the apartments that would be needed to replace those at Robert Mills Manor if it were sold. Cameron said additional housing would be built on yet-to-be-determined sites in the West Ashley area, on James Island or in the Neck Area.

There are nine public housing units in the West Ashley area and none on James Island. There are two public housing projects on the Neck: a 60-unit development on Mount Pleasant Street; and Joseph Floyd Manor, a high-rise project for elderly people.

A committee of city and housing authority officials are looking at plans to sell the 46-year-old project for renovation as private townhouses if scattered site housing can be built for its tenants. The project has 267 apartments, of which 38 would be retained as public housing under the proposal for its sale.

A study has shown, however, that the sale of the project would raise less than half of the $11 million needed to build new housing for the tenants and the committee has tentatively recommended against the project's sale.

Cameron said there are "prime sites" for 50 to 75 scattered site public housing apartments on the peninsula. A site is considered prime if it is vacant, zoned for construction of multi-family dwellings and requires no demolition of an existing residential structure, he said.

A prime site must have no realistic expectation of being developed privately and must be of a size for no more than 20 to 22 units, Cameron said.

Cameron said the authority could not require Mills Manor tenants tomove off the peninsula. "You can't morally force people to move eight or

Cameron

10 miles from where they have lived all their lives," he said.

If Mills Manor were sold, its tenants who want to remain on the peninsula would be relocated in either new housing or existing projects. Presumably, there would be enough interest among tenants of other projects to move to new scattered site housing off the peninsula, making existing public housing on the peninsula available to all who want it.

The housing authority has built 113 public housing units based on the traditional Charleston single house on 10 sites throughout the city. Authority officials say scattered site housing enables public housing tenants more easily to become part of the community, while traditional public housing projects like Mills Manor can become enclaves of low-income residents.

Although the housing authority's commissioners support scattered site housing, Cameron said they have not taken a position on a proposal to sell Robert Mills Manor and relocate its tenants.

"The board does support assisted housing for all the tenants," Cameron said.

The Mills Manor tenant association opposes sale of the project, and instead wants it renovated as public housing.

Thursday, October 30, 1986 Charleston, S.C.

Mills Manor To Remain Low-Income Project

By H. JANE SHEALY
Post-Courier Reporter

The Housing Authority of the city of Charleston has decided that Robert Mills Manor will remain a low-income project.

The housing authority plans to enter into a 20-year agreement with the federal government. The decision seems to end years of speculation about the future of the 46-year-old federally subsidized apartment complex.

The 267-unit housing project — bounded by Queen, Franklin, Magazine, Wilson and Logan streets and Cromwell Alley — is dilapidated.

Nearby homeowners, who spoke at public hearings earlier this year, asked that all or part of the project be turned over to a private developer and residents relocated to scattered-site housing. They claimed the project damages their property values and houses a criminal element.

Donald J. Cameron, executive director of the housing authority, said Wednesday the decision to maintain the housing project may be an unpopular one, but the board made its decision based on guaranteeing project residents adequate housing and rent subsidies.

Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said he's disappointed that redevelopment of Robert Mills Manor won't result in moving tenants to scattered-site housing, but blames finances, not the board.

Riley said the housing authority and the city are "committed to rehabilitating Robert Mills to make it the finest community it can be." However, the city cannot afford a financial contribution to that rehabilitation.

File Photo

Federal government to continue subsidizing apartment complex.

The decision by board members to maintain the housing project was unanimous and was made at a Sept. 25 board meeting, said Cameron. No notice of the meeting was received by the newspaper, although Cameron said notice was sent.

Cameron said the board considered these options:

- Selling all or part of the housing project with the proceeds going toward replacement housing for tenants.
- Providing a mixed-use development (public housing, market rental, home ownership at market value and home ownership by tenants) with the proceeds from units not subsidized by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development going toward replacement housing.
- Maintaining and rehabilitating the project with a HUD modernization loan.

While admitting that the housing project is "a liability" to Harleston Village, the surrounding neighborhood, Cameron said the project could become an asset with sufficient renovation.

Federal money is tight, but the board plans to apply in February for the HUD modernization loan, Cameron said. While he's optimistic that HUD will supply renovation funds, Cameron said he thinks the money may come in a little bit at a time, forcing the housing authority to renovate piece-meal.

If the loan is approved, money should be available in the fall, Cameron said. The loan will obligate the housing authority to maintain the project for 20 years.

Meanwhile, Cameron said the housing authority staff is working on a management and rehabilitation program to be presented at the January board meeting.

Mills Manor renovations running on time and budget, official says

By CHARLES FRANCIS
Post-Courier Reporter

The first phase of renovations to Robert Mills Manor is on schedule to be completed by June, according to the executive director of the city's Housing Authority.

Donald Cameron said no major problems have arisen during the first phase of the renovation to the housing complex, which is bounded by Queen, Franklin, Magazine, Wilson and Logan streets and Cromwell Alley.

However, renovations at the housing complex were put on hold for several days after lead-based paint was found on windows, doors and shelves in kitchens, Cameron said.

He said items that were painted with lead-base paints have been removed.

Cameron said Phase I includes installing metal doors, wooden screen doors, kitchen cabinets, and electric ignition wall furnaces, as well as replacing windows, broken roof tiles, missing copper gutters. Also, the outside of the buildings have been cleaned and officials are adding a basketball court, playgrounds and parking areas.

The renovations also include demolishing buildings at 4, 6 and 7 Wilson St., and 3 Cromwell Alley, he said. This move will eliminate 47 units — three 3-story, 13-unit buildings on Wilson Street and a one single-story, eight-unit building on Cromwell Alley.

The demolition of the buildings, which were built in 1939 and 1940, should be completed by April, Cameron said.

> 'We made sure that the tenants' move to their new home went as smoothly as possible. We wanted to make sure that everything went OK.'
>
> —**Donald Cameron**

This will reduce the number of units from 267 to 220, he said. Tenants who lived in the demolished buildings have been moved to other housing projects and scattered-site houses in the city.

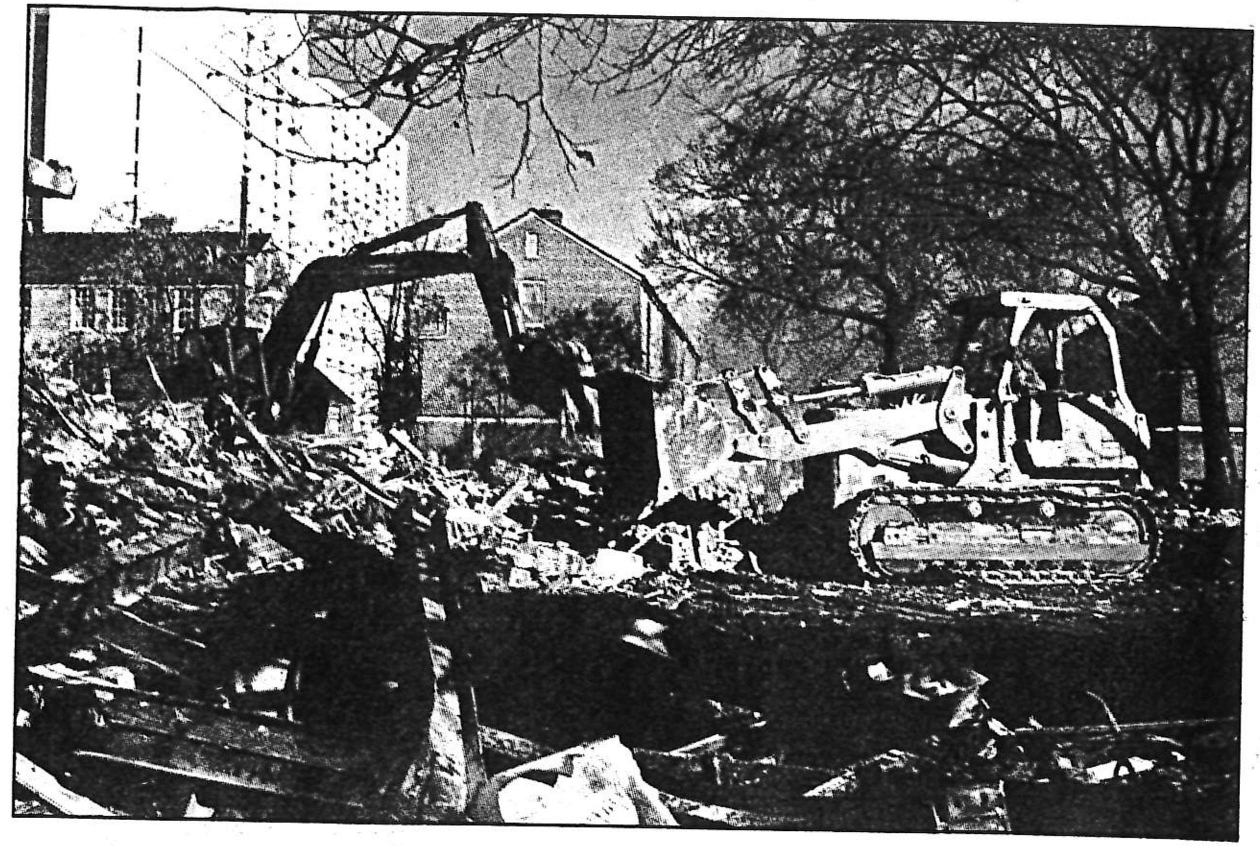
"We made sure that the tenants' move to their new home went as smoothly as possible," Cameron said. "We wanted to make sure that everything went OK."

He said the housing authority discovered during the demolition that asbestos was used to wrap water lines under the housing complex, and the lines will be replaced.

"We didn't anticipate finding asbestos, but it hasn't stopped the work from continuing," Cameron said.

The first phase of the renovation cost $2 million and there hasn't been a cost overrun, he said.

The cost of Phase II is $3.2 million and should begin by the end of the year, Cameron said.



Staff Photo by Charles Francis

A bulldozer and backhoe are used to remove debris at Mills Manor.

Post Courier 1-26-89