

Morristown

College future

Redevelopment plan
includes community
center, new Theatre
Guild home, residences

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(This is the first in a multi-part series of articles dealing with the proposed redevelopment plan for the former Morristown College campus.)

A \$3 million-for-dollar match between a Knoxville real estate developer and the city of Morristown will fund the first phase of a \$6 million redevelopment plan for the former Morristown College campus, officials announced Tuesday.

Morristown Mayor Gary R. Johnson says the long-term goal is for the campus redevelopment to serve as a catalyst to spark business and residential redevelopment of a broad geographical area in central Morristown.

The Morristown City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to approve the letter of agreement

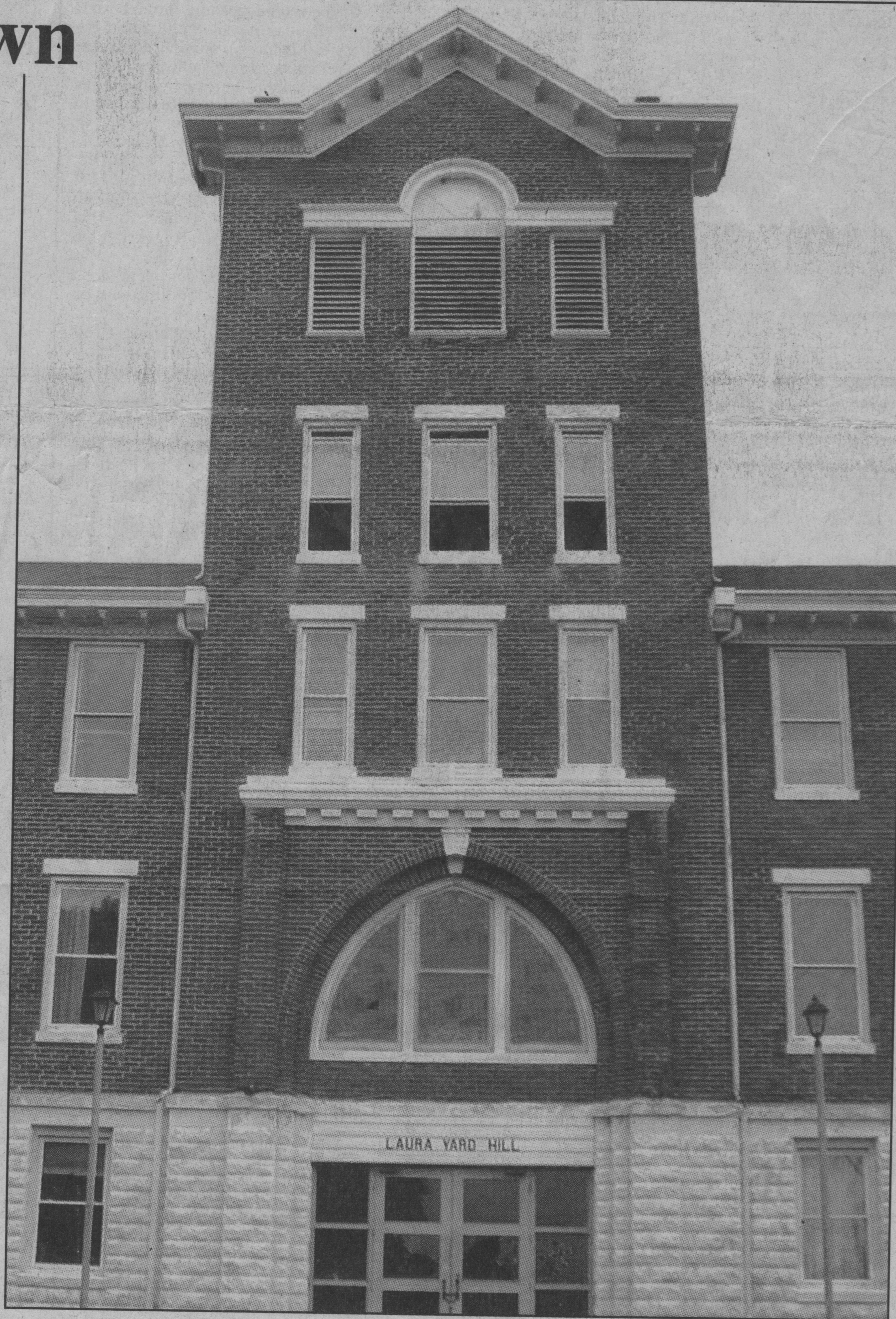
between the city and the developer, Walter Wise, to proceed with the project.

Wise agreed to purchase the 52-acre campus for \$800,000, give the city eight acres to build a community center, weatherize and fence the landscape-dominating Laura Yard Hill Administration Building to prevent further deterioration and either renovate another existing building or spend approximately \$1.8 million on a new office building.

Wise also will foot the bill for planning

For its part, the city will build a \$2.1 million outdoor Olympic-size pool with an adjoining children's pool and pay \$600,000 to build a lighted and landscaped boulevard from North Cumberland Street across the campus.

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Chuck Hale/Citizen Tribune

After months of negotiations, the Morristown City Council and a Knoxville real estate developer have announced a redevelopment plan for the former Morristown College campus that includes a new community center, new home for the Theatre Guild Inc. and extensive commercial and residential development on the 52-acre site.



Artist rendering provided by The Bullock Group

Above, this is a tentative development plan for the former Morristown College campus. Knoxville real estate developer Walter Wise, who is partnering with the city, says full build-out could take more than 10 years. At right, in an effort to stop additional vandalism at the campus, the administration building will be fenced and patrols of the property will be increased.

College

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expenses and will build entrance columns and a large fountain on the campus to create what he calls a "sense of arrival."

Ultimately, Wise says he plans to spend millions more to develop a "village concept," including residential, office and retail development.

For its part, the city will build a \$2.1 million outdoor Olympic-size pool with an adjoining children's pool and pay \$600,000 to build a lighted and landscaped boulevard from North Cumberland Street across the campus.

The city will use a portion of the Community Development Block Grants it now receives annually to pay debt service for the pool, according to the plan.

Full funding for a community center is not included in the first phase of the project, but the city could use remaining funds to start construction on one of three proposed community center gymnasiums, according to Morristown City Administrator Jim Crumley.

Crumley says construction of the boulevard could begin in approximately six months.

Wise will retain ownership of the administration building, but will allow others to use the

Board of Directors voted last week to relocate its future performances to the 364-seat auditorium inside the administration building.

Renovation of the administration building hinges, in large part, on whether the city receives a \$1.5 million grant this summer, according to Crumley.

He says the improvements to the administration building are expected to cost approximately \$4 million. The Theatre Guild agreed to help raise \$1.5 million to renovate the theater portion of the administration building.

The city will apply a \$650,000 tax credit it will receive to the renovations, leaving more than \$300,000 to be raised by other means, according to Crumley.

The tentative site plan also calls for saving the science building and possibly the gymnasium, dining hall and former boiler house. The dorms, which have burned several times over the past few years, likely will be razed, according to Crumley.

Wise, who has been a real estate developer for 28 years, says he'll be patient about redeveloping the former Morristown College campus, conceding the project could take more than 10 years.

The mayor says Wise's

unique partnership," Johnson said. "It requires that we as a city have a developer that we trust and that has experience and a background, and who — very importantly — is not looking for a quick buck to run in and kind of develop something overnight and run

out with the money.

"And we've found that in Mr. Wise," the mayor added. "Walter knows that it requires that very specific partnership between public and private entities ... The benefits are absolutely limitless, in my opinion."

