

Five developmental phases proposed for Nelson-Merry reconstruction

In 1973, a furniture manufacturer bought Nelson Merry from the East Tennessee Baptist Association and sought a zone change to allow light industrial use. Residents objected because they feared the impact of a factory in the residential area and because they felt the historical location should be preserved. The city bought the property for \$30,000 in 1976.

A citizens group steering committee was formed to investigate the property and propose methods of development. Committee members were Bill Powell, chairman Frieda Burts, *ex officio* representing city council, Alma Crossing, Terry Wayne Foster, Eugene Godwin, E.H. Massie, Tony Mills, Arlene Peck, Mose Reliford and Ken Sparks. This committee enlisted the assistance of the East Tennessee Community Design Center. Four students from the University of Tennessee's school of architecture also assisted in the study.

The outside proposal consists of a site plan describing five development phases. The phases are ordered and broken down so that changes may be made gradually and according to financial demands. Plans for the building include facilities for day care, social service, kitchen, recreation, and related community center activities.

The outdoor site plan is composed of three major areas. The first area is adjacent to the building, which the planners say would be excellent for a playground, situated to be accessible to the day care. A ball field has already been built according to plans. Girls little league teams have used the field this summer.

The second major area proposed for development is a nature trail. The center of the trail has a natural clearing that would be ideal for an amphitheater. All paths lead to this

area, so that it would become the natural focus point. A jogging area is also mentioned in the plans.

A game area is recommended, with plans calling for court games such as tennis, basketball, and volleyball. Picnic areas would be an added feature.

The floor plan pictured illustrates the proposals for the interior of the building.

The proposals have been grouped in phases for implementation. The first phase consists of basic clean up of the area. The softball field will be repositioned, fenced in, and lighted. Plans call for the front of the building to be cut and paved and for a water fountain to be installed next to the ballfield. All water and sewage piping would be done during this phase. Estimated cost of phase one is \$43,710.

In phase two the road in the southwest corner of the site will be cut and paved and specified areas will be cleared and grubbed. A "frontier fort" will be built in the playground area using trees cleared from the site, and all playground equipment will be installed. Phase Two cost is estimated at \$20,380.

The third phase recommendation calls for tennis, basketball and volleyball courts and lower parking areas to be graded. The basketball court and all trails on the property will be paved and the railroad tie stage will be installed in the amphitheater. The cost for this phase is estimated at \$45,692.

Phase four plans recommend that the tennis courts will be completed except for lighting. The planners also recommend that the city acquire a strip of land at the north-east corner of the site, 60 feet wide and about 150 feet long to cut a road to provide access to the bottom of the site. The estimated cost of this phase is \$63,376.

The last phase for the outside area

calls for all paving to be completed and the tennis and basketball courts to be lighted. A small restroom will be built on the lower portion of the property. Total cost for this phase is estimated at \$61,750.

The cost of the outside site work is estimated at 234,908. It is again noted that these and all proposed plans are phased so that they may be carried out as it is financially feasible.

The phasing of work for the inside of the structure is similar to the outside work, calling for general clean up, structural repairs, materials such as doors, walls, carpets, tile, paint, and other construction materials. There are seven phases for the remodeling of the inside; phase C is the least expensive, being estimated at \$29,497 and phase A is estimated at \$52,250. Total estimated for the building repairs are \$252,559. The total estimated cost for both inside and outside work is \$487,467, as of 1977.

City council has authorized certain work to begin on the building. The have voted to renovate the gym until a decision is made about the rest of the building it will be closed. New windows have been in the gym and the building new roof.

Councilman John Gibson said several groups have expressed interest in using the facility. He mentioned the Senior Citizen Neighborhood Center as social service groups that use the building. Gibson said the building would be available for all social services to be added that council will along with recommendation survey described earlier possible.

He also said that will be making routine area in an effort to prevent vandalism.

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MEMBER