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Officials: Residents are ready for Fifth St. plaza

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, January 06, 2009

Greenville residents are ready to turn a Fifth Street parking lot into a plaza-type event space, according to survey results presented at the city's Redevelopment Commission meeting Tuesday night.

Members of Uptown Greenville, a private nonprofit committed to revitalizing and ensuring growth downtown, spent September through November surveying the public through three different methods to determine what locals would like to see in a "Five Points Plaza." The plaza would be situated in the parking lot at the corner of Fifth and Evans streets.

Executive Director Denise Walsh presented the group's findings, and the commission voted that the city should develop a request for proposals to hire a designer.

Respondents said they primarily come downtown to eat at restaurants or attend special events. The advantage of creating a "town square," Walsh said, would be the ability to host more events like the FREEboot Fridays held during East Carolina University football weekends or the annual Uptown Umbrella Market. It also would increase surrounding property values, aid the economy and tourism and encourage social interactions among residents, she said.

In detailing what they would like to see in the space, residents named a number of amenities. The top three were trees for shade, seating space and available parking. Green space, bike racks and a water feature were also mentioned. The top three activities they would like to attend were a farmer's market, musical performances and outdoor movies.

The three survey methods used collected more than 250 responses.

Special care will be taken to ensure parking is not seriously limited by the changes, Walsh said. The survey indicated that 93 percent of respondents were likely to visit other businesses when they came downtown to attend events. Nearly that many respondents, however, also said they would not be interested in volunteering or helping plan activities for the site.

Walsh said that, in creating the presentation, she searched for places that incorporated event space and parking and didn't find many. That, she said, gives Greenville the chance to create something other communities look to for inspiration.

City Planner Carl Rees told the commission that a similar public input project would likely be instituted in the coming months to examine possible improvements and event scheduling for the Town Common.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.
JACQUELYN ASHBY "JACKIE" ODOM

Jacquelyn A. Odom Jacquelyn "Jackie" Ashby Odom passed away from this life on Monday, Jan. 5, 2009, at her home after a short but courageous battle with cancer. A service celebrating her life will be held on Thursday at 2 p.m. in Immanuel Baptist Church on Elm Street. A private burial will follow in Pinewood Memorial Park. Jackie was born December 6, 1943, in Rocky Mount. She graduated from Rocky Mount Senior High School in 1962 and attended East Carolina University. In March of 2005 she retired from East Carolina University with over 30 years of dedicated service to the School of Social Work and Criminal Justice as an Administrative Assistant. Jackie was a member of Immanuel Baptist Church and the Chatham Book Club. She was preceded in death by her parents, Josephine Long Ashby and Frank Thomas Ashby. A devoted and loving mother, she is survived by her three children, Debra Odom Twiss and husband, Michael, of Wake Forest, Sherri Lynn Odom, of Winterville, and George H. Odom III and wife, Ashley, of Greenville; five grandchildren, Ryan Walter Twiss, Tyler Lynn Twiss, and Kyle Joseph Twiss, all of Wake Forest, Mackenzie Gray Odom, of Greenville, and Kyndell Ashby Odorn, of Winterville; and sisters, Judy Ashby Perry and husband, Pete, of Greenville, and Mary Jo Ashby Collins and husband, Bruce, of Burlington. The family will receive friends at the church one hour prior to the service. Memorial contributions may be made to University Health Systems Hospice Care, P.O. Box 6028, Greenville, NC 27835-9978. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

Published in The Daily Reflector on 1/7/2009
Keeping N.C. colleges affordable

Comment on this story

Your Jan. 2 editorial "Still a bargain?" questioned how affordable our public universities really are today for most North Carolina families. The doubts raised were based in part on a 2008 report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education that gave 49 of the 50 states (including North Carolina) an "F" for affordability.

As your editorial acknowledged, the center's report graded states -- not institutions -- and costs for all public and private colleges and universities were included in its analysis. Despite the misleading grade of "F," the center's own data show that North Carolina ranks 4 among the 50 states in overall affordability. In fact, data show that since the center's last report in 2006, the amount paid by families of the neediest students attending a UNC campus has actually declined on average by 19.4 percent, or $1,327 per year.

We are absolutely committed to doing all within our power to keep the cost of attending a UNC campus affordable, without sacrificing academic quality. The General Assembly must retain the principal responsibility for funding the needs of the university system. Tuition and fees have always been -- and must remain -- secondary sources of funding. That is why, for example, the UNC Board of Governors adopted a multi-year plan designed to slow increases in tuition and fees. For 2008-09, the average increase in tuition for all of our campuses was 1.2 percent. When all fees were included, this average increase was only 2.1 percent -- significantly below inflation. Because tuition and fees account for only part of the cost of attending college, the board has also set the clear expectation that every campus take real and aggressive steps to control the rising cost of textbooks.

I am and have been described as an advocate of low tuition. I'm proud of that, but I should stress that while we have cut expenses in many administrative areas by $138 million over the past two years to become more efficient and effective, and while we have clearly held tuition costs down, we all recognize that low tuition without high quality is no bargain for anyone -- not our students, not our communities and not the taxpayers. We must provide a quality education to our students if they are to be successful in today's knowledge-based global economy.

With the strong support of the General Assembly, we have vastly increased the pool of need-based financial aid for North Carolina students in recent years. The UNC Need-Based Grant Program now makes more than $116.4 million available to eligible in-state students, up from just $1.3 million in 1999-2000. With federal and state need-based aid, EARN grants and campus-based aid, most students in North Carolina living under 200 percent of the poverty line (about $42,000 for a family of four) can now afford to graduate from college with little or no debt. While too little grant aid is currently available for students from families above that income threshold, we are working hard to enlarge the pool of funds for middle-income students.

Erskine Bowles
President, UNC System
Chapel Hill

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The length limit was waived to permit a fuller response to the editorial.

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State OKs speedier bond sales

Universities, prisons, museums and smaller projects will benefit from $742 million

MARK JOHNSON, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

RALEIGH - The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences grows larger. N.C. State University gets a new library. Prisoners get more cells, and the N.C. Zoo's polar bears get a new home.

And it will all happen a little sooner than initially planned.

In one of his last acts as chief executive, Gov. Mike Easley on Monday pushed through approval of an accelerated schedule to sell $742 million in bonds for university buildings, prisons, museums and smaller projects around the state, such as an oyster hatchery.

The legislature previously approved the projects, and Easley proposed the expedited schedule in November. The Council of State, made up of the governor and other elected executive branch officials, voted Monday to speed up the bond sales in hopes that the construction will generate thousands of jobs and ease the pain of a sagging economy.

"It has a huge ripple effect," Easley, a Democrat, told the council. "Thirty days [sooner] makes a whole lot of difference if you're out of a job."

State Auditor Les Merritt, a Republican, questioned the idea of speeding up the accumulation of debt that was approved months ago, in a different economy.

"We have a lot of projects that were voted on [by the legislature] in a bright-looking picture, and now the picture isn't so bright," Merritt said.

Sixty-five million dollars of the new debt will be issued this spring. Approximately $258 million in bonds likely will be sold in the fall and the rest in succeeding years.

Easley said the plan allows the state to raise a large amount of money and start construction while not having to start paying down the debt until the end of 2009, when the economy likely will be recovering.

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FAST-TRACK FINANCING

Construction in the Triangle that will speed up thanks to Monday's decision includes:
* Green Square Complex (N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences and Department of Environment and Natural Resources) -- $107 million
* N.C. Central University, School of Nursing building -- $24.5 million
* N.C. State University, Centennial Campus library -- $109.1 million
* N.C. State University, 4-H Campus Improvements -- $4 million
* UNC-Chapel Hill, dental school addition -- $69 million
* UNC system, land acquisitions -- $10 million

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Basketball season is over for Kay Yow

Fight with cancer prompts 'one of the hardest decisions'

EDWARD G. ROBINSON III, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

Kay Yow, the only full-time women's basketball coach N.C. State has known, made one of the toughest decisions of her 38-year professional career Tuesday, taking a leave of absence for the rest of the season.
Yow, who has long battled breast cancer, said she does not have the energy to coach at the standard she deems necessary. She will revisit the decision at the end of the season.

In a university statement, Yow, 66, said Tuesday: "Stepping away from coaching is one of the hardest decisions I have had to make, but I have great confidence in the experienced staff I have been working with for such a long time and the character of everyone involved in the program to respond positively to my decision."

Yow's decision came after she missed her fourth game this season on Sunday and 15 days after she missed her first game Dec. 22. At the time, with her team at the end of a five-day road trip, she said she wasn't well enough to coach. Later, she said low energy was preventing her from returning to the bench and she needed to rest at her Cary home.

Associate head coach Stephanie Glance will coach in Yow's absence, a role she filled during the 2006-07 season when Yow took a 16-game leave of absence to address her breast cancer.

Entering this season, Yow, who has 737 victories -- sixth most in NCAA women's basketball history -- suffered a setback as a change in medication put her in the hospital. She bounced back and, despite a slowness in her stride, was leading a young, injury-depleted team that had to find its way with one senior.

She dealt with her team the only way she knows: hands on, to the point, teaching.

Last month, wearing black sweatpants and sweatshirt, Yow shouted instructions.

"Hands, hands," Yow instructed, spreading her arms wide as though she were defending.

Yow then stood, arms folded, at the baseline, looking for weaknesses. She took a step closer, then another, almost entering into the action and was nearly hit by a player.

She laughed.

**A characteristic move**

Yow has often pushed through treatments, overcoming chemotherapy's side effects to stand with her team. Last season, she did not miss a game.

It came as no surprise to those who know Yow that she would pick the eve of the opening of the ACC schedule to step aside so she would not become a distraction for her team.

"The timing of it is vintage Kay," said Nora Lynn Finch, the ACC associate commissioner for women's basketball operations and former N.C. State administrator.

State, which has eight wins and seven losses, plays its first ACC game on Sunday at No. 2-ranked North Carolina.

"I know Kay's doing what's best for her team," North Carolina coach Sylvia Hatchell said. "That's her top priority."

Yow, who is in her 34th season as coach of the Pack, has coached with metastatic breast cancer since late 2004.

N.C. State athletic director Lee Fowler said in a statement that Yow had his full support: "Our number one concern right now is the health and well-being of Coach Yow."

Glance said in an interview last week that the staff and players wanted Yow to rest and recover so that she felt better for herself, not so she could return to coach.

She said Yow, who has listened to games on the radio when she was absent, was in high spirits.
"Things are serious," Glance said. "She's very realistic about things, but she is the ultimate optimist. That's the way she approaches life."

Yow's long-time oncologist, Dr. Mark Graham, said Saturday that the Hall of Fame coach had not experienced any "radical" changes. He said that cold temperatures in New York during the team's five-game road trip could have "magnified" normal symptoms that are usually tolerable.

Graham said in a statement on Tuesday that his best advice for Yow was "to focus on her disease and its treatment, which she will need to do for the foreseeable future."

In January 2007, Yow returned to the bench after missing 16 games, inspiring her team's dramatic run to the NCAA Tournament round of 16. Weary, flanked by her doctor and a nurse, she found the strength to travel with her team to Fresno, Calif.

**Show of strength**

Tuesday's announcement came in contrast to what State fans and players had seen this season. And it was a reminder of something they do not wish to think about.

"It's always in the back of your head, 'Is this it,' " former N.C. State player Khadijah Whittington said. "But now I just pray for her. I know she will pull through. She's a strong lady."

In her statement, Yow gave a glimpse of that strength.

"Even though I don't feel well enough to coach, I'm hopeful to feel well enough to attend some ACC games and show my support for the team as well as N.C. State University," she said. "I appreciate the thoughts and prayers of so many people and I'm grateful for the outpouring of support."

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**KAY YOW CHRONOLOGY**

1975 -- Hired as N.C. State's first full-time women's basketball coach and athletics coordinator.
1978 -- Leads NCSU to the regular-season ACC title.
1980 -- NCSU wins its first ACC Tournament championship
1987 -- Diagnosed with breast cancer and undergoes partial radical mastectomy.
1989 -- Inducted into the N.C. Sports Hall of Fame.
2002 -- Inducted into James Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.
2004 -- Has recurrence of breast cancer and has tumor removed.
January 2005 -- Takes break from team to undergo a dietary and nutritional modification program.
July 2005 -- Has two more tumors removed.
NOVEMBER 2006 -- Takes 16-game leave of absence four games into the season because of progression of the disease.

JAN. 25, 2007 -- Returns to team as Pack beats Virginia.

JANUARY 2008 -- Yow stops receiving chemotherapy and switches to hormonal treatments.

DEC. 2008 -- Misses first of four straight games, citing lack of energy.

TUESDAY -- Announces she will not coach for the rest of the season.

COMPILED BY BROOKE CAIN

**Related Content**

- Send a message to Yow
- Tudor: Expect Yow to keep leading and fighting
- Reactions to Yow’s leave

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Expect Yow to keep leading and fighting

CAULTON TUDOR, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

Kay Yow is out of coaching on the sideline for a while, but she's not through motivating.

The battling spirit that the N.C. State women's basketball coach has instilled in cancer patients far and near will continue to serve as a rallying point for this team and throngs of folks who never played in a game or even tried out for a team.

Long-term, that will be Yow's legacy. But short-term, it will be her game plan, and she's not one to dodge her own coaching advice, which always has been a message of hope and determination.

That's not just my opinion.

It's also shared by her sister, Maryland athletic director Debbie Yow, who a couple of years back summed up Kay Yow's essence in a manner that only a family member can fully appreciate.

"Kay," Debbie said, "is the most committed individual you'll ever run across. There's never been one ounce of quit in her, and never will be. She's never seen a hurdle that she's not completely convinced she won't clear."

When State announced Tuesday that the 66-year-old Hall of Fame coach probably would not return to the court for the rest of this season, almost everyone imagined the worst possible final scenario.

Not me.
I see Coach Yow fighting on.
I see her in that red jacket with the pink breast-cancer ribbon on her lapel.
I see her yelling at a referee and standing chin-to-chin with UNC’s Sylvia Hatchell at courtside.
I see her looking up in the stands and doing that little wolf signal to the fan base she built from zero.
I see her still yelling at some lax player to get back much quicker on defense.
But more than anything else, I see her image of the future -- a time when little girls in North Carolina might as easily ask Santa Claus for a basketball as a baby doll.
A few years back, I asked Yow what she wanted to do with her life. The answer was classic: "Everything I possibly can to help other people."
Whether she returns or not, we all should be so fortunate.
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What they're saying

Comment on this story

Reaction to N.C. state women's coach Kay Yow taking a leave of absence for the rest of the season

"Being a cancer survivor, I completely understand not exactly what's she's going through, but I understand parts of what's she's been through. I think that this journey that she's going through right now has to be her own. She has to find her own way through this. I support everything that's she's doing."

"It will be a devastating loss not to have her on the sideline at N.C. State, but in so many ways she's there anyway. I don't think there will ever be a game or a practice or a workout that she doesn't actually attend if not in body then in spirit."

Debbie Ryan, Virginia coach

"She keeps on. Every time it comes back, she's gone after it and been the one to come out on top. So I know she's fighting now as hard as ever."

Sylvia Hatchell, North Carolina coach
"The most difficult [decision] of her professional career because she loves those kids.

"When you come on to play at N.C. State -- it's a wonderful university and you'll get a first-class education -- but you signed on to play there because you want to be with Coach Yow.

"You want to learn from her, basketball and life lessons."

Debbie Antonelli, broadcast analyst and former player

"She's putting the team and her staff ahead of herself. That's just the way Kay lives. ... She really does not want the focus to be on her. ... She's not wanting to detract or distract them."

Nora Lynn Finch, ACC associate commissioner for women's basketball operations

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