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'Southside is rising': Two key projects break ground

Yusuf Davis; For the Journal-Constitution

The friendly discussion lately between Atlanta City Council members Derrick Boazman and Michael Bond is over a project is bigger.

Measured by size, Boazman (38 acres) has him beat. Measured by value, Bond (\$140 million) comes out on top.

Boazman and Mayor Bill Campbell mounted bulldozers last week to kick off the demolition of Lakewood Village Apartments to make room for the construction of **Park Place South**, in Boazman's district.

The \$68 million development along Pryor Road will include 534 single-family homes, a 100-unit residential center for senior citizens and a community center with a park and swimming pool.

In Bond's district, a groundbreaking for the Historic West End Village, a residential and retail development on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive across from Paschal's will be held next month. The first project under construction will be a F&W grocery store.

Park Place South is a private development sponsored jointly by the Atlanta Development Authority, Lakewood Park LLC and New Pryor Development LLC. It is financed by Fannie Mae and SunTrust Bank. Occupancy is expected in the spring of 2002.

Mae Ola McCoy, who witnessed the demolition of the dilapidated apartments, applauded the reconstruction project.

"It will help clean up our neighborhood and make it like it used to be," said McCoy, who has lived in the neighborhood for 57 years.

Boazman said the last residents moved out of the 90-unit development in February, but the properties had been a "level of distress" for nearly 10 years.

Neighbors described the one-story brick apartments as "an eyesore" representing "a community under siege by drugs and crime."

"I'm glad they're knocking it down," said Curtis Owens, a neighborhood resident for 18 years. "It was really drug-ridden and it's kind of bad when kids live in a neighborhood like this."

Word from political and business leaders is that "the Southside is rising."

The Pryor Road development complements other revitalization efforts in the Southside area, including the Village Square, a mixed-used development and Highpoint, a new residential community.

"We're taking the Southside back," the mayor said. "It all starts with housing."

Photo: Demolition equipment attacks the run-down Lakewood Village Apartments to make room for the construction of **Park Place South**. / JOHN SPINK / Staff