

## Richland Council Race

# Housing Misconceptions Key Issue

By FRAN ZUPAN  
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Small, scattered public housing projects and more public education to clear up misconceptions about public housing are two steps many of the 22 candidates for Richland County Council suggest to solve the county's public housing problems.

The current council in August rejected five sites of about 50 units each and sent the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) and the county's citizens advisory committee back to the drawing board to search for other sites.

Most recently CHA officials have been looking for sites for as few as 10 units, something many of the council candidates favor.

Virtually all of the council candidates interviewed said the county should provide public, low-cost housing. Some disagreed about how it should be done.

Democrat W. D. "Son" Grimsley said he would favor units for two or three families because large complexes take away the tenants' individuality.

Republicans Ray Kenner and Dr. Warren K. Giese said the county should look into purchasing more repossessed 235 houses.

Democrat James C. Leventis said the council should ask people in some areas if they would like a small complex of units.

"At the town meeting in Gadsden, some people said they'd like to have a housing project," Leventis said.

Republican Charlotte LeGrand said 10 two-bedroom units to house a maximum of four people each on the fringe of good neighborhoods wouldn't be disruptive to communities.

Mrs. LeGrand said she has conducted tours of the current public housing projects for visitors from all over the nation.

"Even the largest ones received compliments for their quality and maintenance," she said.

But the average homeowner in Columbia has misconceptions about public housing and cringes at the thought of a low-income project in his neighborhood, many of the candidates said. Some said private projects have given low-income housing a bad image.

"It's up to public officials to correct these misconceptions," Democrat Candy Waites said.

"Maybe more public education would help," Republican Jim Tobias agreed. "I've seen the architect's plans (for the proposed projects). They look like garden apartments."

Democrat A. T. Butler Sr. said small complexes would be absorbed into the surrounding neighborhoods.

"I have three housing pro-

jects near me right now and they don't run so bad," Butler said. "Some are making pretty good neighbors."

Democrat Dr. Frank Harrison said he thinks the county should upgrade the public housing it has now and added he wants to be shown public housing won't lower the values of surrounding properties.

But whatever council does, it should "bite the bullet one way or another," Harrison said. "To keep stalling is wrong."

Several of the candidates noted that public housing projects already exist adjacent to Forest Hills and Shandon, and that property values have remained high in these two neighborhoods.

A couple of candidates said the county should worry about providing public housing first and meeting the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) guidelines for the housing second.

"It's almost impossible to find sites to meet all the criteria," incumbent Warren Giese said. "Washington is asking for the millennium."

Republican Bill Otis Jr. talked along similar lines, calling the HUD requirements, "a social experiment."

"HUD wants to put public housing where it's never gone before," Otis said. "While that's a good aim, the first objective should be to get public housing for the citizens."

Ray Kenner said families who live in public housing should be required to pay the accumulated rent in full plus interest when they can afford it.

"Our government is only a large business," he said.

Candy Waites and John R. Harper II mentioned long-range planning as one solution to housing problems. Mrs. Waites said areas should be set aside for public housing in land use plans.

Harper said the county should have a comprehensive housing plan rather than attacking the problem on a "fire-fighting" basis.

Democratic candidates who



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suggest construction of small and/or scattered projects include Jim Barber, Candy Waites, A. T. Butler Sr., Susie Newman, Jim Leventis, James W. "Chip" Cothran, Julius Murray and John R. Harper.

Republican candidates who

suggest construction of small and/or scattered projects include Rudy Barnes Jr., Jim Tobias, Mac Ogburn Jr., Bill Otis Jr., John Lazur and Charlotte LeGrand.

Democrat Jimmy Bales said he thinks the citizens committee should have held hearings to receive public input before sites were announced.

Republican Dr. Paul Watson Jr. said he didn't have

enough information on the subject to comment, except to say that "individual property rights should be assured."

Republican Howard Nilson said projects like those built by the CHA in the past would be a "definite asset" and an "investment in the future."

Republican Mooney Player declined to be interviewed because he said he isn't actively campaigning for the council job.