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CHURCH PLANNING 106-ACRE CAMPUS

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Bible Way Church of Atlas Road plans to build a 106-acre campus in Lower Richland that would include homes, businesses and recreation facilities.

The church purchased about 103 acres near Atlas and Bluff roads for \$2.6 million from the Burwell D. Manning Jr. family in late October. Some of the land was donated in return for tax credits.

Church officials plan to discuss the project with county officials this week. County Council likely would have to approve zoning and subdivision changes.

The project would feature Congaree Pointe, a mixed-use project of more than 500 homes, a 30-acre recreational facility, and a 24,000-square-foot commercial and medical complex. A hotel also is planned.

The church also plans to build a new worship center and performing arts building along Atlas Road.

The Bluff Road corridor has struggled to attract new development as many new neighborhoods and stores have located along the Garners Ferry Road corridor in Lower Richland.

The project would be one of the largest developments planned for Lower Richland. It would rival a 500-plus home project being developed by The Mungo Co. on about 200 acres on Lower Richland Boulevard.

Burroughs & Chapin's plans to build its Green Diamond development on Bluff Road, directly across the street from the project, failed because much of the B&C property along the river had a potential for flooding.

Church leaders, including the Rev. Darrell Jackson, announced the project during the 11 a.m. Sunday worship service.

"God has blessed us," Jackson told the congregation. "Let us roll up our sleeves, let us imagine, let us get ready to turn the world upside down."

The announcement coincided with the 10th anniversary of Jackson's leadership. He followed his late father, the Rev. Andrew Jackson, as senior pastor in 1996.

"Our thinking was if we did not buy it and develop it, someone else will, and they would develop it in a way that would not be beneficial to the community," Jackson said Monday.

The church's Midlands Community Development Corporation is working with Hallmark Homes International Inc. to build the neighborhood.

Darrell Strother of Hallmark Homes said he does not know the total development cost.

As the son of a Baptist preacher, Strother said he understood the spiritual magnitude of such a venture, and as a developer, he knows the economic potential.

"As a developer, I'm always looking for good plans," he said. "The truth is the Lower Richland community, the southeast side of Columbia, we recognize has some huge potential for growth."

The project will be targeted to seniors, families and singles and will offer a variety of homes - in four subdivisions - ranging from \$135,000 to \$180,000.

Builders expect to begin clearing land in January. The first homes should be ready by fall of 2007, and the development should be complete in three years.

The Midlands Community Development Corporation received about \$600,000 this year from the state Legislature to finance a medical park, Jackson said.

Church officials are expected to discuss the project with Richland County planners this week.

Last year, county consultants completed a master plan to help attract and manage growth along a stretch of the Garners Ferry Road corridor in Lower Richland. The plan did not include the Bluff Road corridor.

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ABOUT BIBLE WAY CHURCH

- Founded October 1963 by the Rev. Andrew Jackson
- About 9,000 members as of July 2006
- Worship center seats 2,500; sanctuary seats 1,200
- Other buildings include the A.C. Wellness Center and the C.R. Neal Dream Center, which offers job training, educational resources and after-school youth programs
- The Midlands Community Development Cooperation, a nonprofit company, began in 1998 to promote community development

SOURCE: Bible Way Church of Atlas Road Web site

CONGAREE POINTE: BY THE NUMBERS

- \$2.6 million
- How much Bible Way Church of Atlas Road paid the Manning family for 103 acres
- 103: Acres included in the project; three acres were already owned by the church
- 4: Number of subdivisions planned
- 500: Number of homes planned
- \$135,000 to \$180,000: Estimated price range of homes
- 24,000: Square footage of commercial and medical complex

*Caption: Congaree Pointe*MAP: COLOR

Memo:

"About Bible Way Church" and "Congaree Pointe: By the Numbers" info boxes at end of story.

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