

OUR VIEW

Westside Glory?

Strategic planning can be a cumbersome and lengthy process. Residents on the Westside would be well advised not to be lax as the city seeks input and formulates a master plan for their communities. This is the time that your voice can be heard about the future of the Westside.

In recent weeks, the Westside has been the focus of the city of Las Vegas's Planning and Development Department. Along with putting together a priority list for the West Las Vegas Plan, a pilot program was launched with the aim of revitalization and encouraging residents to address housing code regulations.

There have been a series of meetings to discuss development on the Westside. Councilman Lawrence Weekly and Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates attended the most recent meeting, along with Chauncy Moore, chief operating officer of the New Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino Development Corp.

Not too long ago, the Sentinel-Voice reported on these pages that the new owners of the Moulin Rouge had put together a \$200-million plan to redevelop the historic Westside site. At once, the sum would seem untenable, but in the realm of development, where public and private partnerships navigate with a variety of incentives, gathering dollars for such major projects is commonplace.

Tax abatements, low-interest loans, city, state and federal grants, Tax Increment Financing, the so-called TIF, are just a few of the ways the city can entice developers. The city can also appropriate funds for infrastructure improvements from the annual budget, designating projects for roads, sidewalks and sewers.

For sure, business is the American way and few venture alone. The private sector also has various ways of partnering with developers on money matters and sharing risk of development.

Our View is that the West Las Vegas Plan, in its embryonic phase, should be taken seriously. Strategic planning, some would call the visioning process, can be the source of community pride. What is your preference, residential, commercial or mixed-use development?

The Pioneer Trail, a proposed recreation (bicycle and walking) trail that would pass through 30 sites and show the historical progress of settlement in the Las Vegas Valley, looks to be a certainty because someone acted on a vision. The proposed trail winds through the Westside.

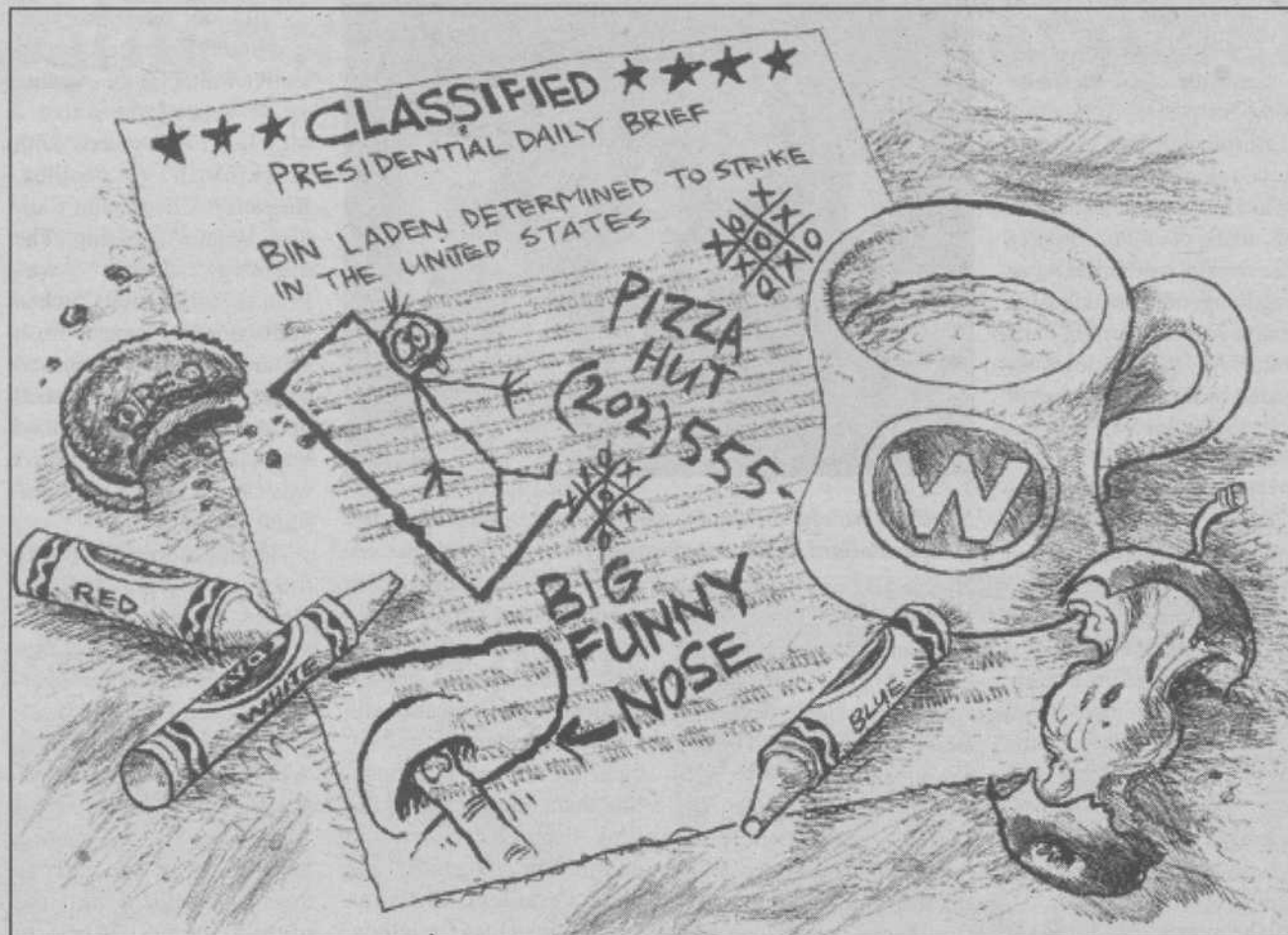
Do you want a new park in your community, honoring one of the icons of the African-American experience? This is the time to speak up. More than a few want a new high school built on the Westside. Others want to see more commercial development. Those who live in Westside communities know what the needs are. The question is are you involved in the process at a time when your voice will be progressive? Don't let plans be finalized then you come along later with regret.

Don't believe for a second this is planning that will end collecting dust on a shelf. As the interstates become more and more clogged, traffic volume is spilling onto surface streets. If you don't believe this, call the city and request the latest traffic study. Some areas are having a daytime population increase a hundredfold as traffic flows along avenues and boulevards through the Westside. Traffic volume beckons developers and development.

There is also a downside that comes with not looking ahead, not planning, and not being involved. In Proverbs, it says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Right now, we are not about to lament the downside. New heights, we are gaining. As many as who are involved, as many will be blessed and pleased with having a say.

The next meeting on the West Las Vegas Plan is scheduled for May 6 at the West Las Vegas Arts Center.

POINT OF VIEW



Schools demand accountability

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In writing about what you may have guessed by now to be my favorite subject of "bad-mouthing" the incompetents in charge of the Clark County School District, I make a distinction between policy-setting leaders, as embodied in the Board of School Trustees, and administrative leadership represented by the superintendent and his chain of command.

In the last five years, CCSD has become a majority-minority district. The combined population of students of color is 56 percent and 44 percent for students of the majority population. It is my premise — given the fact neither the Board of School Trustees or administration has given needed attention to this phenomenon — this has resulted in the CCSD experiencing an annual decline in student performance.

The district is dead last in the number of students continuing their education beyond high school, ranking 50 out of the 50 states. Also, the CCSD continues to rank near the bottom, 38 of 50, in the number of students dropping out of school. Thirty-eight percent of high school students fail to graduate. The district is among the nation's leaders in the category of teenage pregnancies.

Due to differences in educational attainment, gender, racial and religious back-



LOUIE OVERSTREET

grounds of the seven-person Board of School Trustees, this group is constantly at odds on just about every policy issue of substance it discusses. The board is comprised of six females, one of color, and one minority male. Only three trustees have a college education and that includes the two minorities. Thus, when the issue of race or the suggestion that race-specific programs be enacted, persons of color are always out voted.

Three prime examples illustrate the level of acrimony. (1) There is no district-wide policy requirement for teaching multicultural appreciation. (2) The fact an African-American female who has the most education, prior experience as a principal, and has served on the board for seven years, has never been elected by her peers to serve in the largely ceremonial position of board president. (3) The failure of the board to adopt a set of objective measurements for evaluating the annual performance of the su-

perintendent.

The conditions that exist in CCSD that are assigned to a less than enlightened administration are the following: (A) spending that is not targeted to objectives and outcomes; (B) salary increases for senior administrators that far outdistance that given to teachers; and (C) gross avoidance of being held accountable for student achievement.

If the calls I receive are an indication, numerous people feel their children are being "messed over" by CCSD. Well folks, it is possibly now or never when it comes to having your concerns heard beyond the "head shed" out on Flamingo Road.

I have knowledge of the fact that the problems have become so acute in CCSD that three agencies of government and one private foundation are presently seeking

ways to document needed change and/or to provide assistance in a manner that holds CCSD accountable for positive outcomes for students.

For one, the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) is currently conducting an audit of the district's operating and capital expenditures. If you feel your children are not being given a fair shake by CCSD, you may want to e-mail or call in your concerns to the LCB. This agency can be reached by e-mailing your concerns to schoolaudit@lcb.state.nv.us or call (775) 684-6815.

Your boy shared among a number of concerns that CCSD was committing the legal no-no of co-mingling operating and capital funds, paying for permanent staff positions out of capital funds and buying vehicles for non-construction staff. Read this
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