

# LOCAL & STATE

## MOST PROSPECTIVE JURORS KNOW LITTLE OF GIRL'S DEATH

■ Jury selection begins in trial of man  
accused of killing Jessica Lunsford B6



TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2006 | THE NEWS-PRESS | news-press.com

# Council backs Dunbar redevelopment

## Plan includes shopping, parks

BY BETTY PARKER

bparker@news-press.com

A redevelopment plan for the Dunbar community, with parks, shopping areas, entertainment centers and shady streets, won endorsement from the Fort Myers City Council on Monday.

But details such as costs, and which parts of the project might get the green light first, will be worked out later, after council

members and city staff have more time to study the report.

Planners Bill Spikowski, of Spikowski Planning Associates, and Victor Dover, of Dover Kohl and Associates, urged the council to take some action quickly.

Otherwise, they said, the community will lose faith, and the plan could end up like a series of others — done in 1981, 1992, 2000 and 2002 — stacked on a shelf with little to show for the effort.

They worked with community members on the plan for months, and most suggestions came from Dunbar residents and businesspeople, they said.

Many suggestions call for private development of housing — not the apartment-style projects now in use, but mixed styles of housing — and other facilities.

But the city needs to take major steps to make that happen, largely by changing development and building regulations in the area, they said.

“Your regulations now are for suburban development, and that’s not what you want in town,” Dover said.

Dunbar has many smaller lots that are not unusable under existing regulations. But if the regulations were changed, it

would be easy for owners to put businesses or homes on those lots, the planners said.

They also urged the city to work with the owner of a junkyard off Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

The owner wants to move, and the city doesn’t want a junkyard there.

“But the owner isn’t a real-estate expert,” Spikowski said.

If city staff could help him find a new location, he could move, and the city could buy the old junkyard for a better use that provides a bigger tax base, Spikowski said.

“Those are the kinds of things the city can do to help,” he said.

Dover also cited McCollum Hall, a nightspot of decades ago that attracted top-name black entertainment to Dunbar, as another target for quick action.

Dover suggested the hall, now virtually abandoned, could become a restaurant and music center, and serve as a beacon on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard for further improvement.

Clemente Park also was recommended as a focal point, home to community buildings and a cultural center.

Providing some canal cross-

ings and other connections could lay the groundwork for a bike path connecting that park with Dunbar Park, they said.

“The new intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Veronica Shoemaker Boulevard is too important to be left to the vagaries of generic roadside strip development,” they wrote in the plan.

That spot “deserves a prominent cultural landmark, and dignified housing should be added nearby.”

That also could be a spot for a monument to great African-American leaders, they said.