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QUESTIONS LOOM OVER HISTORIC PROPERTY FOR PROPOSED HOMELESS SHELTER

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In this rendering of a new interchange on I-70, the green space just right of center bottom is the 28-acre property referred to in the Juliet Bowling Rollins Revocable Trust. Running across the very bottom is Business Loop 70. The far right shows Paris Road, nearing Old US-63 at the bottom. The yellow line between the green space on the left and Central Concrete on the right, represents a new road connecting the interchange to Business Loop. The proposed homeless services center would be located at the bottom of the green space.

Construction of an \$18 million “homeless services center” on Business Loop 70 in Columbia is planned on property described as a historically significant “archeological treasure” during efforts a decade ago to preserve its character and greenspace for a new interchange from I-70 and gateway into the downtown area currently being considered.

The property is also tangled in possible legal issues over ownership and control that dates back to the 1870s when it was first occupied by two of Columbia’s most prominent families – the More family and later the Bowling family.

“This property represents the final link in a chain of property ownership, community leadership and historical relevance merged,” wrote the city’s Historic Preservation Commission in opposition to a zoning change in 2010.

The property is controlled by “The Juliet Bowling Rollins Revocable Trust,” which was executed in 1985. The late Juliet Bowling Rollins’ two surviving granddaughters continue to live in two residences in the back, wooded portion of 28 acres – largely unchanged for 180 years - and each control a one-fourth interest in the trust. Simmons Bank controls the other one-half interest.

The trust sold a 5.7-acre parcel at the front of the property along Business Loop 70 for \$600,000 late last year to real estate investor Betsy Peters, a retired pediatrician and current member of the Columbia city council. Peters contracted in April to sell the property for the same price to the Voluntary Action Center, a Columbia non-profit that hopes to break ground in the spring on a 25,000 square-foot facility to serve individuals experiencing “chronic and unsheltered homelessness.” The facility would include up to 100 beds, a kitchen, laundry facilities, showers, secure storage, kennel, computer lab, drop-in center, and medical and dental clinics.

In 2010, the Historic Preservation Commission and the city’s Downtown Leadership Council voted to oppose a rezoning request on the back 23 acres where the houses are located and encouraged the city council to preserve an opportunity to someday develop the corridor and its greenspace to connect I-70 with historic College Avenue, Wright Brothers Mule Barn, the downtown arts district, Stephens College, Columbia College and historic downtown Columbia.

The Historic Preservation Commission suggested possibilities that included preservation of the residences which would be viewed from the interchange, re-creation of the old More’s Station depot into a bike and pedestrian trailhead from north Columbia to downtown, potential passenger service on the nearby COLT railroad line, and redevelopment of the nearby city power plant when it is taken out of service into industrial-type lofts, perhaps a science museum, or a multi-use development like The Foundry in St. Louis.

MoDOT is currently conducting a study with its consultant team, which includes several local residents, to identify ways to improve I-70 where it passes through Columbia. A current rendering of the possible new interchange shows it connecting with Parker St. on the north and a new street running north to south from the interstate to Business Loop 70 to near Old

on the very east side of the property next to Central Concrete. The Historic Preservation Commission envisioned such a road being developed through the middle of the property, creating the “gateway” with greenspace and historic elements.



The vacant plot on Business Loop 70 east of the city's power plant that would be the location of a planned new homeless services center.

The Historic Preservation Commission also pointed out in 2010 a “prevailing public interest in this property.” According to the trust, Juliet Bowling Rollins directed that upon the death of her granddaughters, the balance of her estate be delivered to the Board of Commissioners of Boone County.

“Because this property is already held in trust with the final disposition to the Commissioners of Boone County, there is an opportunity to engage in thoughtful public planning for this property,” wrote the Historic Preservation Committee.

Final disposition of the estate was just one of many thorny legal issues brought forward by the Historic Preservation Committee, which was chaired in 2010 by Brian Treece, who would later serve two terms as mayor. Treece said this week he remains familiar with the issues and opportunity at the property but declined to comment citing possible conflicts with other projects and organizations he’s involved with. Earlier this month, Treece was appointed k Mike Parson to the state highway commission.

The Historic Preservation Commission pointed out to city council in 2010 several issues it believed not clear in ownership documents, including authority to sell any of the property. In her trust document, Juliet Rowling Rollins gave two individuals the authority to sell her property - herself and her daughter. Both are deceased and neither directed the sale of any property. The commission questioned whether the surviving granddaughters have the authority to sell any of the property. The commission also pointed out flawed and multiple legal descriptions of the property.

Councilperson Peters said there were no discussions of problems with the title when she purchased the property and that she was going to seek confirmation. Ed Stansberry, executive director of the Voluntary Action Center did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Juliet Bowling Napier and Laura Rollins Napier, the granddaughters of Juliet Bowling Rollins, live private lives in the two homes on the property, one built in 1906 and the other in 1913. The grandmother, Juliet Bowling Rollins, who died in 1987, was the daughter of Charles B. Bowling, a lumberman and founder of Exchange National Bank, which ultimately became Landmark Bank and is now part of Simmons Bank. She was married to Frank Bingham Rollins, the grandson of James S. Rollins, a congressman, businessman and founder of the University of Missouri.

Charles B. Bowling, who died in 1944, acquired the property in 1897 from Elawson C. More, a lawyer and politician who had developed the property. Charles B. Bowling's son William - Juliet's older brother - was a director of Exchange National Bank, a prominent cattle breeder, a founder of the Tiger Hotel Corporation and later the hotel's owner. When William died in 1977 without a wife or children, his interest in the property was bequeathed to Juliet. Another older brother, Charles C. Bowling, who served as president of Exchange National Bank, had died in 1968.

The Juliet Bowling Rollins Revocable Trust, dated Aug. 2, 1985, directs that in the event her granddaughters die without leaving "bodily heirs, born hereafter" the trust be terminated and a lasting memorial be developed in memory of her father Charles B. and brothers William and Charles C. Further it directs the balance of her estate be delivered to the Board of Commissioners of Boone County and used to "provide assistance in the treatment and care of deserving children of Boone County suffering from crippling and disabling children's diseases."

In 2010, the Historic Preservation Society also pointed out that Juliet Bowling Rollins did not want the property sold and that the surviving granddaughters were not given the explicit authority to sell the property. From the document:

".... It is my direction that the undivided interest owned by me in such property which is being transferred hereunder to this trust, not be sold, except at the direction of myself, or after my death, at the direction of my daughter, Juliette Rollins Napier."

City staff is reviewing proposed plans for the homeless services center, to be called the "Opportunity Campus" that were developed by VAC and the Columbia Housing Authority and delivered to city council earlier this week. VAC has secured \$6 million in state funding to build the facility and is seeking \$3 million each from the City of Columbia and Boone County to be used as matching funds.

MORE INFORMATION



\$15 MILLION HOMELESS SERVICES CENTER IN THE WORKS

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