

Architect wants plaza downtown

By Chris Handal, Herold staff writer, August 22, 1988

Landscape architect Duane Christopher has a vision for Rock Hill, and it includes trails linking different parts of the city to downtown, an elevated pedestrian plaza, a downtown plaza -- and a doorway where the SCN Building now stands.

Christopher will share his ideas during a 5:30 p.m. Thursday presentation at old Belk Building in TownCenter Mall. The talk is open to the public and is part of the Central Rock Hill Plan, called Empowering the Vision.

A system of city trails, or greenways as they are called, has been discussed and is likely to be recommended by the Garden City Theme Group of the Central Rock Hill Plan.

Christopher's presentation will include maps and drawing of what Rock Hill could be five to 10 years from now.

"We felt somebody needed to start putting together a master plan -- a vision -- of what the city should do," said the head of Duane F. Christopher and Associates of Rock Hill.

Christopher sees a network of trails starting at Cherry Park. One of those trails could link the Winthrop Farm, TechPark and a public park on Jones Avenue together before going downtown.

Another trail from Cherry Park could go to the Winthrop Farm before making its way to Glencairn Garden and downtown.

Still another trail could run from Fewell Park to Oakland Avenue to the central business district.

"Everything is connecting and focusing on the central business district," Christopher said.

Another of Christopher's suggestions is an elevated pedestrian plaza linking Oakland and Charlotte avenues over the railroad tracks.

The most "radical" part of the plan is creating a doorway to downtown where the SCN Building is, Christopher said.

If the city decides to eliminate the SCN Building -- something that has not been discussed to date -- and takes the roof off TownCenter Mall -- something that has been talked about during the Central Rock Hill Planning process -- a downtown plaza could be constructed at the intersection of Dave Lyle Boulevard and Main Street.

An official with Carolina Properties Inc., the Columbia-based company that owns the SCN Building, questioned the sense in eliminating the building.

"I don't understand how demolishing the building would improve the looks of the area," said Bob Horning, marketing consultant for Carolina Properties. "It's a nice-looking building, and it's in an important location in the center of the city."

SCN Building was built in 1977, Horning said. Soon after Carolina Properties bought it in 1986, the SCN Building was completely remodeled, he said.

"What would removing the building add to the perception of downtown Rock Hill?" he said. "I don't know what you would gain by tearing it down."

Horning added that company.....

Christopher said he has not discussed his ideas with city officials.

I think it's radical, but I think that's what it's going to take to give the central business district its own identity."

"We need to start planning," he said.

Christopher did not have cost estimates for his ideas, but said the city could accomplish many of his ideas in five to 10 years.

Christopher's talk will be the second public presentation this month on greenways. Charles Flink, a Raleigh, N. C. landscape architect, spoke about greenways Aug. 4.

Christopher opened a landscape architecture firm in Rock Hill in 1981 and has done more than 250 projects, including subdivisions, mixed-use developments, commercial, industrial, and single-family residential projects.

Besides the Garden City Theme Group, five other committees constitute the Central Rock Hill Plan: the Educational City, Functional City, Cultural City, Historic City, and Business City