City Heights residents will have say concerning Interstate 15 extension

Evening Tribune - Friday, September 21, 1990
Author: Jeff Ristine

Getting your name on a freeway is hard. But having engineers use your ideas to plan the design and uses of land covering the freeway -- that could be easier than you think.

When the long-sought extension of Interstate 15 finally is built through City Heights, community activists will have a chance to make sure it reflects the needs and wants of the people who will have to live with it.

"For the first time, the community is taking control of a (freeway) project," said Bethany Porter of the City Heights Community Development Corp. It will be the community's job to work with contractors on a plan for the freeway cover, Porter said, rather than "have a bunch of outside consultants come in and tell us what's best for us."

Stepping into a role usually performed by the state or local government, it will be Porter's non-profit organization that selects the contractor who will design the freeway cover.

The eight-block freeway extension will be built parallel to the 40th Street corridor, filling a gap between Adams and Myrtle avenues, but cut far below the level of the surface streets. While the state Department of Transportation has pledged to provide funding for two blocks of freeway cover, community leaders hope to find enough additional money to cover the entire project.

Prospective bidders received a briefing today from the community group on its expectations in a conference at 40th Street and University Avenue, where buildings have been demolished in preparation for construction.

Among the top requirements, Porter said, will be a willingness to hold public meetings and consider community input before any blueprints are delivered to the city and Caltrans.

It's a rare opportunity, Porter said, so the organization also scheduled a press conference for today to call attention to the chance for residents and anyone else interested in the project to play engineer.

In the past several years, city officials have discussed prospects for shopping, a cultural center and housing or parks, an idea that might require pollution detectors to warn when emissions from the vehicles below become unsafe.

Bidders, meanwhile, will be asked to outline the approach they intend to take on the
project, along with their experience, expected results and proposed fee. The Community Development Corp. also wants bidders to help figure out a financial plan to cover the entire freeway extension.