

# Neighbors form task force

*East Raleigh residents want to guide development*

BY CINDY GEORGE  
STAFF WRITER

**RALEIGH** — It's a neighborhood with an aristocratic flair — streets are named for King William, Queen Mary, Lord Berkeley and other such notables — and residents say it's high time to preserve the character of the community.

Those who live in and around the Longview area have organized a task force with the city and are working on a neighborhood plan for the communities surrounding the Raleigh Country Club, Enloe High School, Longview School and Powell Elementary School.

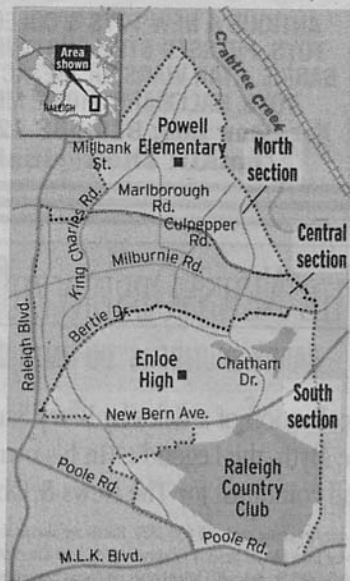
The King Charles Neighborhood Plan, named for the street that runs through the

area, should go to the City Council for approval in late spring or early summer, said Katrina Simon, planner for the city's southeast and east planning districts.

"It will provide guidance for development of the neighborhood," Simon said.

Some residents consider their inside-the-Beltline community in east Raleigh a jewel with its older, well-built homes and affordable houses.

But as longtime homeowners have died or moved out, investors and "For rent" signs have moved in. Absentee landlords present a growing problem, residents say. The area



SEE PLAN, PAGE 7B

WOODY VONDRACEK / The News & Observer

## PLAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

needs amenities such as banks and movie theaters, and it has only a handful of restaurants.

While facing an increasing percentage of rental housing and some of the largest tracts of undeveloped land in Raleigh, groups of residents started working last fall to take charge of how the community grows and fills out.

The plan has spawned a King Charles neighborhood task force focused on development issues in the area, as well as an electronic mail list in which residents discuss changes in the community — all designed to lay out the welcome mat for more neighborly relations.

“A lot of our neighbors don’t know each other. If they did, they’re more likely to take in their trash and cut their yards,” said Matt Leary, task force chairman. “We take great pride in the area, and that’s why we’re working on our neighborhood plan — so we can push up our property values.”

But there are challenges, he said.

“The area has a poor perception. A lot of real estate agents don’t want to show houses here. They discourage prospective homebuyers from buying,” said Leary, 28, who purchased his house on King Charles Road in 2000.

Members of the task force and the Longview Gardens Neighborhood Association opposed a plan Tuesday before the city Planning Commission to split a lot on Albemarle Avenue to accommodate two houses instead of one. The Planning Commission voted it down, though the property’s owner could appeal the decision.

Still, it’s an early victory for task force members. The group also plans to take snapshots of problem properties and present them to city inspections staff, start a letter-writing campaign to absentee landlords and begin neighborhood watch programs.

They’re also supporting a new

## TO GET INVOLVED

The King Charles neighborhood task force meets at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Lions Park Community Center to discuss absentee landlords. City inspections staff members will also attend the meeting.

For more information about the King Charles Neighborhood Plan, visit [www.raleigh-nc.org/planning/Small\\_Area\\_Plans/KingCharlesNP.htm](http://www.raleigh-nc.org/planning/Small_Area_Plans/KingCharlesNP.htm).

report released by the neighborhood preservation and housing task force that recommends strengthening Raleigh neighborhoods by licensing small-scale rental operations, limiting single-family home rentals to 20 percent of houses in a neighborhood, increasing enforcement of city codes and ordinances, and creating a permanent advisory group to review issues facing city neighborhoods.

Estimates place renter-occupied housing within the King Charles Neighborhood Plan boundaries at 27 percent to 47 percent, said Lynette Pitt, chairwoman of the East Citizens Advisory Council.

“Part of what the members of the neighborhood preservation and housing task force said was once you get close to 50 percent, it’s hard to reclaim the neighborhood,” said Pitt, who went to the City Council in August and asked for a neighborhood plan in her area.

Though the neighborhood plan won’t address every issue, Pitt said she does have new hope for her community’s future.

“We want good neighbors and good citizens who will help us take care of the area instead of it becoming more run-down looking,” she said. “The fact that people are engaged and want to do something is the most gratifying part of the whole process.”

Staff writer Cindy George can be reached at 829-4656 or [cgeorge@newsobserver.com](mailto:cgeorge@newsobserver.com).