

City architects critical of Square project

COR UYS, Municipal Reporter

PRETORIA architects have described the city council's Verwoerd Square project as not utilising a "wonderful opportunity" to create a "really imposing city square".

However, according to the deputy mayor, Mr Bob Zylstra, the council has a developer and an architect and "should get on with the job".

The Pretoria Architectural Society says in a report on a meeting it held concerning Verwoerd Square that circumstances had changed since the project was mooted in 1965.

It said a new political climate, talk of privatisation, an increase in population and the planned city lake project invalidated earlier criteria.

It questioned whether a centre city square was the best place for a clinic, because the users — young Pretoria and poor Pretoria — lived the furthest away from the city centre.

Others asked whether it was justified to place the city library — described as a depot supporting suburban libraries — in the city centre.

Speakers also said insufficient parking would be provided and questioned whether there was justification for a new mayor's suite and more reception facilities.

The meeting was "fairly unanimous" that the scheme would not succeed in creating a "so-called people's place" in the city centre.

The city council has accepted an offer from Murray and Roberts Properties for the re-development of the terrain — on the block bounded by Church, Van der Walt, Vermeulen and Prinsloo streets — and demolition of buildings has actually started.

The project, which is the first step in the council's ambitious city core scheme, should be completed in 1993.