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Perkins touts job creation in mayoral bid

Premium content from The Business Journal - by Owen Covington, Staff writer

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Commercial Real Estate

It was by design that long-time council member **Robbie Perkins** chose the offices of the **Greensboro Regional Realtors Association** to announce his run for mayor of Greensboro.

Perkins said he has relied heavily upon the real estate and construction trades in his previously successful campaigns for public office, and will do so again as he seeks Greensboro's top spot this fall.

Supporters say Perkins' experience in real estate will be a benefit, though that same professional background could make him more likely to have to recuse himself from some decisions related to land deals and rezonings because of potential conflicts of interest.

"Today, we need jobs in this community. We need economic development in this community," Perkins said when announcing his candidacy. "It's time for somebody from that type of background to be able to lead this city toward those two very important goals."

Specifically, Perkins mentioned the importance of developing property downtown and along the High Point Road and Lee Street corridors. Regarding downtown, Perkins said the existence of infrastructure was one reason development in the core city could be less expensive than elsewhere.

"We've got to grow our tax base," Perkins said. "We've got to focus on the heart and soul of our community. We've got to focus on downtown Greensboro. It's the cheapest place for us to effectively do business."

Also in the race are incumbent Bill Knight, a retired certified public accountant who worked for **Sharrard McGee & Co.**, and **Tom Phillips**, a former city councilman and wealth management adviser with **Merrill Lynch**.

Chester Brown III, a Perkins supporter and president of **Brown Investment**

Properties, said a background in commercial real estate is a natural fit for economic development.

"Anyone with a background in putting real estate development together has got a good perspective on what it takes to make these things work," Brown said.

That background and Perkins' involvement in property sales and development deals have also led him to recuse himself numerous times during his tenure on city council. For instance at an April 20, 2010, council meeting, Perkins abstained from voting on the allocation of Neighborhood Stabilization funds for a housing project near North Elm Street and Pisgah Church Road because an NAI Piedmont Triad broker found the property for the developers.

When asked about the potential for conflicts of interest if he is elected mayor, Perkins said he did not see that as an issue, and would recuse himself if there was a conflict.

David Hagan, president of **Hagan Properties** in Greensboro and a Perkins supporter, said the benefits of having a candidate who has a real estate background outweigh any drawbacks.

"The only conflict (that's a problem) is the one that's not disclosed," Hagan said.

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