Politics figure in Oxford land development battles

By JIM WILHELM

Daily Collegian StaffWriter

The Oxford Development Co. has won one battle, but it may soon find itself fighting a two-front war.

The Monroeville-based firm was recently awarded the right to negotiate asales agreement with Allegheny County to develop the proposed \$100 million Grant Street skyscraper complex in downtown Pittsburgh - a keystone: project in the city's Renaissance II program.

Analysis

Oxford got the nod on a controversial 2-1 vote by Allegheny County commissioners over the competing Grant Land Co. Grant Land, a subsidiary of the Hillman Co., has vowed to fight the decision in court — a move that could tie up the project for months.

It is not the only court hassle facing Oxford. Oxford also is the developer of the proposed Ferguson Mall on N. Atherton Street in Ferguson Township. Citizens' groups opposed to the construction of the mall on the 150-acre Dreibelbis farm tract have successfully received a preliminary injunction to halt a zoning change Oxford needs to construct the mall. The injunction by Judge Richard M. Sharp forbids the Ferguson Township supervisors from acting on Oxford's request to rezone 100 acres of the farm from residential to commercial until the citizens' groups have their say at a public hearing Tuesday.

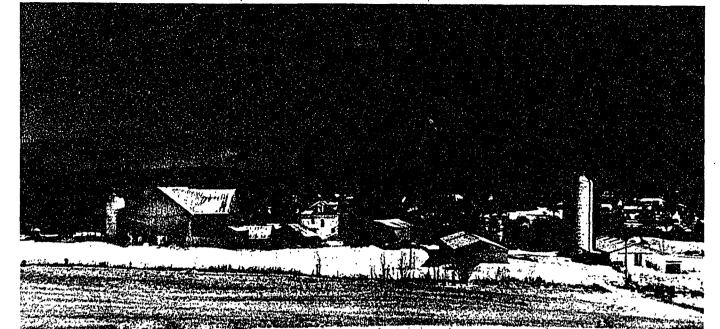
Oxford now finds itself in the unenviable position of fighting a two-front war in the courts to get their proposed projects off the drawing boards and under construction.

The decision by the Allegheny County commissioners to award the Grant Street project to Oxford is highly political in nature. The two commissioners voting in favor of Oxford -Jim Flaherty and Tom Foerster - are Democrats. Curiously enough, Edward Lewis, owner of Oxford development, was a chief contributor to the unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign of Jim's brother Pete Flaherty.

Voting against Oxford and in favor of Hillman's Grant Land was Commissioner Robert Peirce. Although Peirce claims he voted against Oxford because Grant Land has offered more money for the 1.8 acres of prime real estate in the city, there could be and undoubtedly is another motive for his

Peirce is the lone Republican commissioner. The Hillman Co. is owned by the husband of Elsie Hillman, a national GOP committeewoman and Peirce's political patron.

When all things are considered, it becomes quite obvious the decision to give the Grant Street project to Oxford was political. The Allegheny County Planning Commission reviewed volumes of information on both firms' proposals and decided the Grant project was the better — both financially and in overall



The Dreibelbis farm, located off N. Atherton Street zoned from residential to commercial so construction can (Route 322) in Ferguson Township, is the site for Oxford Development's proposed \$10-\$12 million Ferguson Mall, A group of Ferguson Township residents has opposed attempts by Oxford to get almost 100 acres of the farm re-

construction. Oxford is worth about \$65 million. The Hillman Co. is valued at almost \$110 million. Hillman has a definite tenant for occupying at least half of one of the two towers. Allegheny Ludlum Industries has said they would rent space in one of

the towers if the project had been awarded to Grant Land. Oxford has no such commitment for tenants and their competitior is willing to up the sale price for the land.

Meanwhile, in Centre County, Oxford's mall has become the target of

begin. Shown here are part of the 23 acres of the former dairy outlet that are already zoned commercial. The Nittany Mountains are in the background.

wrath from many Ferguson Township residents. Most Ferguson residents aren't actually opposed to the mall's construction — in fact, they favor development in their community. Their biggest complaint is the location of the

Oxford's proposal to locate the malk along heavily-traveled N. Atherton Street (Route 322), near a large residential area and adjacent to an. elementary school, just doesn't sit well with property owners in the area. Fearing a drop in their property values : and a traffic mess rivaling a 1:25 p.m. arrival to a Penn State home football game, the residents of Park Hills and other surrounding housing plans have taken up arms against Oxford.

A group of them has even formed an organization to collect funds for legal battles against Oxford and to work for responsible development in the community. Known as ACORD (A Community Organization for Responsible Development), they've collected, numerous signatures on petitions for. presentation to Ferguson supervisors at Tuesday's meeting.

How Oxford will fare in the local battleremains to be seen. The possibility of another lengthy court battle to gain land. for development could leave Oxford with, # no choice but to shelve its plans for development in Ferguson Township. After all, nobody relishes the idea of fighting court battles all over the state.

A decision by Oxford to forget construction plans in Ferguson Township could set a dangerous precedent. Other, developers interested in Centre Region land might develop the attitude that trying to accomplish something in this area isn't worth the effort or the high cost in legal fees.

That's a battle Centre Region residents can't afford to lose.

DAFFODILS

\$.99 A bunch Cash & Carry

Woodrings flower shop 145 S. Allen St.



Served with vegetable of the day, potato, and French bread and butter

> Every Thursday Nite 210 West College Ave.

USG and the Student Employment Center are sponsoring a

Summer Job Program

Information is available in the Student Employment Office in 105 Boucke

Community Chiropractic Center

Dr. David M. Calandra

220 Academy Street Boalsburg, Pa. 466-7873

Chiropractic...

a natural healing and health maintenance system. The major premise of Chiropractic philosophy is that the body will innately strive for health, harmony and balance if the pathways for it to do so are opened. It is the concern of Chiropractic to open these pathways.

Discover

WITHOUT A HITCH.



Get a BritRail YouthPass for one full week of unlimited Economy train travel for only \$65. Or 2 full weeks for \$95. Three for \$120. Four for \$140. With our YouthPass you'll make the most of your time and money—whatever the time and money you've got.

On our trains you can go to every nook and cranny of Britain from the green wooded

valleys of Wales to the legendary moors and highlands of Scotland. Criss-crossing the land on crack expresses—or meandering through the countryside on lovable locals. It's a great way to get to know the British.

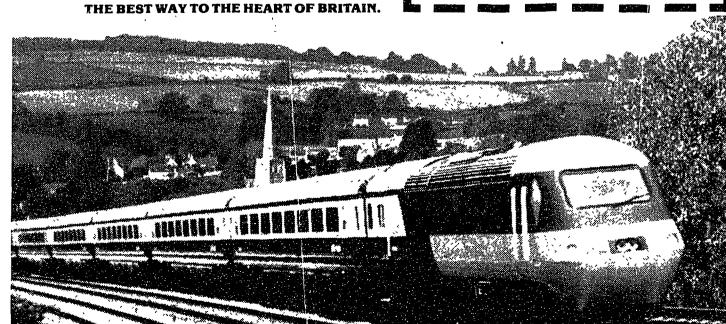
This year, give your thumb a thummer vacation. BritRail through Britain without a hitch. You'll see more of the Britain you want to see. For full information send the

coupon for our free booklet. Note: you can't buy a BritRail YouthPass in Britain.You must buy it here

before you go. (And you must be under 23.) Get it from your Travel Agent, and get set for the summer of your life.

			, i	
1	BritRa	il	Irav	el
	THE STATE OF STREET	AKET VET 4		TOTAL TALL

BRITRAIL TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL Box S, Dept. 192-722, Staten Island, NY 10305 Please send me my free copy of "Easy Guide to BritRail" for full details.
Name
 Address
CityStateZip



Samurai Photographer!



Samurai photographer Chuck Fong—caught one Saturday Nite, Live. Chuck, he not only one wild and crazy guy but one helluva good swordsman. He good click-click, too. You want picture, chop-chop? Maybe something different? You