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## Fairgrounds would add parking, stalls

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RALEIGH - The N.C. State Fairgrounds would get new exposition space, more parking and hundreds of extra horse stalls under a long-range master plan made public Wednesday.

The plan, designed to look 20 to 30 years in the future, would cost \$121 million in today's dollars if fully completed.

"The whole process has allowed us to think about our campus as a whole, to think about needs and deficiencies," said State Fair manager Wesley Wyatt. "As funding and resources permit, we can take on some of these projects."

Among the highlights:

- \* New State Fair admission gates, with bigger ticket booths and better lighting. The number of ticket gates would drop from eight to three, with gates facing Hillsborough Street, Trinity Road and Youth Center Drive.
- \* Additional parking for 5,000 vehicles on land west of the main fairground property. When not needed for parking, the grassy lots could be used for soccer fields. "Our goal for our property is to maximize the use of it," Wyatt said.
- \* Infrastructure upgrades, including improvements to sewer, water and electrical systems.
- \* An additional 300 horse stalls at the Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. Horse Complex. The new stalls would allow the complex to host two horse shows at once.

There is no schedule for when projects might begin. "I'd hope we would have a better idea in the next several months," said Wyatt, noting that prioritizing is the next step.

Officials showed the plans to a gathering of neighbors, business owners and government officials. Marshall Stewart, operator of the Raleigh Flea Market, liked what he saw. The plan includes expansion of the Gov. W. Kerr Scott Building, a popular weekend venue for hobby shows, including those for toys and stamps.

Much of the weekend flea market is outdoors, and an expanded Kerr Scott building could give flea market vendors more indoor space, which would particularly help in winter, Stewart said.

"Weather is our nemesis at the flea market," he said.

Many of the fairgrounds improvements in the past few years were paid for with income earned by the fairgrounds, Wyatt said. The Exposition Center, completed in 2005, and the Gov. James G. Martin Building, which opened in 2006, were both built with fairgrounds money. Recent infrastructure improvements near Dorton Arena, including electrical and sewer upgrades, were paid for with money allocated by the legislature.

Projects on the master plan could be paid for with the same combination of money, Wyatt said.

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"I would hope the General Assembly sees the fair as a good investment and continues to fund projects we have," he said.

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