

# PRESS RELEASE

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## THREE DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY TO BANK FRAUD AND CONSPIRING TO STEAL AND CONVERT PUBLIC FUNDS

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA – The United States Attorney's Office announced today that Lancelot Wright, age 47 of Lexington, South Carolina; Robert Anthony Williams, age 57, of Tampa, Florida; and Phillip Mims, age 46, of Columbia, South Carolina, pled guilty today before United States District Judge David C. Norton in Charleston, South Carolina. All three defendants pled guilty to one count of conspiring to steal and convert public funds in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 and to one count of bank fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344. Judge Norton will sentence all three defendants after a pre-sentence report is prepared by the United States Probation Office.

Information presented at the plea hearings established that Wright, Mims and Williams were involved in businesses in the Columbia area. The defendants used several of these businesses—including Strategies Development Group (SDG), Supremes LLC and the Village at River's Edge (VRE) —to commit various illegal acts. With respect to the bank fraud allegations, Mims, Wright and Williams used

the proceeds of a bank loan for purposes that were not permitted under their loan agreement. SDG obtained two loans from First Saver's Bank to construct a building to be known as the St. Andrews Medical Village (SAMV). On September 21, 2007, FSB committed to lending SDG \$3.3 million as a construction loan, and the commitment letter was signed by Mims, Wright and Williams. While the commitment letter clearly provided that SDG as the borrower could use the loan proceeds only for construction costs related to the SAMV, Mims, Wright and Williams used the hundreds of thousands of dollars they obtained from the loan for other purposes and projects, ultimately causing substantial losses to the bank.

In 2009, Wright and Williams worked to bring a struggling diaper plant called Softee Supremes from Georgia to Marion County, SC. In 2009, the South Carolina Department of Commerce awarded a \$1,000,000 grant to Marion County, South Carolina, to assist in the relocation and operation of the plant. At that point, Wright, Williams, and Mims and others launched a scheme to steal and convert grant funds for their use by submitting falsified invoices for payment to the new company (Supremes LLC) and then splitting the proceeds of the fraud which totaled in excess of \$80,000.00. That same year, Wright and Williams agreed to become investors in the Village at River's Edge (VRE) and they made a "kickback" payment to a municipal employee. Mims then joined the VRE as a project manager, and in that role, he engaged in a scheme to illegally siphon funds received from a federal grant by pocketing money which was to be used for construction costs at the VRE.

The charges in these cases are the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigations, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Office of Inspector General, and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. Assistant United States Attorneys Nancy Wicker, Mark Moore, Jane Taylor, and Dewayne Pearson of the Columbia office are prosecuting the case.

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