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Neighborhood Planning

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NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

BY

DONALD S. SMAIL, JR.

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

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THESIS PROJECT

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CHAPTER I

Defining the Urban Neighborhood

The past fifteen years have witnessed a growing awareness of neighborhoods in the United States. Although always a functioning and fundamental unit of any urban area, only recently has the concept of "neighborhood" gained wide recognition and acceptance as the way to observe and deal with the problems of urban America.

Neighborhoods are indeed the building blocks of cities¹. The history of human settlement supports this concept. Socialization and interpersonal contact occurs primarily among the immediate and extended family, and with those who live close to us. The close ties that develop between persons living in an enclave of ethnic, racial, cultural or even economic commonality are forged to offer support to all actors. The strength and capacity to operate as an individual member of society is developed at the neighborhood level, with benefits of social stability accruing to the city.

Before the neighborhood can be analyzed as a cohesive social unit, its proper definition must first be articulated and understood. What is a neighborhood? Must it be urban? How can boundaries for neighborhoods be established? Who should be empowered to draw those boundaries? These are a few of the difficult questions that confront those of us interested in neighborhoods and city governments.

Questions such as these have perplexed planners, demographers, sociologists and philosophers since the time of Plato. Trying to determine where people live and why they

locate in particular settlement patterns is a task as confusing and time consuming for urban planners today as it was for the tax collectors of the Roman Empire.

Although there may be some merit in considering densely settled rural residential areas as "neighborhoods", for the purpose of this analysis the process of definition and delineation will be limited to settlements within metropolitanized (urban and suburban) areas. The examination of rural neighborhoods is left to other researchers.

A great mass of information has been collected and many reports written about urban neighborhoods. They have been scrutinized by many different sectors of the academic community, and social and technical sciences. Generally, little innovative analysis has resulted, due in part to predetermined biases on the part of the researchers. Engineers and architects have a penchant for physical design and building style; economists focus on spending and earning patterns; sociologists gather their social indicators and churn out "quality of life" measurements. The end products tend to be of limited value due to their lack of comprehensive perspective from which to gain a broader view of the subject. Poor communication and problems with transferability of data and analysis has created problems for researchers and those who attempt to make collective sense of these labors.

A review of the most recent literature on neighborhoods will attempt to synthesize a useful and comprehensive methodology for determining physical boundaries for

neighborhood areas.

Suzanne Heller, in her book The Urban Neighborhood , offers a neighborhood defining perspective from the disciplines of sociology and ekistics . The book presents for critical comparison, typical physical elements of neighborhood definitions:

"where streets, railway lines or parks separate off an area and its inhabitants, or where historical and social traditions make people view an area as a distinctive unit...²"

The observation is made that often physical boundaries encourage a symbolic association , and socio-cultural characteristics become attached to physical dimensions³.

Apparently influenced by her exposure to the science of human settlement at the Athens Center of Ekistics, Keller suggests four basic theoretical conceptions of neighborhoods:

1.) A physically delimiting area having an ecological position in a larger area and particular physical characteristics arising from natural geographic conditions and from a particular configuration of activities and usages.

2.) An area containing such facilities as shops, clubs, schools, houses, and transportation that may be used by those living in the area or by outsiders. (In the latter case a neighborhood has a special functional role in the

organization of a town or city. Investigators do not always distinguish between these two types of usage- by residents and by outsiders. Some consider usage of neighborhood facilities as an index of the existence of neighborhood only if this usage is confined to residents. Yet, if outsiders use a particular neighborhood for recreational, business, or cultural purposes, this itself may be a significant determinant of neighborhood identity.)

3.) An area representing certain values both for the residents and for the larger community. Such values as cleanliness, quiet, safety, social solidarity, political cohesion, ethnic or religious compatability, aesthetic quality, and social prestige have different priorities for different individuals and groups, and are present in different measure among the subareas of a community.

4.) A field or cluster of forces working in and on an area to give it a special atmosphere. (An immigrant ghetto, a middle-class suburb, or a skidrow area has a special aura that affects how the area looks and how people look at the area. In part, this is an inscrutable phenomemon, and like the personality of an individual, it cannot be reduced to the composite elements since it is an outcome of their interrelations. Each individual and activity contributes to this collective effect even while they are subordinate to it. Areas thus have collective records on crime, delinquency, residential stability,

wealth, morale, and morality. Neighboring⁴ is only one of the activities and components of this collective record⁵.)

Keller's analysis indicates the considerable degree of complexity encountered in trying to comprehend the dimensions of urban neighborhoods. The Keller position can best be summarized by her phrase "collective character". Whether descriptive of a way of life, a style or period of housing construction, or a particular settlement pattern, it is reflective of an internal and external perception of some level of homogeneity, consistency, and stability.

The concept of "neighboring" is offered as a way of understanding if not measuring the limits of a neighborhood area. The term refers to a role in which an individual residing in a particular district develops a certain social attitude toward others living in the same district. This collective association is distinct from a relationship between family members or even between friends, although the roles and attitudes may merge if friends and relatives inhabit the same geographic locale. This attitude which develops is difficult to fully comprehend, being based on so many individualized perceptions and degree of social interaction a particular person may assume. The concept of neighboring may be best described as a social "territoriality⁶", the evolution of a complex series of social interactions permitted and enhanced by the proximity of those living nearby.

Randolph T. Hester, in Neighborhood Space , operating from

a background in architecture, transcends the traditional "physical dimension⁷" of neighborhood perception frequently associated with his profession. His basic premise is that neighborhood is a microcommunal unit, "...larger than the home, smaller than the city.⁸"

Hester reports on his experience in designing small recreation sites in urban areas. In assessing the problems related to their location, character and maintenance, concludes that use or non-use of these facilities is in itself a useful social indicator of where neighborhood boundaries are. Those located in the center or core areas of a neighborhood tend to be more closely guarded by the users, a symbol of the sociological and cultural identity of the locale. The type of activity in demand may give an indication of certain demographic characteristics of the immediate area. Tennis and handball facilities would serve a somewhat different client group than perhaps a basketball court and swing sets. Intensity of use indicates how well the physical plant reflects the recreation needs of the neighborhood.

As one moves toward peripheral boundaries, large play areas or even smaller passive parks may serve other than their intended purpose. In intensely settled urban areas laden with ethnic, racial and cultural enclaves, boundary open spaces may function as urban battlefields. Young people congregate and claim the space as part of their social "sphere of influence⁹". A group from an adjacent area may believe the space is part of their neighborhood sphere, and seek to establish control of the

area. This type of territorial conflict is not necessarily reflective of a lack of available internal space. Large, low-density suburban communities are subject to the same phenomenon. Lack of sufficient recreational space in urban areas however, would obviously tend to increase the frequency and intensity of this type of conflict.

Hester suggests that evaluation of the location and condition of existing "neighborhood spaces" can offer insight into the dimensions of the neighborhood itself. It is more reasonable to consider the neighborhood as a network of activity nodes, some isolated and some overlapping. Those spaces which seem to have the highest concentration of neighborhood-type activity can be identified as core areas. As the outer limits of the activity centers are reached, one must begin to evaluate interaction with other distinct areas.

Where these limits begin to overlap, the neighborhood boundary exists. Carried further, it is not unreasonable to assume that certain areas will fall within the "sphere of influence" of more than one neighborhood. These zones require the most attention and inspection. Invariably the more complex and diverse activities represented in these "multi-neighborhood zones", the less social friction there exists between the inhabitants of these adjacent neighborhoods. Although residents of these proximate micro-communities may adhere to distinct cultural patterns and social mores, the complexity of activity in a boundary zone indicates a degree of compatibility between these areas.

Neighborhood identity can be influenced by modification of the state and local governing process. As many cities adopted innovative forms of government in the 1950's and 1960's, such as the city manager and commission forms, political representation began to take on a more centralized appearance. Many cities developed non-partisan or at-large elections, and others transferred control of some city functions to appointed boards and councils. As pointed out in George Frederickson's Neighborhood Control in the 1970's, "The fundamental creed (in city government reorganization) was to centralize control of budget and personnel¹⁰." In the process, the power of local neighborhoods was diminished considerably.

This trend toward centralization had repercussions in many urban neighborhoods. As the decision makers became increasingly less politically attached, supposedly more objective, and more removed from the neighborhood scene, there was a significant loss of neighborhood generated power. Except in those older communities with long established ethnic and racial voting blocs, this phenomenon created a loss of identity for many neighborhoods across the nation. The growing trend of managing city services by program and function instead of neighborhood need, was perhaps more economical but had longer term negative effects on the community as a social unit¹¹.

As recent efforts to aid city governments and neighborhood organizations have become more commonplace, there has been a resurgence in community identity and neighborhood pride. As more funds become available and more attention is given to the

prospect of attacking urban problems from the neighborhood level, a reorientation to the immediate concerns of the local community has occurred. Such efforts as the Community Action Program (CAP), Model Cities, and the full package of programs which came out of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)¹², provided many transitional neighborhoods with real physical and programmatic attachments to the local community. As these types of programs are perpetuated and improved upon, the reorientation to the neighborhood can be expected to continue.

Research in defining urban neighborhoods was recently completed by the Institute for Urban Studies at the University of Notre Dame, under a grant from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)¹³. The report outlines six major approaches to defining neighborhoods:

- 1.) Homogeneous - assumes that there exists distinct physical boundaries to neighborhood areas and that persons of similar demographic and ethno-cultural characteristics tend to reside in these areas. The assumption is that the city is a composition of these bounded units, each with their own distinct population.

- 2.) Intimate - a humanistic perspective of the city, characterizing neighborhoods as geographic areas in which deep and intimate social ties are established and sustained. The "urban village"¹⁴ concept of neighborhood fits into this category, in which a rural social organizational system is recreated in an urban setting. Of particular importance in using this analytical approach

is sufficient data for establishing religious, ethnic and cultural commonality, and being able to assess the occurrence of "neighboring" interpersonal contacts.

3.) Political - the emphasis is on political alliance as a determinant of neighborhoods. The implication is that awareness of the neighborhood involves a certain commitment to becoming involved in political issues which affect its future. Frederickson's position on decentralization and issue analysis falls into this category.

4.) Functional - looks at the neighborhood from a perspective of assessing the service concerns of a group of residents. Commonality of interests is examined, but unlike the previous two methodologies, the interests shared have a base in service availability: schools, retail facilities, health and safety services and personnel, and recreation areas.

5.) Economic - evaluates a city as a composite of housing submarkets. Most of the above factors will enter in to an assessment of the character of the housing and residents of a particular area. Strong cultural ties will most likely result in an area being designated as a distinct submarket, as will a well established network of functional systems.

6.) Citizen Perception - drawing upon each of the other approaches, it is frequently utilized as a subjective analysis of neighborhood areas. Various techniques

ranging from random mail surveys to evaluating boundary definitions as determined by neighborhood organizations, have been used. Although in theory a fine comparative calibration, problems arise with persons identifying an area larger (West Side) or smaller (a two block area) than the actual meaningfully defined area. This results from an inadequate understanding of what "neighborhood" means. Once a definition can be agreed upon and disseminated for a particular city, these perceptive assessments are considerably more successful.

The report offers a rather comprehensive methodology for developing and initiating the neighborhood identification process. Included are a number of relevant case studies evaluating the comparative successes of various efforts in defining urban neighborhoods in different regions of the country. The need for flexibility in devising a neighborhood definition is implicit here. Although sociologically it may be possible to develop a general assessment of what neighborhood means, on a city by city scale neighborhoods are more difficult to stereotype. An observation can be made that it should be left to local residents and the city government to discuss and determine how the term "neighborhood" applies to the physical layout and residential settlement pattern that exists in that particular city.

To assist and augment sociological methodologies for defining and identifying urban neighborhoods, the need for concise and pertinent data is of paramount importance. On the

eve of another dicennial census, all those concerned with developing new and better ways of evaluating municipal subunits should give great support to developing useful aggregation of this mass of information that is soon to be compiled.

From the viewpoint of a city planner attempting to develop a technique to both identify and compare neighborhoods, block statistics from the U. S. Census can serve as a strong data base. From this information, each block in a city can be profiled to give a mean estimation of the residents of a block. By comparing adjacent blocks one can notice changes in housing type, family size and income, age of residents, ethnic and racial background and other demographic information. Careful comparison can lead to a grouping together of adjacent blocks, forming larger multi-block areas and eventually linking up to form complete neighborhoods.

Using the pure statistical aggregate block profiles as a foundation, the more subjective criteria should be overlayed onto a map of these "statistical neighborhoods". Those blocks which are identified by all or most of the criteria as part of "neighborhood X" can be considered the core of that neighborhood. Where functional, cultural or perceptual dimensions conflict with or contradict boundaries established by statistical profile, these areas must be outlined and scrutinized more closely. Intensive interviewing of residents in these gray areas, and complete statistical correlation of Census, survey obtained and other social indicators should offer sufficient information to assign these difficult blocks

to one neighborhood or another. If no correlation is evident, perhaps this area should be designated as a transitional buffer between these adjacent neighborhoods; a part of each but completely enclosed by neither.

Although admittedly a complex and time consuming effort, the process of describing, defining and identifying urban neighborhoods is crucial to understanding the social fabric of a city. Through analysis of neighborhoods, sociologists, planners and public officials can come to a better understand the roots of community problems, and where the organizational capacities exist to combat these problems. To ignore the neighborhood unit is to ask for a disorderly and fragile socioeconomic and political environment in any city.

ENDNOTES

1. Geno Baroni, Who's Left in the Neighborhood?, (Washington, D.C.: NCUEA, 1976), p. 5.
2. Suzanne Keller, The Urban Neighborhood : A Sociological Perspective, (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 88-89.
3. Keller builds on ideas developed in Kevin Lynch's Image of the City.
4. Keller, p. 29.
5. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
6. Edward Hall, The Hidden Dimension, (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Inc., 1969), p. 7.
7. Architects have been stereotyped as only having a physical orientation to human settlement.
8. Randolph T. Hester, Neighborhood Space, (Stroudsburg, Penn.: Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, Inc., 1975), p. v.
9. A phrase coined during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt, to describe the United States' interest in Cuba after the Spanish American War. Applied here to make the analogy of control without occupation.
10. George Frederickson, Neighborhood Control in the 1970's, (New York: Intext Press, Inc., 1973), p. 10.
11. Ibid., p. 265.
12. Such programs as Head Start, Legal Services, job placement services and adult education.
13. Research for and preparation of the text was supported by the Office of Neighborhoods, Voluntary Associations and Consumer Protection of HUD.
14. For further discussion of this concept, refer to Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers, (New York: Free press, 1962).

CHAPTER II

Developing Neighborhood Self Reliance

The most pressing problems facing urban areas today are not really city problems, but rather the collection of neighborhood problems. Crime, juvenile delinquency, housing deterioration, disinvestment, and mortgage and insurance redlining¹ are all issues that confront the city only after they have confounded residents of the neighborhoods in which the incidents occur. Historically, efforts to attack many of these problems have assumed a macroscopic operational level, attempting to alleviate the particular dilemma "city-wide".

Most "all out attacks" have some motivation in the political arena, owing to the fact that it is easier to justify an expenditure and personnel commitment that is directed to all areas of the city, rather than to single out a particular neighborhood and solve its problems. The ineffectiveness of the city-wide approach is evident from observation of urban problems that remain. It should be up to the neighborhood, its residents and their organization to analyze the full range of urban problems that confront that section of the community. These people often know well what the problems are, and are especially aware of the ultimate effects. Only through understanding the perspective of urban problems from the street level can root causes be determined and solutions developed. A combination of neighborhood capacity and effort coupled with municipal finances and private sector technical assistance would seem to offer the best alternative for designing

effective solutions to problems in urban neighborhoods.

It is in the best interests of a city to develop and strengthen the organization of residents at the neighborhood level. Through the operation of neighborhood meetings, various issues can be deliberated, and hopefully a consensus achieved on significant issues, problems and policies. The intent is to create a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of the particular neighborhood situation. Regardless of the outcome, if the city has become interested and involved in the neighborhood definition process, this concern is in it self a reassuring and stablizing force in an urban setting. A great ammount of legitimacy will accrue to a city government that earnestly solicits the involvement of the citizenry in meaningful and open discussion of their common predicaments.

Getting to this final step of community participation is no small effort. Many obstacles must be removed and suspicion alleviated on both sides. However the benefits to be achieved far outway any difficulties or hardship encountered along the process route. Getting cities and neighborhood groups to cooperate first requires that they communicate. The task of establishing lines of communication between neighborhoods and municipal government is likely to be a different experience for each city. In older urban areas, especially those in New England and other colonially settled states, and those other municipalities with distinctive residential or ethnic settlement patterns, there is generally less difficulty in determining which organizations represent which neighborhood

areas. Easier identification speeds up the process of establishing communication linkages, both inter-neighborhood and neighborhood-city. Newer cities, particularly those in the growing areas of the South and the "sun-belt" Southwest, have experienced much of their growth and prosperity during the past twenty-five years. These communities have tended to be reliant upon their residents in assisting efforts to "market" the community as a desirable place to live and work. Neighborhood associations, business groups and other civic organizations are depended upon to provide a base of support for the city to build on². This dependency has developed into a comparatively strong bond between the municipal government and organizations representing its subunits.

The manner in which a city has developed can effect how its neighborhoods have evolved. There is often great difficulty in defining neighborhoods relative to the particular settlement patterns of the area. Suburban communities often have neighborhoods that are ethnically and culturally diverse, held together by common economic class, family structure, educational concerns and other value systems. Common ground is difficult to determine, and suburban associations that develop tend to be crisis oriented, lacking a long range perspective and a complete understanding of how the neighborhood functions. Cities in this broad category often have as part of their history a short period of uncontrolled rapid growth, characteristic of mining towns, western port cities and communities that grew alongside the railroads and canals that

transported this nation through the Industrial Age.

If all cities were to fit nicely into the categories outlined, the process of understanding urban problems would be somewhat simpler. In fact there are many cities which fit more than one class, and some that have such a unique history of development as to defy categorization. It would be easy to justify shelving the idea of developing better ways to understand our urban areas and the problems indigenous to each, by asserting that every city in the United States is a unique entity, each having its own peculiar history, physical layout and residential settlement pattern. Although in a sense this is true, such an observation has little value to those who attempt to develop urban policy.

Is there some common link, some definable unifying factor that holds together the social fabric of our cities? The answer to this problem can be found by studying urban residents. Monsignor Geno Baroni, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Neighborhoods, Voluntary Associations and Consumer Protection³, observed that:

"To understand cities, you have to relate to them in terms of pluralism and diversity. People don't live in cities. They live in neighborhoods... and if neighborhoods die, cities die. And if you're going to revitalize cities, you've got to revitalize neighborhoods as well."⁴

The ultimate success of current efforts at urban revitalization will be dependent upon our success at improving conditions in the neighborhoods. As overwhelming as the urban crisis may seem from a metropolitan or national perspective, it

is obvious that the situation will be more easily understood when surveyed from street level⁵. The effort becomes more effective and realistic when people in the neighborhood take action and give their support to localized research, strategy development and implementation of neighborhood initiatives throughout the city, even though their area might not always be atop the priority list.

Achieving this objective requires understanding how neighborhood associations evolve, become organized and begin to formulate their agendas. This gradual transition follows a format that is generally consistent regardless of geographic location of the city. Any neighborhood goes through a series of progressively more organized and more significant steps. The following is an outline and description of the idealized development of neighborhood associations.

- Resident Awareness - This initial stage represents a transition from a position of strong individuality to an awareness of the importance of the community. As settlement patterns become more dense, there is a natural increase in interpersonal contacts. For example, as people talk more with one another, they become sensitive to the commonality of their situations, their occupations, and the ages and interests of their children. This awareness is fortified by common bonds of ethnicity, culture, religion and language. When asked where they live, people who have entered this level of social consciousness are likely to

respond not with a street address, but with the symbolic name of their parish, school district or other locally accepted designation for that part of the city they call home.

The awareness process has three stages. First is the recognition by residents living in a particular area that they can identify with many of their neighbors, and are part of a distinct neighborhood rather than just a section of some other subunit of the city. Once achieved, this neighborhood perception tends to be self-perpetuating. The second level dawns when newcomers to the area become aware of the "neighborhoodness" of their new surroundings, and become assimilated into it. The speed and ease with which the progression is made depends on how well the newcomer fits the profile of established residents, and the length of time in which the area has recognized itself as a neighborhood.

The third stage is attained when external recognition comes from citizens living outside the area, from the municipal government, and from the press. Events that occur within this newly acknowledged neighborhood will be publicized as taking place in "Jefferson Park" or "the Upper East Side" rather than "at 1217 Vargas Street". In the tertiary stage of resident awareness there evolves not an ability to define the exact perimeters of the subunit, but rather a realization of the neighborhood's existence, a general conception of its location and a perception of the

type of individual living there. In Providence, Rhode Island one hears such expressions as, "That place is up on Federal Hill," or "I think that family is from Fox Point."⁶ External perceptions of a neighborhood can be positive and complimentary, or negative stereotypes, but the very existence of wide external perception is in itself an important transition for a neighborhood.

- Capacity Building and Catalytic Change - This stage is attained when citizens of a particular neighborhood realize that there is a measure of power generated by collective concern and action on an issue of neighborhood interest. This new found strength is greater than the sum of the energies of individual members, due to the fact that a certain ammount of "kenetic energy"⁷ is generated by people working together. Five individual families complaining about a rat "problem" may draw some attention, but an association of fifty homeowners bothered by a rat "infestation" will draw action.

The catalytic change that evolves here is the development of a "self-help" state of mind when identifying the range and extent of neighborhood problems. The misconception that the paternal city or other external forces will always appear and solve local ills, is replaced by a position of preferring to develop solutions with the capacities that exist within the neighborhood. An approach to a particular problem, that has its roots in the

neighborhood or was spawned by local discussion, will stand a better chance of acceptance and success. Barriers to cooperation are minimized when people perceive that their neighbor's ideas and their own, have played a part in the final approach developed. The extent of cooperation is likely to relate directly to the perceived degree of incorporation of neighborhood based proposals and ideas into the municipally initiated action.

- Concern and Advocacy - the period of time in which people who recognize themselves as part of a neighborhood seek to discover and identify the problems that confront their local area. In this phase citizens begin to become formally organized, and do not wait to respond to city requests for information and suggestions. The residents of a neighborhood openly support the formation of an association to represent their interests, and many join the membership roles. The association incorporates as a formal organization, with a charter, by-laws and procedural rules, and gradually assumes a role of advocacy for the neighborhood.

- Crisis Intervention - a true test of the strength of a neighborhood organization. The ability of an association to recognize an evolving problem as a "crisis", to motivate and organize a coalition of interested citizens, businesses, and other neighborhood forces, will forecast

the futures of the organization's leaders and perhaps affect the organization itself. To be designated a crisis, an issue must be of such major significance as to pose a threat to the lives or lifestyles of many neighborhood residents or business firms. Such events as construction of a major transportation network, water and sewer systems, or severe pollution problems are typical examples.

Oftentimes, in neighborhood areas with little or no communal organization, the presentation of such a crisis will create enough interest in maintaining the community to create an association in its wake. As people are drawn together by their common predicament and join an effort to fight off an imposing menace, a sense of togetherness evolves. Neighbors who may never have gotten to know one another, begin to communicate, to realize that they have much more in common than the encroaching spectre of an interstate highway being built through their section of the city.

From this new awareness evolves a raised level of consciousness about the advantages and special problems that exist within the neighborhood. The energy generated in reaction to the aforementioned crises can be captured and redirected into the formation or strengthening of an organization, if there is sufficient interest and common trust. The successful resolution of a crisis situation is often adequate enough to provide just the right amount of continued interest. The residents, particularly those

involved with the crisis effort, have a new feeling of pride, a sense of accomplishment that can be translated into a continuing effort if the right actors take advantage of the situation^s. The key component that must exist is confidence in the organization and the neighborhood.

- Organizational Confidence - Confidence here has two levels: the legitimacy of the organization from the perspective of community members, and the credibility the organization has with the city in accomplishing certain tasks. Both are a function of performance, the ability of the association to fulfill to a high degree the expectations of those concerned with the outcome.

Municipal governments expect neighborhood associations to serve as barometers of city conditions, to offer advice to the city when necessary, and to assist in carrying out the implementation of policies and decisions. This latter expectation presents a dilemma for neighborhood associations. To be cast in the role of mayoral puppet or local salesman for city policy puts the group leaders on unstable ground, particularly when it is obvious that the neighborhood had little input into formulation of those policies. Conversely, if the leadership persists in advocating the neighborhood position without relent or hint of compromise, legitimacy for the group may rise at the local level. The tradeoff may be loss of credibility among municipal leaders, a perception of the association as

merely a belligerent, uncooperative faction within the community. The city government is likely to avoid contact with this association, believing that any pertinent discussion will end in stalemate. Unable to produce a visible product, the leadership is either changed by election or the organization may break apart under the strain of ineffectiveness.

The obvious answer to the organizational dilemma is compromise. Neighborhood leaders need to develop the capacity to arbitrate among competing interests within their area, to be able to assign priorities to the most important components of the neighborhood's position. These leaders must have the foresight or political astuteness of knowing when to scuttle insignificant aspects of their position that may appear untenable to the city and/or unfair to other neighborhoods.

Reasonableness must be present on both sides of city/neighborhood conflicts for a viable resolution to be achieved. The city must realize that it cannot expect an association to nonchalantly renege on its commitment to represent the best interests of the neighborhood, especially regarding matters that have been approved by vote of the full membership. The association and the neighborhood residents must come to understand that the city cannot extend privileges or commitments to one area that cannot be offered to every other neighborhood, unless circumstances are immediate and extreme. As critical as

credibility and legitimacy are to a neighborhood association, so are consistency and equity important tenets for city government.

A special concern in building confidence in a neighborhood association is the issue of representativeness. Most municipal and metropolitan governments or planning bodies want some assurance that the organization that carries the name "West Side" or "Little Tokyo" really represents the interests of that section of the community. Is equitable representation indicated by comparison of demographic profiles of leadership versus general membership or neighborhood? Do minorities and women take an active part in the operation of the association, and if not, why not?

Representativeness is best judged in terms of performance and satisfaction⁹. Although it is important for a neighborhood association to have an open membership policy, it is often true that some members may rise to the top, perhaps be a bit more eloquent than the average citizen, and profess to speak for their minority group or for the whole association. A phenomenon often associated with citizen participation, the evolution of a "participatory elite"¹⁰, should be avoided. The real interests of the particular minority group may in fact be overshadowed by the personal and political agendas of the small group who actually assume control roles in the organization. This is not to say that minorities should

not have representation or spokespersons; but that the people should speak through their spokesman rather than he (or she) speaking for the group.

- Neighborhood Self-Governance - When the city is satisfied that the particular neighborhood association has the support of the local community, and the capacity to deal with neighborhood plans, programs and policy matters, this subunit area has reached the end of the continuum. The intent is not to have every community association operate the daily affairs of that neighborhood, but to have some control over the planning and decision-making process that effects the long range future of the locale. This transition should not give a neighborhood the power to levy or raise taxes, hire city personnel or make metropolitan decisions.

What can happen is that the neighborhood association presents its case for funding of certain programs or redevelopment efforts within, or affecting, its designated representation area. The association should make decisions in how to spend the money allocated by the city to it through federal, state and other sources. This process is currently in effect with present guidelines for the distribution of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG). Citizen review boards can have input into the planning process in the Urban Development Action Grant

program (UDAG)¹¹. Under HUD's Neighborhood Self-Help Development program (NSHD), a neighborhood group can get financial assistance directly from the Federal government to carry out plans which have been developed at the local level. Further discussion of how Federal programs affects neighborhoods can be found in Chapter IV, and neighborhood self-governance is given further consideration in Chapter VI.

The history of most neighborhood associations is one of peaks and valleys, times of prominence and times of discreditation. Strong neighborhood associations are built on four fundamental ideals: capacity building, credibility, representativeness and legitimacy. With these qualities imbedded into the organizational hierarchy, associations following this model are likely to have a better chance of success. All four principles are important to building an effective and efficient association, and lack of any one will lead to weakness in other parts of the structure. Yet it is apparent that whatever the course taken by city residents in forming interest protecting community groups, neighborhoods will be a prominent force on the urban scene for some time to come.

ENDNOTES

1. Redlining is a colloquial term applied to exclusionary lending practices in certain economically depressed areas.

2. For additional information on alternative approaches to city-citizen interaction, refer to Douglas Yates, The Ungovernable City, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977).

3. Established in 1976 within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

4. Thomas P. Glynn, "An Interview with Monsignor Geno Baroni," Neighborhood ; the Journal of City Preservation, no. 3 (December 1978): 2.

5. This is not to suggest that reform measures can only be implemented at the local level.

6. Federal Hill and Fox Point are two neighborhoods in Providence which have dominant ethnic settlement patterns.

7. A physics term for energy of motion, used here to characterize the energy that is generated by community interaction.

8. However, a return to complacency can also occur, resulting in a weakening of the organization.

9. Douglas Yates, Neighborhood Democracy - The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Co., 1973), p. 72.

10. Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP no. 4 (July 1969), p. 391.

11. Authorized under Section 18 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1979.

CHAPTER III

The Model Cities Experience

Model Cities is a term that is familiar to all urban planners . To many it connotes failure, the disenfranchisement of the planning process, an era of comprehensive planning that had mostly negative results. Others realize that the experience gained from this program was educational for students of urban policy. When its second generation impacts are considered it certainly does not appear a total failure. Indeed, it seems the Model Cities effort represented a philosophical obstacle that had to be tested and tried in order to open the eyes and minds of planners, elected officials, administrators and other public servants to new methodologies and approaches to dealing with urban problems .

The Model Cities program was designed to concentrate public and private resources in a comprehensive five-year attack on the social, economic, and physical problems of slum and blighted neighborhoods. Authorized by Title I of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966, the stated purpose was "to upgrade the total environment of such neighborhoods and significantly improve the lives of residents¹."

Model Cities was initially intended to serve a " demonstration " function as the title of the enabling legislation suggests. A few localities, it was thought, would be selected as testing grounds for the policy and program initiatives. However, with the problems related to race and

poverty reaching crisis proportions by the mid and late 1960's, the demand for some strategy, any strategy forced the hand of the federal government. The Demonstration Cities Program was put into full scale effect, long before the proper time .

The program's approach was designed to incorporate neighborhood level citizen input into the planning, program development and implementation stages of the community development and redevelopment process . At the outset, cities were invited to submit applications for funding to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the administering agency . Each applicant city was to designate a "model neighborhood" area, a section of the city which was predominantly residential in character, with large concentrations of low income families and many hard core slum areas.

The unique characteristics of the Model Cities Program were: the promise of a coordinated Federal response to solving local urban problems; the supplemental grants intended to give a city greater fiscal flexibility in carrying out its program; and the design for a working relationship between local residents and their city government.

The first year of funding under Model Cities consisted of direct one-year planning grants intended to cover 80 per cent of the "cost of planning comprehensive programs to raise substantially the levels of housing, education, health and medical treatment, employment and job training, income, and social services in the model neighborhood²." Upon successful

completion and approval of the plans, those activities would be eligible for funding under many Federal Grant-in-Aid (categorical) programs, as well as Model Cities Supplemental Grants to support advanced planning and implementation activities. Although HUD was designated as the administering agency, other Federal agencies having urban assistance programs were under executive order and other bureaucratic commitments to cooperate in developing joint funding and program packages. Those principal agencies involved in the Model Cities effort were the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce (EDA), Health Education and Welfare, Interior, Justice (Community Relations Service), Labor, Transportation, and the Office of Economic Opportunity.

As mentioned above, the first stage of Model Cities was development of a general comprehensive plan with the second and third stages of activity intended to be a translation of the objectives established in stage one into dollar figures. In stage two the City Demonstration Agency (CDA), a body with responsibility for local administration of the program, was expected to refine its funding priorities within the constraints of expected available funding from existing state, federal and local sources. Citizen participation was expected to be instrumental over this period during which the five year objectives were ranked for the model neighborhood. Stage three sought to establish a structure for developing more definite action plans and programs for the first year of funding. Stage one was given an eight month deadline, and stages two and three

were to be completed by the end of the twelfth month from the date of award³.

The HUD requirements presented a difficult task to the City Demonstration Agencies Selected by the elected government of the local community, administration of the Model Cities function was either delegated to an existing city department or assigned to an agency established solely to fulfill the program requirement. The latter was the more common occurrence. Mayors across the country saw the CDA as a device to incorporate the views of the more important and outspoken leaders from the problem area, in cooperation with representatives of city department that were to be directly involved in the redevelopment efforts⁴. Also, it was a means to get members of racial and ethnic minorities involved in city government. Traditional barriers to grass roots participation had been broken away in part by the requirements of HUD and partly by the perceived short life of the program⁵.

Establishment of a new agency to run Model Cities on the local , level was, as mentioned, the more frequent approach to administration. Understandably, many problems were encountered. HUD's tall orders and high expectations put tremendous pressure on the newly formed agencies. The task of performing a "planning" function, a concept new to some city department officials let alone local citizens, required achieving compromise of consensus on many delicate issues , problem areas and perspective approaches. The CDA's were generally composed of community actors who had recently and

frequently been at odds on many of the same issues they were now expected to develop comprehensive solutions for. The chemistry was often all wrong for the kind of result HUD was expecting, especially in light of the rigidly established time constraints .

From the perspective of the Federal Agencies though, the approach and the time schedule was worthy and necessary. The purpose of Model Cities was in fact to address the urban problems that had come to the surface so vividly in the turbulent 1960's. In addition, it must be remembered that Model Cities was intended as a " demonstration " program which was designed to test the value of a coordinated, comprehensive approach in dealing with urban problems at the local level.

Although the institutionalized system that developed to support Model Cities in fact hampered the achievement of many of the program's objectives, it is doubtful that requiring that the administrative function be assigned to an existing city department would have produced any better product. In fact, settling into the hands of an established bureaucratic agency with its own tried and true decision making process ingrained into the organizational hierarchy, it is likely that citizen participation would have played even less of a role in deciding critical issues. Most probably the designated agency would have developed its plan for the model neighborhood, established funding priorities and an action plan strategy, and then sought to gain the support of local citizen groups. This scenerio did occur in some cities which chose to assign the CDA function to

a line agency, but some others choosing this approach fared rather well .

It appears that the problems with the Model Cities Program go deeper than institutional constraints or committee organization⁶. The problems were many, penetrating and weakening the program from the national level down to the model neighborhood itself. The Federal agencies which were expected to cooperate with the efforts of the local CDAs in packaging categorical programs could not even establish lines of communication amongst themselves. Many of these executive departments had operated autonomously for years without coordinating their activities, and often without concern for the efforts of their bureaucratic colleagues . These Federal agencies had established mechanisms for policy analysis, program evaluation and decision making. To expect them to divest priority setting and other controls to newly formed, untested local CDAs, without a precise design , was asking for too much.

Another problem at the national level was the change in the executive office after the 1968 presidential election. The Democratic platform that had forged ahead with the Civil Rights Act and the " War on Poverty " lost out to a Republican platform that spoke of " the power of the silent majority " and a revenue sharing program which promised substantial support for the suburbs. The effort and expense to end our involvement in Vietnam became paramount to our domestic priorities. Nixonian urban policy is perhaps best characterized by his

moratorium on housing subsidies in January, 1973 .

President Nixon interpreted the federal government's position on equality issues as being against racial segregation but supporting social class segregation. That is, that the federal government would be opposed to neighborhood segregation on the basis of race alone, but would find little objection to higher status persons keeping lower income people out of their neighborhoods⁷. Although it can be said that those persons in the lower socioeconomic strata represent many ethnic and racial backgrounds, it is a fair statement that blacks are markedly overrepresented in these classes. Additionally, little was done on the national level to ensure that bankers, realtors and other controlling factions in the housing arena would conform to federal antidiscrimination policy .

At the state level, the major problem was lack of a defined role for state government. Many important programs related to the urban dilemma, such as education and welfare, were administered by state agencies . Most states also had manpower and financial resources that were critical to meeting city needs. Model Cities, however, took the power angle, sidestepping state government and dealing directly with city officials in an attempt to get at the root of local urban problems⁸. Without a prescribed role, and feeling virtually ignored by the process, state officials generally stood by and watched Model Cities break apart from within. It seems that getting to the problems resulted in making inefficient use of resources and expertise that could perhaps have solved those

problems .

Although the advent of strong and active neighborhood level citizen participation was a major outcome of the Model Cities program, it can be observed that in many cases the motives for obtaining that input were less than genuine concern for improvement of the neighborhood or a revamping of the planning process. Citizen group organization and activity often arose out of concern for relevant planning issues, but the real agenda appears to have been gaining control of the political process . The purpose for many local factions was to test the political waters, to acquire a measure of political power, a voice in the city government, a more equitable of city funds. Although admittedly not without value, the political power struggles distracted many from giving proper attention to planning .

Part of the problem rested with the CDAs. Although HUD had established certain requirements for involvement of local citizens in the process, the particulars of that interaction were left rather vague. In particular it was unclear at what stage citizen input was to be incorporated. Many cities did not bother to listen to citizen groups until well after the model neighborhood had been designated and research begun. Others waited until long range plans had been developed before seeking general consensus from neighborhood dwellers. Local neighborhood representatives to the CDA too frequently became part of a " participatory elite " who professed to speak for the community as a whole⁹. It is not impossible to conceive of

how they often became coopted into approving plans which they had little part in developing or control over .

It would be unreasonable to call the Model Cities Program a complete failure. Despite the many political, institutional, and cultural obstacles that hindered its progress and resulted in its ultimate demise, some good did arise from the ashes . Regardless of what may have motivated them, this innovative program represented the first occasion in which many minorities had taken an active part in city government. Model Cities laid out a framework for incorporating citizen participation, which has served as a foundation for subsequent efforts to involve local residents in the decision making process. Despite the often time consuming rhetoric that characterized the Model Cities planning process, the legacy of the program remains with us today, as all Federally funded and most state funded urban programs have established requirements for involving local residents in planning their collective futures .

On a case by case level, most cities across the country learned from the Model Cities experience. Municipal capacity was pushed to the breaking point as elected officials were put to task in proving their ability to plan and coordinate revitalization efforts¹⁰. Local residents learned more about how their government system worked (or didn't work), and city governments discovered much more about the citizenry than could be found in any U. S. Census data profiles. It was at times explosive, sometimes ineffective, often inefficient, but Model Cities was always an educational experience. This observation

is best illustrated by a quote from Marshal Kaplan, Gans and Kahn in their book The Model Cities Program reviewing the activities of the first year:

" For those who saw in the Model Cities planning approach an easy way to resolve urban problems, the first year of planning must have been disappointing. For those who saw in the Model Cities planning approach a better way to resolve urban problems, the first year of planning ... gives cause for optimism¹¹" (emphasis added).

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Programs of HUD, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 8.

2. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Model Cities Program - Questions and Answers, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 4.

3. Marshall Kaplan, Gans and Kahn, The Model Cities Program, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 8.

4. Douglas Yates, Neighborhood Democracy - The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Co., 1973), excerpted from chapter 7.

5. Many city officials believed the raised consciousness of and participation in municipal affairs was a direct result of the Model Cities Program, and would fade when the program dissolved. refer to Bernard Frieden's Benign Neglect.

6. Interview with Nicolas P. Retsinas, Mayor's Office City of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 30 April 1980.

7. Kent P. Schwirian ed., Contemporary Topics in Urban Sociology, (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1977), p. 315.

8. The observation being that the states had a long, displayed, anti-urban bias (Roscoe Martin).

9. Douglas Yates, The Ungovernable City, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), excerpted from chapter 3.

10. National Model Cities Executive Director's Association, The Mayor and Model Cities, (Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, 1973), pp. 3-7.

11. Marshall Kaplan, Gans and Kahn, p. 99.

CHAPTER IV

Federal Programs and Urban Neighborhoods

When our forefathers designed the political framework for this nation, it was impossible for them to have envisioned a governmental system, an economy, a society as complex and diverse as that which has evolved. Indeed, the Constitution they established was constructed to eliminate or control the problems of power struggles, political and religious conflicts and exploitation of minority members, a situation that had plagued other nations. Some flexibility was incorporated to allow the system to bend with the advent of major technological innovation or social change. However, the principle ideal which was expected to guide this nation through difficult times, was the focus of government acting as an extension of the polis¹ rather than the citizenry being an instrument of the government:

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people²."

It must be remembered by urban planners, elected officials and citizens group alike that our system of government is a federal republic and a representative democracy. Federal refers to the manner in which our national government is organized with the cooperation of the "federated" units, or states. These units are directly responsible for the administration of national government at the local level. The concept of representative democracy assumes that through free

election, the people select members of their community to represent them in overseeing the direct operation of the system³. These two fundamental concepts are sometimes overshadowed by our more immediate attention to current issues and development of temporary solutions to recurring problems.

Although American cities existed and thrived quite well during the Revolutionary War and Federalist Era, it is important to note that no mention is made of them in the U. S. Constitution. Though some groups attending the Constitutional Convention in 1787 lobbied for a strong role for city government, the position of James Madison and his followers won out in the final drafting of this fundamental document. It was expected that cities would continue to exist as social and governmental entities, but giving a direct measure of power to local governments was attacked as having potentially grave effects on the effort to unify the infant country. As articulated by James Madison in Federalist Paper number 10, the theory was that offering a defined Federal role to cities would serve to institutionalize municipal government as a force in national politics⁴. There was concern that the national government would have no way to control the formation of cities (and perhaps should not have control), and that burgeoning urban areas would spread and diffuse coordination of government. It was expected that the additional political impetus would conflict with state representation at the national level, creating faction between members of neighboring communities and state government. The primary objective was to

create a united country, not risk destroying what existed by creating vehicles of faction.

The legacy of the response of state government to urban problems is a significant criticism of our system of government. Cities, until recently, had historically been underrepresented in state legislatures, with state governments in most areas of the country giving attention primarily to rural interests. It was generally believed that cities had adequate resources, manpower and direction to deal with their own problems. State governors usually did not desire to meddle in the complex affairs of city government⁵.

The anomaly of underrepresentation for urban areas began in the Federalist Era and survived through to the 20th Century. It was then that states began to notice the problems of cities were quickly becoming more widespread, and ultimately fell into the hands of the state, due to lack of resources and expertise at the municipal level. City efforts to overcome overcrowding, economic stability, traffic congestion and related health and welfare problems, had met with little success. With the onset of the Great Depression it became apparent that it was up to the states and the Federal government to respond.

Most states either initiated or assumed operation of local health and welfare operations, unemployment and other social concerns. Where sufficient interest or motivation was lacking on the part of a particular state, the Feds entered the scene to offer some persuasion. Most of the Federal activity that evolved was in the form of financial support of existing or

newborn programs. Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" response to the problems of the Great Depression is a milestone of Federal involvement in local government. The laissez-faire⁶ policies that had pervaded the consciousness of national government since the birth of this nation came to a crashing halt, regrettably at the expense of tremendous hardship that was wrought by the Depression through the 1930's. If a phoenix did arise from those ashes, it was the concern of the Federal government for local socio-economic problems.

Not all Federal initiatives have had positive impacts on cities. Indeed, as hindsight attests, in attempting to solve urban problems in individual functional areas, an approach in keeping with the federal government's organizational structure, many more problems have been created for the city and its' neighborhoods. A case in point is the implementation of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944⁷. In the effort to relieve problems of congestion and air quality and link major urban centers with defendable roads, many neighborhoods were disrupted and tens of thousands of people displaced in the path of the right-of-way. While admittedly relieving some aesthetic and environmental problems in the inner city⁸, the new highway systems also made suburbs possible and facilitated migration for many urban residents. Construction related nuisances had deleterious effects on downtowns and neighborhood areas along the highway's path, disrupting the desirability of the living environment for many residential districts.

The flight to the suburbs was expedited by other Federal

programs, particularly home mortgage assistance. Post World War II increases in real income, coupled with Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration low interest guaranteed mortgages, enabled many blue collar, low-middle income and young families to purchase modern single family homes in low-density suburbs, an opportunity previously reserved for higher income groups⁹. Urban tenant families saw the opportunity to invest and improve their quality of life, and followed the crowd. Returning veterans and others forming new families provided addition demand.

There seems to have been a paradox in force when FHA was subsidizing the suburban exodus while the Urban Renewal Administration was trying to bring middle-class people back into the city¹⁰. Both were within the Housing and Home Finance Agency, but were serving different masters ideologically. Unfortunately, the net effect was a combination attack that tore the vitals from many urban neighborhoods. The housing programs were enticing urban dwellers, especially those renting their quarters, out of the city, creating a great supply of rental units. As more of these units became vacant and the demand for rental housing decreased, many landlords could no longer afford to maintain their properties due to reduction of income. Deterioration made these available units even less attractive, and soon blight set in. Neighborhood commercial activity shrank as the market demand for their products began to drift away. Many businesses fled to the suburbs to provide goods and services to these new and relocated consumer markets,

leaving the urban neighborhood with diminished commercial capacity. Lack of convenient shopping facilities further tarnished the appeal of the urban community. America's affinity for automobiles and the newly constructed highway networks, placed the benefits of the downtown only a short ride away. "City" was fast becoming a profane word.

The Urban Renewal Program sought to inject some vitality back into the American city. Through large scale clearance projects, this effort was intended to solve the problems of a particular location not by removing the problem, but by removing the man-made environment itself. Those living within clearance areas (almost two-thirds of cleared slums were inhabited by black families¹¹) were forced to relocate, theoretically into available standard housing. The supply of decent urban housing could not meet this unnatural demand, and the displaced were forced to move to other deteriorating housing areas, creating new slums or crowding into slums that had been overlooked by Urban Renewal. The failure of this program can be underscored by observing that between 1949 and 1964 only one-half of one per cent of all federal expenditures under Urban Renewal was spent on relocation of individuals and families¹².

The shortcomings of Model Cities were a basic inability to coordinate programs and funding directed to urban areas, and an inability to function within existing political and institutional constraints. Although the Model Cities concept of rebuilding the human as well physical environment

(particularly with regard to housing of the urban poor), was quite honorable, the product fell far short of the program's goals and most expectations.

The legacy which we are left with in the area of Federal assistance is replete with acronyms and program numbers, and some innovation. CDBG, UDAG, UMTA, 312, Section 8, CETA and Title XX all translate into an enormous cash flow into urban areas. New approaches are evolving and some attention is being given to learning from the past, but has the predicament changed much at the neighborhood level? Must we continue to look for answers through new programs or can adjustments be made to existing assistance programs to make them more effective?

The new era of HUD programs provide an array of strategies. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are flexible allocations to local governments to fund an assortment of community development activities. These grants were established under "hold-harmless"¹³ provisions, and fund, among other things, activities previously eligible under separate categorical programs¹⁴. The initial three-year authorization of CDBG funds totaled \$10.95 billion (FY 1978 - 1980), and provided funding to metropolitan cities and qualified urban counties on the basis of "entitlement", a formula which includes population, poverty, age and overcrowding of housing, and growth lag data¹⁵. The remaining "discretionary" funds were distributed to smaller communities and specially impacted areas on a competitive basis. CDBG permits local officials to

determine spending priorities, but the legislation outlines "...adequate housing, suitable living environment and economic opportunity for low income groups" as essential. This open-ended approach has been rather well received by the local governments, allowing them more discretionary control over local Federal expenditures than any time before¹⁶. Federal requirements for housing assistance plans and equal opportunity provisions are designed to help keep the program honest. Strong input from neighborhood and citizen associations has served to bring the decision-making process into the public domain. The effect of this approach on low-income and minority people is still undetermined.

Section 312 of the Housing Act of 1964 has recently been reorganized as a useful program for urban areas¹⁷. Under this section, loans are made available to residential and nonresidential property owners in depressed areas¹⁸. The program is intended to prevent unnecessary demolition of relatively sound structures that require some improvement to bring condition of the property up to applicable standards. A unique feature of this program permits business tenants to apply for funds if their lease extends at least as long as the loan terms. All applicants must demonstrate a capacity to repay the loan, and must have been denied by private sources. Preference is given to low and moderate income applicants, but many have difficulty in establishing credit and ability to repay.

Some 312 loans have gone to persons in higher income

brackets who have been able to certify a genuine interest in the particular area¹⁹. The three per cent interest loans may not exceed \$27,000 per unit (\$50,000 for nonresidential), but a landlord can apply for assistance for more than one unit. consequently, there have been some abuses, particularly among absentee landlords. The scheme is to purchase property located in eligible areas, and rent out or let them lie vacant until the structures deteriorate to substandard condition. The property becomes eligible for Section 312, but only at the risk of great harm to the particular neighborhood. This practice of "speculative decline" is undocumented but considered to be a substantial problem, especially among residential properties in lower-income slum areas²⁰.

President Carter's National Urban Policy represents a milestone for improving federal domestic assistance to urban areas. A few of the programs stemming from these policies that have reached the implementation stage are worth mentioning.

Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs) are funds offered to "distressed" cities and urban counties for revitalization of the local economy and reclamation of deteriorated neighborhoods. Structured to provide one time financing of important projects and revitalization efforts, not much attention has been given to neighborhood impacts of these project activities. However, the attraction of private capital investment into the city and increasing employment opportunities for low income and minority persons has brought UDAG much acclaim. The program has become so popular that

funding levels were recently raised from \$400 million to \$600 million per fiscal year, with at least 25% of that amount reserved for cities under 50,000 population. The UDAG First Annual Report claims that the partnership of public, private and local effort has generated private investment of \$2.9 billion, an average of 5.95 private dollars per each UDAG dollar invested. Difficulty in securing legally binding private commitment has been a recurring problem for many cities, as well as the usual long time commitment to developing the Environmental Impact Statement. It is apparent, however, that despite minor problems UDAG will remain as a funding strategy in the near future²¹.

The Neighborhood Self Help Development Program (NSHD), in establishing direct federal-neighborhood linkages, is a new step for American federalism. As incorporated into the National Urban Policy, NSHD permits neighborhood associations to plan and initiate revitalization projects for their local community. With a limit of \$125,000 per grant, the awards are not expected to substantially fund large scale redevelopment efforts. Rather, this program is to provide supplemental funding to catalyze projects for which substantial planning has been done.

Only mayoral approval²² of a NSHD project or program is required, with administrative responsibility remaining with the applying organization. A neighborhood association must establish "demonstrable capacity²³" to administer the activity before the application can be considered. The first round

application period ended March 21, 1980, but awards have not been made as of this writing. Although the appropriation is small (\$15 million for FY 1980), NSHD is expected to test the ability of neighborhoods to plan for their futures and to maintain themselves. Increased funding can be expected if the program proves successful. However, since the program tends to favor well organized, experienced local groups, some care must be given to assure that a "most favored neighborhood"²⁴ dilemma does not occur. This kind of situation would discriminate against unstable neighborhoods that perhaps are unable to certify their capacity, but could really put the funds to good use.

The success of President Carter's National Urban Policy will be heavily dependent upon these action oriented programs.

Perhaps the most important program affecting the availability of suitable living space in cities is HUD's Section 8 Lower-Income Rental Assistance²⁵. In this rent-subsidy program, HUD pays the difference between what a lower-income household can afford to pay, and the "fair market rent"²⁶ for an adequate housing unit. The principle applied here is that no eligible tenant need pay more than 25 per cent of net income towards rent. Certain health and safety standards are applied before an unit can be accepted for funding under this program.

Section 8 is divided into two basic categories: assistance to existing units or a rent guarantee for new or rehabilitated

dwellings. Local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) are usually responsible for administering the "existing" part of the program, and proposals for new and rehabilitated units are submitted directly to HUD, usually in response to an invitation to bid within a certain area. This program has been particularly successful as an impetus to the development of housing for elderly and handicapped people.

Although having a positive effect in producing or maintaining a supply of urban housing units, Section 8 is not without its problems.

The local PHA is responsible for supervising existing subsidized units, and control of newer units after construction or repair, and have substantial discretion in the operation of the program. Many PHAs apparently spend great time and effort in implementing the Section 8 design, and unearthing those who seek to abuse the program's flexibility. Others see the administrative task as an additional burden adding to their overwhelming responsibilities.

One aspect of the administration of Section 8 that theoretically could cause decline of housing conditions in urban neighborhoods is inspection and code enforcement performance. This task is potentially the most time consuming for the PHAs. Although guided by general HUD regulations on housing conditions, local standards are applied in determining if a particular unit is acceptable. Once approved, these properties are reinspected on only an irregular basis or if a tenant makes a formal complaint. Many units are probably below

local standards, though the landlord keeps getting the rental assistance payments. Knowing this, some landlords delay maintenance until a complaint is filed, at which time they can make repairs or terminate the contract.

The tenant is often left with the choice of living in a substandard apartment or having to leave and find another. Obviously, decent low income housing is not in very great abundance nor does it meet demand, and many tenants are reluctant to move once established. If the landlord's unit deteriorates severely enough, then he can tap into the Section 312 program to make repairs. The cycle is self-perpetuating, as the programs reinforce poor maintenance practices.

The claim is made here that by adjusting some of the procedures , and changing policy under Section 8, some preservation and reclamation of urban housing can be effected. To begin with, standard inspection practices should be established at either the state or federal level. For units contracted under Section 8 or any federal or state rental assistance program, a yearly inspection of the property must be undertaken. Should it be found that a particular unit has fallen into disrepair and has become substandard by HUD or other agreeable definition, then the landlord shall be required to make the necessary repairs within a reasonably stipulated period of time.

If, at the end of the repair period, and without showing evidence of unusual or undue hardship, a landlord has not made the proper repairs, then HUD should take action against this

subsidized unit. One method might be to invalidate the Section 8 contract for that unit, and place considerable constraints on other subsidized properties owned by the landlord in offense. However, this would cause considerable hardship to the tenant, now likely to be evicted if rental assistance is not available.

A more effective approach to this problem of deteriorating housing stock would be to have HUD oversee delinquent maintenance. If after the initial notice and grace period the repairs have not been made, then HUD could be authorized to subcontract the required repairs, to be paid for by deductions and penalties from that unit's Section 8 authorization. If the violation were extensive enough, the funds earmarked for any other rental assistance properties owned by the uncooperative landlord could be likewise withheld. Different interest penalties could be set depending upon the number of units involved, and the scale of a landlord's involvement with Section 8. The implication in the process outlined above is one of a warranty of habitability. In the initial Section 8 agreement, a landlord would be made aware of his responsibility to keep the subsidized unit in repair, subject to inspection and not including willful tenant destruction. If found not in compliance, the above stated sanction could be applied.

A tenant's right to a habitable living space is not a traditionally or widely accepted legal principle, although there is considerable discussion in state and federal courts on this issue. This warranty "...renders the tenant's agreement to pay rent contractually dependent upon the landlord's

covenant to deliver and maintain the premises in suitable condition²⁷." Such a provision in a Section 8 application would give tenants and the subsidizing agency contractual rights such as rescission, modification and retention of rent payments upon breach of the obligation²⁸.

This proposal may seem to be a radical attack on the private housing market, but in fact is intended to preserve it. Instead of letting housing dollars float away through cracked floors and broken windows in a Section 8 unit, this money could be used to leverage or even make the repairs. It can be argued that these provisions might dissuade prospective landlords from entering into such a contract. However, many landlords have become dependent upon Section 8 financing as a stable and secure method of operating. If administered fairly, the burden of proper upkeep would be distributed among all landlords, and the supply of well maintained, save and habitable housing in urban neighborhoods would be substantially increased.

Another concept that could offer great benefits to cities is that of program packaging. This refers to the practice of linking together multiple grants, programs and other resources into a more comprehensive attack on the physical and social blight othat continues to plague inner-city neighborhoods. Easing prohibitions and constraints to using federal assistance in one program as part of a city's matching financial committment in another, would make it easier for a community to become involved in more programs.

From a planning perspective, packaging would reinforce the

consistency of city-wide and neighborhood plans. By requiring that intermatched programs have a common set of goals and do not conflict in their planning and implementation phases, lines of communication between agencies at the local and national level could be established. Obviously the packaging process would have to be scrutinized on a case by case basis. One would not want to see welfare or housing money being spent to build a city golf course. The opportunity to weave programs together has the potential to offer a community great flexibility in tailoring existing programs to meet their unique local needs. The interagency cooperation that this would inspire could only be beneficial to the operation of the city in responding to citizen needs.

This discussion has analyzed many federal aid programs. There are a great many more, both public and private, that could withstand major modifications, but time and complexity does not permit further consideration here. The message that should be derived is that we already have a great many programs at our disposal. That they have been underutilized or inefficiently managed is evidenced by the myriad of problems that continue to grow in our nation's urban neighborhoods. The job of restoring our nation's cities requires much capital, labor, planning, coordination and most importantly, cooperation²⁹.

ENDNOTES

1. The word "polis" originates from Plato's Republic, and pertains to the human component of the city.
2. Article X of the U.S. Constitution.
3. The alternative is direct democracy, where all members of the society participate in the decision making process (town meeting concept). Aristotle referred to this idealized form as "chaos".
4. James Monroe, Federalist Paper #10, summarized.
5. Louis H. Massotti and Robert L. Lineberry eds., The New Urban Politics, (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1976).
6. From the French, meaning "do leave as is". Used by many historians to describe executive branch domestic policy prior to the 20th Century.
7. The 1944 Act was short-titled "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways", and was the actual enabling legislation. However, no significant construction on the system was begun until 1956.
8. In particular, air quality, noise abatement and reduction of heavy truck traffic travelling on city streets.
9. Herbert J. Gans, People and Plans, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 296.
10. Ibid., p. 297.
11. Ibid., p. 262.
12. Ibid., p. 263.
13. Hold-harmless refers to the HUD policy whereby all municipalities receiving funding under the previous categorical programs would be funded at the same average level.
14. Urban Renewal; Neighborhood Development Grants; Model Cities; Water and Sewer Grants; Neighborhood Facilities Grants; Public Facilities Grants; Rehabilitation Loans; and Open Space, Urban Beautification and Historic Preservation Grants.

15. Cities could apply under either of two eligibility formulas: the existing rating system under hold-harmless, or a revised system weighted to offer more consideration to areas with large amounts of older housing.

16. Observation obtained in conversation with municipal planners in East Providence, Rhode Island, South Bend, Indiana and HUD officials in Washington, D.C.

17. Recent changes in the legislation has made it easier to become eligible for Section 312, allowing persons above low income levels to apply (Title II, sec. 312, Housing and Community Development Act of 1977).

18. CDBG areas (Neighborhood Strategy Areas); Urban Homesteading areas (Section 810); Urban Renewal; and Code Enforcement areas.

19. Previous abuses of Section 312 financing have helped speed the gentrification of some transitional neighborhoods. Refer to Philip L. Clay, Neighborhood Renewal, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Co., 1979), p. 29.

20. Interview with Anne Stubbs, Governor's Office for Policy and Program Review, Providence, Rhode Island, 22 March 1979.

21. First round UDAG awards were criticized by neighborhood groups for neglecting neighborhood revitalization projects, and funding downtown CBD efforts. Subsequent grant rounds have awarded more funds to neighborhood based projects. (Refer to FY1978 UDAG Annual Report).

22. The mayor, or chief elected official, must certify that the project is not in conflict with city plans or policies.

23. Established by past performance or an objective audit.

24. Analagous to the phrase "most favored nation", a diplomatic trade status offered by the executive and Congress to U.S. allies.

25. Section 8 is used here as an example of the type of modification that could be made to an existing federal program. This is not meant to imply that only Section 8 could be changed, or that changing Section 8 regulations would offer the greatest benefit.

26. A rent value determined by HUD, supposedly reflective of the fair rental housing market in the particular area.

27. Boston College Law Review, "Implied Warranty of Habitability in Federal Housing," XIX no. 2 (January 1978), p. 344.

28. Ibid., p. 358.

sk.

29. ACIR, Improving Federal Grants Management, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 141.

CHAPTER V

"People, Building Neighborhoods"

The Report of the National Commission on Neighborhoods

The National Commission on Neighborhoods (NCN) was established by the National Neighborhood Policy Act of April, 1977, to conduct a twelve month research effort. The group was designed to have twenty members: two each from the House of Representatives (appointed by the Speaker) and the Senate (appointed by the Vice President), and sixteen specially qualified persons selected by the President¹. The participants reflected a wide range of geographic, racial, political, and ethnic interests, mirroring the existing plurality of American urban areas.

Awareness and concern for mortgage credit denial and unavailability of adequate insurance in older urban districts helped spawn a national consciousness about neighborhoods. The NCN evolved from the lobbying efforts of neighborhood associations around the country, trying to fight economic discrimination. Hearings considering the proposal for an NCN were held before the Senate Banking and Urban Affairs Committee² and the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development³ to discuss, "...the factors contributing to the decline of urban neighborhoods and the factors necessary to neighborhood survival and revitalization⁴."

The Commission conducted field hearings and research on location in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, St. Louis and Seattle. Utilizing the talents and contacts of the

membership, the NCN was divided into five task forces: Reinvestment; Economic Development; Legal, Fiscal and Administrative Obstacles to Neighborhood Self-Reliance; Delivery of Human Services; and Governance, Citizen Participation and Neighborhood Empowerment. Many conferences were sponsored on reinvestment, HUD programs, multi-family housing, neighborhood institutions and fiscal empowerment of neighborhood organizations.

The results of the NCN effort were delivered in a report to President Carter and the Congress on March 19, 1979. Contained was an analysis of the extent and depth of problems that confront neighborhoods in metropolitan areas, concluding with recommendations on economic development, housing, neighborhood self-help capacity and tax codes.

The final report, entitled People, Building Neighborhoods, was over 800 pages long and included conference reviews, transcripts of interviews, macro and microeconomic analyses and other more technical reports. The information was edited into a 350 page summary which was made available to neighborhood groups, institutions and the general public.

In the area of neighborhood reinvestment, the report investigates neighborhood economic policy on a national level and concludes that a serious void exists. The concept of a neighborhood as a "tightly dependent" economic unit has never been integrated into any comprehensive federal policy package. Ignoring their economic importance has wrought havoc on many urban neighborhoods, especially in older areas with a rapidly

deteriorating physical plant. Also of significance is the fact that most of these problem communities are densely populated by ethnic and racial minorities having their own special employment and economic problems, which serve to compound the dilemma.

The lack of economic policy for neighborhoods is not consistent with the role neighborhoods play in the functioning of a city. People live, educate their children, spend their money and often even work in their local community area, maintaining a cash flow that allows the the neighborhood, and ultimately the city, to operate. But no neighborhood is completely self-contained and self-sufficient. Without maintenance of existing facilities and capital investment to improve roads, sewers, water lines, sidewalks and other community areas, no neighborhood can expect to survive.

Response to urban problems to date has done more harm than good. As previously mentioned, the Urban Renewal approach tried "...removing neighborhoods as a cure for their ills⁶." In a small community, the planning answer to the problem would seldom be razing a section of town to cope with social and economic problems. Lack of understanding of what "neighborhood" is, and failure to realize that the diversity and human energy of urban neighborhoods is an asset to the city, has handicapped municipal government officials in attempts at neighborhood improvement.

Of particular interest in this section of the report is a consideration of neighborhood myths that have been perpetuated

by planners and policy makers in the public sector, and realtors, bankers and other private investment interests. These myths have little or no basis in scientific research, but are an expression of perception derived from outdated and inconclusive data and analysis. The three myths are:

1.) Older neighborhoods, either through "natural forces" or the competition of the marketplace, invariably decline and move towards blight as they filter into the hands of poorer residents.

2.) Racial change is a precursor of decline.

3.) Mixed land uses or the introduction of commercial or industrial uses into residential areas indicate and contribute to decline⁷.

These myths evolved partly from federal efforts in the Depression to improve housing conditions in the United States. Some human ecology research done at the University of Chicago during the early 1930's was absorbed by policy analysts at the national level, and endorsed by the newly formed Federal Housing Administration (FHA). In comparing human settlement patterns to territorial behavior of plants and animals, a theory of competition for space was applied to the urban phenomenon of cyclical trends in neighborhoods.

Interpreted from Homer Hoyt's perspective as a professor of Real Estate at the University of Chicago, the competition theory implies that as neighborhoods age and individual properties decline, they "filter down" in ownership and occupation through successively lower income groups. An

extrapolation of this analysis lead to inclusion of racial factors into the continuum of neighborhood decline. Segregation of ethnic groups was believed to be a key to stability in urban areas. Hoyt and his associate Frederick Babcock went so far as to develop a ranking of ethnic groups with respect to their impact on a neighborhood. The desirability ratings from best to worst reads as follows:

- 1.) English, German, Scotch, Irish, Scandanavian;
- 2.) North Italians;
- 3.) Bohemians and Czechs;
- 4.) Poles;
- 5.) Lithuanians;
- 6.) Greeks;
- 7.) Russians, Jews (lower class);
- 8.) South Italians;
- 9.) Negroes;
- 10.) Mexicans.*

The absurdity of this ethnic and racial boxscore needs no comment. However, it is important in a historical context in that it is indicative of the primitiveness of social research and lack of real understanding of neighborhoods that pervaded the early periods of federal urban and housing policy.

As more attention has been given to the problems of our nation's cities, empirical research has been done to develop a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of change in urban communities. Studies of indicators for mortgage delinquency and foreclosure revealed that although this type of disinvestment could be correlated to some neighborhood characteristics, there were no strong linkages and race was found not to be a factor⁹. Further research has indicated that foreclosures on FHA loans in California, were likely to be

caused by the lender's failure to follow the guidelines in servicing loans¹⁰. "Redlining" and loans to speculators and absentee landlords were blamed for much of the housing decline.

The NCN recommendations on reinvestment call for a comprehensive approach of maintaining existing housing stock, and refinancing deteriorating units. More careful control of federal housing programs to prevent gentrification¹¹ is urged. The most convincing concept found throughout the reinvestment section is access: to credit and capital; to information; to technical assistance; and to research and development funds. Protecting the neighborhood from harmful private economic discrimination, through stronger enforcement of the Community Reinvestment Act regulations and other anti-redlining legislation, are other critical concerns of the Commission.

The last recommendation is to take advantage of benefits provided by Neighborhood Housing Services activities¹², in re-establishing the linkages between residents, the private sector, lending institutions and the government. Cooperation between these actors on the urban scene is essential to any effort at neighborhood reinvestment.

Economic development in urban areas has taken many approaches. There has been income transfer to poorer sectors of the population, provision of managerial expertise by public and private sectors, or public intervention to support a particular group or industry. However, the character of most

of these efforts has traditionally been one of intervention or reaction to public concern rather than prevention. For the urban neighborhood the problem is one of "benign neglect"¹³, the latent effect of federally imposed policies which discriminate against them.

High concentrations of Black and Hispanic people in these troubled areas inject more confusion into the dilemma, adding the unique economic burdens of repressed minorities to the crisis. A continuing increase in the elderly population adds further economic strain, as society tries to cope with supporting and caring for its senior citizens.

Trends in economic growth in the United States as reflected in the organization of our national economy, has tended to favor expansion in suburban districts and newly developing regions. The economic significance of the urban neighborhood has been overlooked and traditionally unaccounted for in policy development.

The effect of the automobile as a transit mode on economic development, has wrought havoc on cities. By dispersing commercial activity, industrial and manufacturing employment, and residential settlement, the auto and the national highway networks have helped to seriously weaken the structure of our urban economy. Carrying the upper and middle-class into the city in the morning and home a night, highways represent a formidable barrier to inner-city residents seeking a better employment situation. With many unable to afford a dependable automobile or the gasoline to run it, the lower income

unemployed and underemployed are prevented from tapping into the suburban job market. No adequate public transportation exists to get them to suburban locations, where many medium skill and unskilled jobs exist.

Another reasonable concern of the NCN is property ownership patterns in our cities. The proliferation of absentee landlordism, partially assisted by some federal housing programs, creates an atmosphere of poorly maintained dwelling units and transient tenant populations. State housing investment agencies have offered little assistance, preferring to invest in the more stable suburban mortgage market.

A number of broad economic policies and strategies were developed as a result of the Commission's efforts. Although somewhat idealistic, the concepts put forth should at least assist cities in developing better neighborhood economic policy. These policy strategies are:

A.) Community Full Employment - Although inflation is a major problem for all, nothing is as important as a job. Employment policies generated from the bottom up is advocated, creating jobs in economic sectors where there is an excess supply of workers. A tactic that could be applied here is to create jobs where the unemployed live, within the most distressed neighborhoods. Use of existing resources, a long term development focus, extensive job training programs, inflation remedies and allowing for a wide variety of financial investments are components of this rather optimistic ideal.

B.) Modelling Neighborhood Economic Development - Since local private and public sectors have generally avoided serious investment in low and moderate income neighborhoods, it becomes the responsibility of the Federal government to design an alternative economic

structure. The catchword used here is "partnership", the cooperative effort of neighborhood advocates, public economic development agencies, and public or private sources of capital. Incorporated into the strategy is creation of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) at the neighborhood level, with coalitions formed to promote the advantages of locating in the city. Minority and other small business firms should receive increased financing from state and Federal agencies, and better technical assistance from the private sector.

The intent of the Federal government in this process is to provide funding for establishment of CDAs and community based credit unions; to assist the states in administering economic policy; and pooling information from different regions. As cities become more successful at rebuilding physical and economic infrastructures, others should be able to benefit from the experience. It is believed that certain models of neighborhood economic development will evolve and be proven successful¹⁴.

In surveying existing constraints to neighborhood self-reliance, the NCN investigated the effects of many functional areas on neighborhoods. Generally, the obstacles could all be categorized under one title: overregulation. This has been found to be especially true with regard to housing. In attempts to establish programs to conserve local housing, neighborhood organizations are constrained by a confusing framework of laws, codes, ordinances and regulations, some of which conflict in application. Although most of these controls are necessary to protect the health and welfare of the community, they are an imposing figure to novice investors. Though not designed to harm lower income people, many of the procedural requirements indeed frustrate low and moderate income individuals in efforts to help themselves.

Unfortunately, these people are least able to cope with the burdens of the system.

The cycle of decline, deterioration and abandonment of urban neighborhood properties has inflicted serious injury to many cities. Abandoned buildings have perhaps the most devastating effect on the morale and economic stability of a neighborhood. Ironically, the abandonment process is supported by the practices of local governments and lending institutions: mortgage foreclosure and tax foreclosure.

Administrative and legal considerations seriously limit private and public action to reclaim foreclosed property. Recent efforts in St. Louis, however, have cast new light on the prospect of property recycling. Through the establishment of the St. Louis Land Revitalization Authority (LRA)¹⁵, the municipal government permits the City Collector of Revenue to file consolidation actions against properties which are at least two years behind in tax payments. Action is brought against the property (rather than the owner), relieving the LRA of the duty of personal process. After final attempts to contact the owner have been certified, the property is taken and sold at auction, along with other unredeemable parcels. If no one bids on a particular parcel, the land is forfeited to the city. In New Jersey, a similar process gives adjacent owners right of first refusal to purchase delinquent properties before going to auction¹⁶. The NCN gives full support to these and other innovations directed towards lowering property vacancy rates in urban neighborhoods.

Regarding residential segregation and other forms of minority discrimination, the NCN report gives acclaim to the "anti-snob zoning act¹⁷" passed by the Massachusetts State Legislature. This pioneer enactment establishes a maximum number of low and moderate income housing units which each community must accept. Cities and towns may reject a proposal for such housing only if the project would be inconsistent with community goals or if the scale of the effort would introduce too many units in proportion to other classes of uses.

The A-95 Review process is touted as an additional tool for advancing minority concerns. Since A-95 was amended in 1972¹⁸ to incorporate minority concerns, this process has considerable potential as a device for assuring that federally assisted activities of local government are consistent with national Equal Opportunity and fair employment principles.

Another neighborhood fiscal concern is taxation. It is argued that through adjustments in federal tax law, reinvestment and stability in urban neighborhoods can be achieved. Personal income tax credits to investors in depressed and revitalizing districts can lure financial commitments back into the city. Property tax credits for rehabilitation of urban residential properties can help to entice families back into the city, or better yet, to allow those living in deteriorating units to make repairs and stay.

Present Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines do permit homeowners to amortize rehabilitation expenses over five years¹⁹. Another section allows accelerated depreciation

methods to be applied to owners of certified historic buildings²⁰. Both of these provisions are a positive influence on certain historic neighborhoods, but are grossly inadequate for solving the problem the problem of disinvestment. The NCN recommends that the Internal Revenue Code be gradually amended to deter non-resident investment, and channel tax shelter investments into desirable neighborhood rehabilitation projects²¹.

Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), established by Congress in 1969, was the product of an amendment to the Code, which permitted smaller investors to pool their finances and invest in real estate. Incorporation is not necessary, but an REIT must agree to return ninety-five per cent of its ordinary earnings to the shareholders (a minimum of one hundred persons). Surplus cash can be invested in government securities, but other types of investments are severely restricted. The principal benefit of REITs is that earnings can be passed along to individual investors without assessment of the usual corporate taxes, although the income is taxable as personal income.

The rush to establish REITs resulted in many speculative ventures and huge losses in the first few years of this provision. Attracted to the REIT concept by its reasonableness, the NCN recommends that the idea be directed into a Neighborhood Revitalization Trust, which would attempt to capture local capital and reinvest it within the local area.

Labor is another concern of neighborhood advocates. As a

result of the Davis-Bacon Act²², no federally supported project can depress local wages. This means that anyone working on a federal project receives at least "journeyman" wages, regardless of the training level of the employee (apprentice, trainee, or helper). Since many neighborhood oriented projects are dependent upon volunteers and low-wage workers, many such efforts are thwarted by labor interest groups. The recommendation offered by the Commission is to exclude neighborhood revitalization projects from the Davis-Bacon wage restrictions, similar to the exclusion bestowed upon projects funded exclusively by CETA. By easing restrictions on labor, costs of construction could be lowered and many jobs created, and revitalization of urban neighborhoods could result.

Innovation and modification of current zoning practices is also part of the empowerment design. By offering neighborhood groups some input into the zoning process, a more realistic reflection of local land use could be effected. The shortage of large vacant parcels and "mixed use" land patterns are characteristic of many urban neighborhoods. Current zoning practices tend to favor segregation of land uses, much to the dismay of small scale entrepreneurs:

"If lower income citizens can save a little each week, take night school courses in television repair or hair dressing and start a business part time by converting the front parlor of the family home, they can hope to build up the business to the point where they can leave old jobs and open up a bigger shop in a better location. Zoning defeats this aspiration. By requiring separation of uses, zoning prevents the lower income entrepreneur from using his or her front parlor to start a business. Instead, he or she must

raise the capital to lease commercial space elsewhere and absorb the costs of commuting between job and home²³."

The focus of attention in this section of the report is on increasing the level of neighborhood self-control, a return of more precise and better motivated investment could be achieved. With sincere technical assistance from the private sector, and strong financial support from Federal and state agencies, it is reasonable to predict a better investment future and a more attractive living environment for urban neighborhoods.

In the delivery of human services, federal involvement has evolved as the controlling influence. Social services offer families and individuals assistance in coping with the complexities and crises of everyday life. The NCN report highlights the benefits of coordination of service delivery at the neighborhood level. A series of case studies compares the kind of benefits that can be achieved by channelling these services through neighborhood organizations in a familiar setting at the local level.

A critique of the current mechanisms for human service delivery explains the problems of personnel-recipient relationships, poor integration of services and lack of citizen participation as the most distressing. The view of the Commission is that by giving neighborhood groups assistance and

supervisory control over service delivery, great benefits can be reaped. The net effects of efficiency, effectiveness and client satisfaction can provide a great stimulus for socioeconomic change within urban neighborhoods.

The final section of the NCN Report, dealing with more advanced empowerment issues, recommends that politically independent participatory organizations be given much more control over the flow of cash into a neighborhood, where they have the capacity. Development of state and municipal urban policies is deemed crucial to the perpetuation of honest and helpful input from concerned citizens. Packaging of Federal urban assistance is indicated as providing local officials with more discretion to tailor programs to neighborhood needs. Further discussion of empowerment and neighborhood governance can be found in Chapter VI.

The issuance of the NCN Final Report was met with much controversy, not the least of which was from its membership. Four of the twenty members refused to sign the document, citing disagreement with policies and recommendations put forth. Some others who did sign, voiced reservations about the usefulness of the product. Senator William Proxmire signed the Report, but disagreed with the recommendation of increased Federal outlays as a way to help neighborhoods²⁴. Norman Krumholz, a signer

and Planning Director of Cleveland, Ohio called the final document, "...a smorgasbord of major and minor issues," and observed that the recommendations, "...which appear to include something for each participant's interest, fall far short of a coherent strategy to deal with the problems of our neighborhoods²⁵."

Although the NCN Report was met with mixed reviews, it must be remembered that the Commission was handed a phenomenal task. To expect them to assemble the urban jigsaw puzzle in only fifteen months²⁶, was indeed expecting too much. Regardless, the significance of this effort and its notoriety has cast much light on the problems of urban neighborhoods. It is unlikely neighborhoods will ever be ignored again.

ENDNOTES

1. The members were: Joseph F. Timilty, Chairman; Ethel D. Allen; Anne Bartley; Representative James J. Blanchard; Nicolas R. Carbone; Gale Cincotta; Senator Jake Garn; Harold W. Greenwood, Jr.; Maynard Jackson, Jr.; Norman Krumholz; David C. Lizarraga; John McClaughry; Victoria Mongiardo; Arthur J. Naparstek; Robert B. O'Brien, Jr.; Representative Joel Pritchard; Senator William Proxmire; Macler C. Shepard; Peter Sandor Ujvagi; Bathrus B. Williams.

2. Senate Urban Affairs Committee, S 14752.

3. House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, H.R. 15388.

4. Ibid., p. i.

5. National Commission on Neighborhoods, People, Building Neighborhoods, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979).

6. Ibid., p. 67.

7. Ibid., p. 68.

8. Ibid., p. 69.

9. Ibid., p. 71.

10. Ibid., p. 72.

11. Gentrification is a term for the return of a new upper and middle class "gentry" into urban neighborhoods, which displaces poorer residents.

12. Section 3 (4), U.S. Housing Act of 1937 (P.L.75-412). In addition to HUD's Technical Assistance, the Departments of Labor, Justice and Health, Education and Welfare contributed over 150 million from FY1971-1976.

13. NCN Report, p. 131.

14. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

15. Ibid., p. 176.

16. Ibid., p. 178.

17. Ibid., p. 184.

18. Ibid., p. 185.
19. Internal Revenue Code, Section I D.
20. Ibid., Section 167 K.
21. NCN Report, p. 209.
22. This legislation was enacted to boost wage earnings, and has had the strong support of labor interests.
23. NCN Report, p. 209.
24. Susanna McBee, "Disputed Report Issued by Neighborhood Panel," Washington Post, 12 March 1979, p. 17.
25. Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

The Future of Neighborhood Planning

The history of urban planning is one rich with physical and social innovation and improvements for our society and its cities. It is a history not without failures however, and to many observers the shortcomings seem to eclipse the success. The public often perceives planners as idealists, removed from the workaday world of the city. This misconception has been perpetuated by many planning practices which have relied wholly on the talents of the city staff with little if any input from citizens.

Some planners have fallen victim to a high self-impression of their importance to a city. In their hands lies the very future of that locale, and they are often called upon to make objective judgements on the health, welfare and future growth of the community. The responsibilities are great, the work is tedious and rewards are few. Public presentations and city government meetings are more often marked with hostility than with appreciation. The planner is the devil's advocate, explaining to people what they should do in hopes of affecting what they will do to their cities and towns. A conscientious planner must confront the community with the realities of a city's predicament resulting from past action or inaction, and offer alternative solutions.

One inadequacy of city planning professional practice has been a lack of consideration of the neighborhood unit as a strong force in the community. To be properly understood, a

city must be looked at in terms of the neighborhoods in which people live. Most urban dwellers make their homes, shop and go to school outside of the downtown core.

The neighborhood is where social mores and cultural traditions are established, the scene of behavioral development and modification. By maintaining proper condition of the neighborhood area, much can be done to control environmental influences on city residents and their children. Social as well as physical conditions must be considered in redevelopment plans if any sense of a comprehensive approach is to be claimed.

Assuming that planning is best carried out at the neighborhood level, many obstacles immediately present themselves. Many municipal systems of government do not acknowledge neighborhoods in the process of administering the city. Neighborhoods are often thought of as physical locations, not social or governmental units. Few cities have ward lines or other voting district designations that respect even recognized neighborhood boundaries. Until the 1980 Census, no attempt has been made to make Census tract boundaries neighborhood specific, or even to generate statistics aggregated at the neighborhood level. Even U. S. Congressional district lines do not conform to neighborhood or even city boundaries.

Most municipal functions have non-neighborhood designated service areas. Other than schools and perhaps fire stations, little attention is given to keeping the neighborhood dimension

in mind. Fiscal concerns are the most common reasons for this, as it seems wise to place facilities in a centralized location within the intended service area. However, in the case of a recreation facility, locating it on a boundary between two unfriendly neighborhoods is likely to create some conflict, as youths vie for authority on the site. It would be better to construct two smaller facilities, one well within each neighborhood, which will help to avoid unnecessarily increasing the likelihood of confrontation. Dealing with the problems of juvenile violence, and condition of recreational space, might best be approached by social workers in cooperation with recreation program directors and the city's recreation planner.

For neighborhoods, or rather neighborhood associations, to become involved in the planning process, changes must be made in the way in which community plans are developed, designed, funded and implemented. Perhaps the most disturbing gap of neighborhood input exists in the area of plan development. Seldom are neighborhood organizations directly involved in primary planning activities, unless the input for the action was inspired by a neighborhood group. The concept that is being put forth here can best be described as neighborhood empowerment¹. The process would involve many changes of existing institutions, and will metamorphisize the planning process as we know it. As referred to in the National Commission on Neighborhoods Report², a city or other authorized body, would designate a particular group as the official representative for that neighborhood area³, and give these

groups the authority to make planning decisions for themselves. In effect, the "city plan commission" concept would be applied to the neighborhood level. From the ranks of the designated Neighborhood Representative Organization (NRO), a group of citizens would be elected or selected to initiate and review planning activities for that area.

The NRO Plan Council would be recognized by the city council or other municipal legislative body, which would grant certain administrative rights to the group. So legitimized, this committee would be responsible for primary review of neighborhood based projects, redevelopment efforts, etc. With assistance from the staff of the City Planning Department, this planning group could conduct data collection efforts, and consider the revision of neighborhood land use, zoning and master plans to better reflect the basic needs and aspirations of the local area.

The purpose of this modification is not to give a neighborhood plan council complete and autonomous control over the planning function. The city must still hold the purse strings and has ultimate decision-making power. However, the information base and plans on which municipal decisions are based will be more accurately reflective of the situation at the neighborhood level, if those plans and data are generated at that level.

The most serious obstacles to this scenerio are capacity, motivation and experience of the local planning council and its supervisory parental NRO. Involvement in the neighborhood

planning process would be time consuming, and it would have to be assured that participants were willing to commit sufficient time. Motivation could be generated by giving the neighborhood association real input into the process. One approach might be to include a representative member from each neighborhood plan council on the city planning board or plan commission. A gesture such as this would give more legitimacy to the neighborhood planning effort, and would improve the municipal planning effort by making it more sensitive and responsive to neighborhood problems.

Quality planning activity at any level is directly dependent upon the expertise of those who plan, and the resources made available to them. Few neighborhood organizations can afford to hire a qualified staff planner, nor would there be enough work to warrant one in most neighborhoods. Many cities, in realizing the benefits of placing the planning process at the neighborhood level, have begun to assign responsibility for neighborhood-based planning activities to members of the city planning staff. Through their Neighborhood Planning Program, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) has distributed the local planning function to its staff. Each neighborhood planner is assigned a specific geographic area that corresponds to accepted neighborhood boundaries. Depending upon the size and population density of the areas, a planner might be assigned only one-half of a very large area, and another might be responsible for three or four smaller neighborhoods. Although relatively new, the approach

is popular among community groups, and is an improvement over the previous municipal arrangement.

This approach, a modification of the "two tiered" configuration of neighborhood planning organization, has evolved as the most reasonable alternative. The city of Buffalo, New York is divided into thirteen planning districts, which are in turn broken down into seventy planning neighborhoods. Criteria for establishing neighborhood boundaries in Buffalo were developed by the City. They were heavily dependent upon physical barriers, parish designations and ethnic settlement patterns⁴.

In 1972 the Planning Department of Raleigh, North Carolina divided the City into eighteen "communities", subject to the approval of community groups. These groups then subdivided these districts into smaller, neighborhood units. The experiment here has done a great deal to encourage community participation, and helped the Planning Department gain a better understanding of real neighborhood dimensions⁵.

In these final pages I have considered new approaches to neighborhood planning. The process of devising solutions to urban problems, necessitates a reorientation of process to the problem perspective of the lower level. No longer can municipal officials expect citizens to acquiesce to paternalistic government practices. People have begun to realize that they have too much at stake to ignore municipal

decision-making. Neighborhoods want to control their respective destinies, and must have some input into the process if anyone is to expect a reasonable resolution of those crises that test the very foundations of our society.

To plan a neighborhood is a utopian ideal.
A neighborhood that plans is not only a desirable arrangement, but the most reasonable urban pursuit.

ENDNOTES

1. National Commission on Neighborhoods, "People, Building Neighborhoods", (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979) p. 271.

2. Ibid., p. 177.

3. Refer to Deborah A. Auger, "The Politics of Gentrifying Neighborhoods," JAPA, (October 1979).

4. Thomas Broden and Thomas Swartz, Neighborhood Identification Handbook, (Notre Dame, Ind.: Institute for Urban Studies, 1979), p. 42.

5. Ibid., p. 42.

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