

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION  
HOUSING COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 5, 1970

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR CHRISTIAN SONNEVELDT  
AND CITY COMMISSIONERS

URBAN RENEWAL HOUSING

The Housing Committee of the Community Relations Commission supports Mayor Christian Sonneveldt's proposed housing subsidy plan as a means of starting the clearance of inner-city housing blight.

President Johnson said: "No domestic task facing this nation today is more demanding or more urgent than reclaiming the corroded core of the American city." It is a statement that applies to our city more than it does to most large cities of this country. While other cities for a number of years have struggled with the problem and done something about it - we have only recently become concerned.

It is a condition with which we can no longer play around. It is a condition that fifty years ago, would have required dealing with only a couple of square blocks - today several square miles must be dealt with. How large an area will it cover tomorrow? It is a condition that if not checked, can engulf the entire city.

While the power structure of the city, through its urban renewal program has glorified the super-structure of the city, (downtown business area, Westside Industrial Park area, freeways) it has only talked about restoration of the foundation of the city - the corroded inner-city.

We do not question the sincerity of some non-profit organizations that are trying to do something about the corrosion of the inner-city but we do question their effectiveness. Trying to remove the offensive-

ness of a mountain with a few hand-shovels seems to be an expenditure of much wasted energy. A job that takes sixty million dollars to achieve does not seem worth attempting with a few thousand dollars begged from time to time - much of which must be consumed on administrative cost.

If we are to solve the major problem of the city - which is the restoration of the blighted inner-city - we must give the problem top priority. We must learn how other cities are handling the problem. Big-city mayors of other cities are appointing housing coordinators to aid builders in running the gamut of bureaucratic complexities. These coordinators are also aiding model cities' programs in producing better records.

It is primarily the responsibility of city government to restore the inner-city. A coordinator appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the City Commission should be the urban official responsible for doing the job. His office should solve the problems, set up the programs; it should be the meeting place where government officials and business men meet to get things done; it should be the meeting place where people in the area involved come to participate in the planning of the area. The non-profit organizations that wish to contribute to the restoring of the corroded core of the city, should work through the coordinator's office.

The appointed coordinator should be responsible for the drafting of a plan to eliminate the entire blighted area of the inner-city. Our city planning department and urban renewal department have plans for all other areas of the city, but none for the most important area - the blighted inner-city.

It is an area from which both black and white citizens are fleeing

because the city has no plan for restoring it. They can see only a loss of investment by remaining in it.

Yet it would be the most desirable area of the city in which to live, if it were not allowed to deteriorate. It contains the cultural area of the city; the finest shopping area, churches, theaters, courts of justice, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., financial institutions, hospitals and clinical facilities, and the services of professional people. All of these services are available, within walking distance, to the people who live in the inner-city.

The longer the task of saving the inner-city is delayed, the more difficult, if not impossible - it becomes to accomplish. It is a task which can never be accomplished in a piecemeal fashion as some are attempting to do.

William M. Glenn, Chairman

Community Relations Commission  
Housing Committee