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THE HUMAN SIDE OF URBAN RENEWAL

The HUMAN SIDE of URBAN RENEWAL

A Study of the Attitude Changes Produced by Neighborhood Rehabilitation

by

MARTIN MILLSPAUGH

and

GURNEY BRECKENFELD

Edited by

MILES L. COLEAN

IVES WASHBURN, INC., NEW YORK

1960

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NOTE: *The sections on neighborhoods in Chicago, Miami, and New Orleans were written by Gurney Breckenfeld. The sections on Baltimore were written by Martin Millspaugh, who was also responsible for the organization of the study. Miles L. Colean was supervising editor throughout, and the conclusions are the joint responsibility of all three authors.*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This is a study in challenge and response. The challenge is the slum and the spread of blight, and the response is the reaction to efforts at their amelioration. This is a study of the attitudes of people toward slums and neighborhood changes, of the modifications in attitudes that occur during the slum clearing or slum prevention process and after a certain stage of progress has been reached.

The authors are experienced reporters. That is to say they are social scientists without preconceptions. They have been trained to observe and record facts and to draw their judgments without personal bias. They have done their job well; and this is not an easy accomplishment in an area as cluttered with preconceptions and as supercharged with emotion as is the one with which they deal.

To many, the findings will be surprising. To some they will be disappointing and disturbing, for they show that the prevention and eradication of slums are not to be accomplished by physical measures alone or by measures limited to the condition of housing, but that profound changes in the hearts and minds of people, both in and out of the affected areas, are called for, and that any letdown in effort means retrogression, and that, in short, eternal vigilance and unremitting endeavor are the price of a good neighborhood.

This is a pioneering study. To my knowledge no similar approach has been made to the question of why it is that well-meaning, presumably well-organized efforts to stop neighborhood deterioration and to revive neighborhoods that have already sunk have often come to so little, whereas other efforts, apparently no better sponsored, have had a fair degree of success. While the scope of the study permits of no more than tentative conclusions, it should provide at least the beginnings of enlightenment and point the direction for further investigation.

Miles L. Colean

PREFACE:
THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Experts and laymen can agree that slums breed a hopelessness in people's hearts. Amid the piles of rotting garbage, tumbledown porches and junk-filled back yards, the human spirit seems to wither away. This malignancy of the urban flesh was considered incurable—even unavoidable—for generations during the birth and expansion of American cities. It is no longer viewed with complacency. The forces of social welfare moved into the housing field in the 1930's, and in the years since World War II, this country has seen the birth, full-blown, of a new national attitude: the slums must go, and their victims must be restored to useful city life.

In the early stages of this movement, the city of Baltimore pioneered in the development of a system of slum rehabilitation, as opposed to demolition and rebuilding. The system was based on housing law enforcement, and it was applied first to single houses, then to blocks and, finally, to entire neighborhoods. From the beginning, the people who created the "Baltimore Plan" found that rehabilitation produced some gratifying changes in the attitudes of the people who lived in slum houses. Frustration was replaced with hope, and lassitude with determination. At first, these attitude changes were regarded as by-products of the physical improvement. But gradually there grew a feeling that this sort of change might be more important than rehabilitation itself.

This possibility came to the attention of the Fund for Adult Education, and the result was a grant of funds to Fight-Blight, Inc., a non-profit corporation that had been set up by leading Baltimoreans to tell the story of the Baltimore Plan and of rehabilitation generally, so that other cities could benefit by the experience of pioneering efforts in this field. The grant was designed to finance an examination of the attitude changes that accompany rehabilitation, and to answer the question: how do those changes contribute to the goals of liberal adult education? This book is the result.

Work was started in 1955, when the authors went into the neighborhoods concerned, to investigate the accomplishments and the

failures, the results and the problems of the rehabilitation programs. Hundreds of people were interviewed: residents of the slum and blighted neighborhoods, city employees and officials, social workers, civic volunteers and critical observers of many stripes. After completion of this field work, the results were sifted, analyzed and tried out on experts who have watched developments in the cities concerned during the succeeding years. Their opinions were given due weight, but the conclusions are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

At about the time work was started on this study, the new concept of urban renewal was replacing and unifying the anti-slum efforts that had been known as rehabilitation, conservation and redevelopment. Urban renewal, however, has served only to expand the importance of rehabilitation in the sense with which this book is concerned. If the nation's cities are to be rejuvenated at a cost the economy can afford, the large bulk of the renewal work must be rehabilitation. The by-products—in the form of changed attitudes, values and behavior—will grow proportionately in importance.

The connection between the rehabilitation of slum houses and the generally accepted concept of liberal education may seem at first glance to be a slim one. But liberal education—in this case, liberal adult education—has two functions: (1) to free the individual from the frustrations of his environment and the limitations of ignorance, and (2) to give him the tools to develop his mind, his talent and his spirit. Rehabilitating slums gives promise of serving the first function directly. As for the second: if the burden of scratching out an existence in a blighted neighborhood is relieved, the former slum dweller should have new time and energy with which to develop his capacities as an individual.

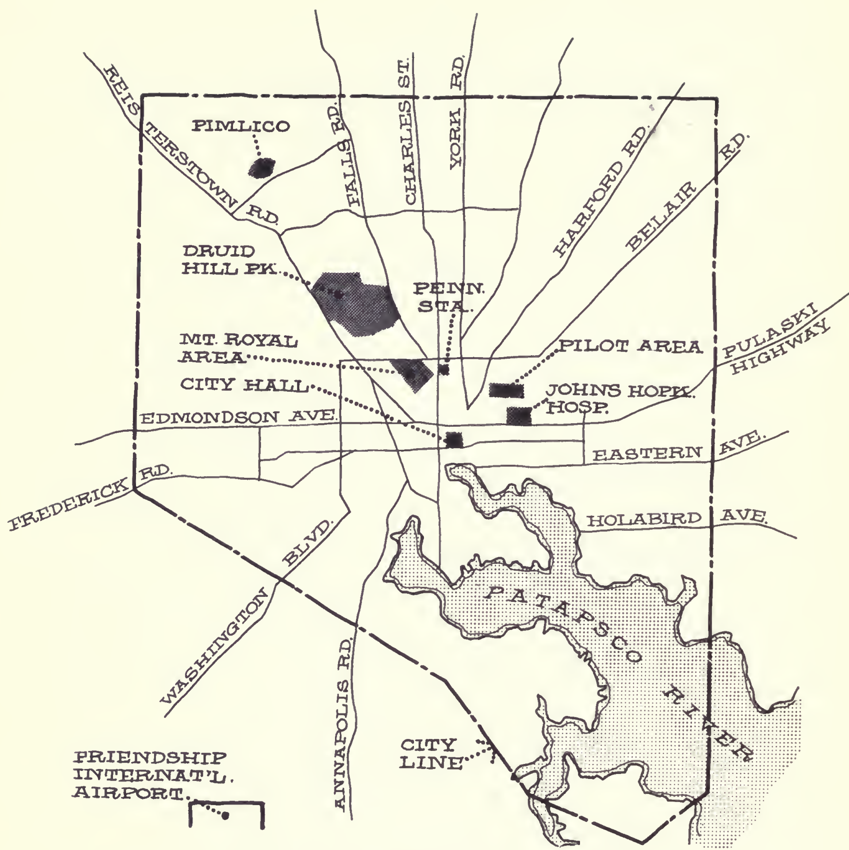
In a work of this kind, it is difficult to give acknowledgement to all the people whose assistance was needed. The authors found that in all four cities studied, the men and women engaged in rehabilitation were willing and eager to give as much help as they could to any effort that might illuminate the dark corners of their field. Hundreds of them were interviewed—sometimes as many as half a dozen times—and it would be impossible to name them all. This book could not justly appear, however, without a tribute to three men: James W. Rouse and Guy T. O. Hollyday, who saw the promise of rehabilitation and recognized the importance of a report such as this, and Miles L. Colean, who was the most perceptive of mentors throughout its execution.

M.M. and G.B.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF URBAN RENEWAL

CHAPTER I

REHABILITATION: THE HUMAN PROBLEMS



Map of Baltimore, showing the location of the Pilot Area and the Mount Royal Area in relation to other city landmarks.

BALTIMORE: The Pilot Area

One of the first attempts to rehabilitate a neighborhood by housing law enforcement was carried out in Baltimore's Pilot Area from 1951 to 1953, with the schools, churches, social and civic agencies joining in to "rehabilitate the people as well as the houses." By 1955, the results had proved encouraging, but transitory, and the problems encountered here had much to do with the birth of urban renewal in the Housing Act of 1954.

The story of Baltimore's Pilot Area really began in 1936, when a young social worker named Frances Morton compiled a detailed and graphic report on conditions in one of the worst of the city's slums. The *Evening Sun* publicized and expanded her findings in a series of scathing, illustrated articles, and Baltimoreans were shocked to learn that 40 per cent of the population was living in filth and blight; that Baltimore had the largest proportion of substandard housing of any large city; that there were 26,000 outside toilets within the city limits.

These exposures brought action. Backed by public opinion, the Health Commissioner ordered the demolition of a block of slum houses as "unfit for human habitation." Miss Morton organized a Citizens Housing and Planning Association, which grew to more than 1,000 members in five years. The City Council passed an ordinance on the "Hygiene of Housing," which gave the Health Commissioner broad powers to outlaw unsanitary and unhealthful slum conditions. At about the same time, the Health Department hired a young inspector named G. Yates Cook, who was to become the sparkplug and the prophet of housing law enforcement.

By the end of World War II, the Health Department had crystallized a policy that was to become known across the nation as the "Baltimore Plan." It meant simply this: the city would enforce, to the letter, all the housing laws that were on the books, and in that way compel the owners of slum properties to vacate them or rehabilitate them to minimum legal standards. In 1947, a separate Housing Court was established to deal with all the housing law

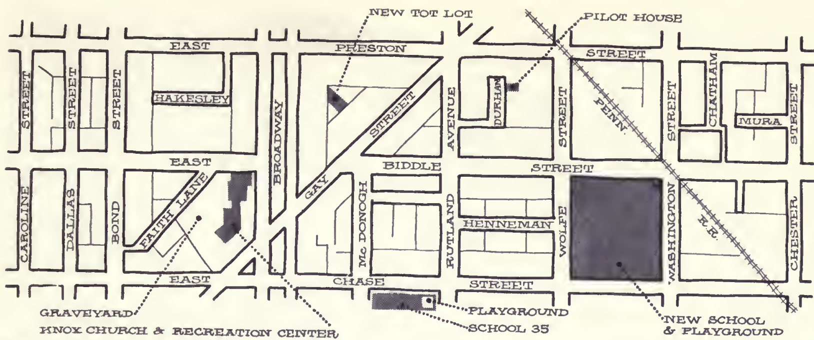
cases, and a score of policemen were assigned to a "Sanitation Squad," which canvassed the slums for outdoor sanitary violations. Instead of waiting for complaints to come in, Cook began making block-by-block inspections of the slums, looking for violations.

By 1950, the city budget contained $200,000 for the Baltimore Plan, and block-by-block enforcement had covered 100 blocks. But 2,000 blocks remained blighted, and slums were forming faster than they were being rehabilitated. After one block was brought up to standard, the surrounding blocks tended to drag it down again. And yet, a remarkable change could be seen in the slum families whose homes were rehabilitated. They cast off their pall of resignation and began to take an interest in cleaning, in decorating, and even in buying their homes.

All of these facts were analyzed by a citizens committee appointed by Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., and the committee hit on a new plan: the rehabilitation of an entire neighborhood at one time. This, the committee said, would create an unblighted area large enough to resist the influence of surrounding blocks. At the same time, it would capitalize on the residents' latent enthusiasm for better living conditions. With the strength of numbers they should be able to protect their homes and their neighborhood against future blight.

To carry out this pioneering project, the City Council established a Housing Bureau in the Health Department, and the Mayor named Yates Cook as director. His instructions were to coordinate the housing law enforcement work of all city agencies, and to call in the schools, churches, citizens' groups and social agencies to help "rehabilitate the people as well as the houses." The citizens committee became a permanent Advisory Council to the Housing Bureau, under the same chairman—a forceful and inventive mortgage banker named James W. Rouse. In 1951, the stage was set for the first test of neighborhood rehabilitation, in a "pilot" area. Backers of the Baltimore Plan hoped it would provide a blueprint for reclaiming all the slums of Baltimore, and perhaps of other cities as well.

The neighborhood chosen as the Pilot Area was not a rock-bottom slum, but it had every variety of blight and deterioration, covering about 14 square blocks in East Baltimore. This area was crisscrossed by a grid of heavily-traveled streets, and between them lay typical blocks of Baltimore row houses—three stories high on the wide streets, and two stories on the alley streets behind them. Altogether, there were 750 houses in the Pilot Area, almost all of them built before 1900. Most of the structures were sound enough, but they had been neglected for so long that the United States Public Health



The Pilot Area as originally staked out for Baltimore's pioneer neighborhood rehabilitation effort.

Service rated 90 per cent of them as "substandard," and 40 per cent as "seriously deteriorated." [1] A third had no central heating; almost half had no mechanical refrigeration, and three-fourths were actively infested with rats.[2]

Between the rows of houses stretched the horribly infested, three-foot-wide alleys of old Baltimore, all but obliterated by a crazy jumble of rotting board fences, leaning outhouses, raw sewage and trash. The same mess filled the yards, and few residents cared to venture outside their back doors. Scattered through the neighborhood were taverns, corner groceries, stables, confectioneries and beauty parlors, most of them with living quarters above the first floor. There were also some purely commercial buildings, including auto repair shops, storage warehouses, a bottling plant and a few small factories.

The residents of the Pilot Area covered a wide range of family types, from irresponsible transients to prominent Negro professional men. But the dominant influence was centered in self-respecting workingmen's families, both white and Negro, and the neighborhood had a reputation for stability. Two-fifths of the families in the Pilot Area owned, or were buying, their own homes; the other three-fifths were still renting from landlords. Between 1930 and 1950, the neighborhood had shifted from predominantly white to 80 per cent Negro,

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[1] From unpublished data collected by Ralph J. Johnson and Roy O. McCaldin, of the United States Public Health Service, for "Housing Rehabilitation: Baltimore Pilot Area," October, 1954. Data supplied by the Baltimore City Health Department.

[2] These figures, and the figures in the following paragraphs, were compiled from the Johnson-McCaldin report cited in (1) above, and from the 1950 Census, the 1950 Census of Housing, and the report of the Law Enforcement Committee for the Pilot Program, mimeographed by the Baltimore City Health Department, June, 1953.

A typical block of Pilot Area homes. This is the 1700 block of East Chase Street. The confectionery on the corner is also typical of the scattered commercial properties in residential blocks.

A typical blighted block from the rear: a junk collector's paradise, with outdoor hoppers, three-foot alley, masses of filth, rubbish and raw sewage accumulated in the yards.

but some of the Negro residents had been living in the Pilot Area for 30 years or more. White families did not move out in panic, but they did move when they could afford it. With the shift from white to Negro came an increase in overcrowding, but more than half the houses were still occupied by single families in 1951.

The selection of this neighborhood as the Pilot Area was officially proclaimed by the Mayor, and law enforcement started in May of 1951. Between May and July, each house was scrutinized from top to bottom by a team of inspectors—one from each of the city agencies enforcing the health, building, electrical, zoning and fire prevention codes. The inspectors turned their reports in to the Housing Bureau, where the reports were combined into a single notice to be sent to the home owner or landlord. The single notice told the property owner all the ways in which his house failed to meet the minimum legal standards, and gave him 30 days to correct the violations. If repairs were not made in 30 days, inspectors could recommend extensions of time. After that, the property owner could be taken to Housing Court. The maximum fine was $50 for each violation, but each day the violation continued was a separate offense. If a landlord flatly refused to comply, the Housing Bureau could order his property vacated, and cut off his income from rentals.

The enforcement procedure was operated by Miss Shirley Biddison, supervisor in the Housing Bureau, who had already made it her business to explore the Pilot Area, meet the residents, and try to prepare them for law enforcement. When the first notices were issued, she soon found that low-income families who were buying their homes could not afford to make all the required repairs in 30 days, or even in six months or a year, in many cases. As a result, the Housing Bureau set up a "Hearing Board," with the power to decide whether an owner-occupant should be taken to court. The board included representatives from each of the city agencies and from the Advisory Council. The chairman was C. William Brooks, the city's zoning enforcement officer, who had long been a key figure in the Baltimore Plan. At board hearings, each frightened, resentful homeowner was patiently persuaded to tell his story, and often it turned out that he could not comply with his notice because of a serious social, financial or legal problem. The Hearing Board referred each problem to the proper agency for expert attention, and held off court action until a solution was found. In some cases, it took as long as two years.

Meanwhile, Cook and his advisors were organizing the churches, schools, and social and recreation agencies into committees devoted to "rehabilitating the people." A steering committee was set up, with

Frances Morton as chairman, and there were separate subcommittees for law enforcement, social services, education, medical care, recreation and "project analysis." Most important of all was a Neighborhood Committee, whose assignment was to provide liaison between City Hall and the residents of the Pilot Area. The committee members were residents themselves, and the chairman was Mrs. Viola C. Jackson, the Negro principal of a nearby school. For the next two years, Mrs. Jackson and Miss Biddison worked shoulder to shoulder, spending their days, evenings and weekends in the Pilot Area. Their task was to explain law enforcement to confused and suspicious residents, and to explain the residents' problems to eager, but occasionally naive, city officials.

In addition to the organized committees and law enforcement agencies, the Pilot Program received indispensable help from other, unexpected sources. One was the First Church of the Brethren, located in a northern suburb. Members of this church formed a non-profit corporation to buy a typical Pilot Area house, and rehabilitate it in attractive and inexpensive fashion, as a concrete example to the residents of the neighborhood. The house was then named the Brotherhood Pilot House, and turned over to the community as headquarters for the rehabilitation program.

One thing led to another. The Church of the Brethren's international Volunteer Service heard about the Pilot Program, and a group of young volunteers came to live and work in the neighborhood during the rehabilitation effort. Led by Vernon Hoffman, a sociologist just returned from two years in the rural slums of Puerto Rico, these young men and women each spent a year of their lives helping all those among the Pilot Area residents who were willing to help themselves. The volunteers cemented cellars, built fences, painted woodwork and carted away trash. They organized "street showers" and games for the children of the neighborhood, and helped the Neighborhood Committee with the chores of doorbell-ringing and record-keeping.

One of the churches in the Pilot Area also played a key role. This was the Knox Presbyterian Church, led by a wiry, broad-minded West Indian Negro, the Rev. H. Octavius Graham. The Knox congregation had recently purchased a big stone church in the heart of the neighborhood—a building complete with recreation center, classrooms, kitchens, auditorium and gymnasium. This became the center for sports, dances, club meetings, Boy and Girl Scout troops and nursery school. It was also the meeting place for large Pilot Program gatherings, and the Rev. Graham welcomed all residents, all leaders and all groups.

Another basic element of the Pilot Program—perhaps the most famous of all today—was the Fight-Blight Fund. The fund was created when Miss Biddison and the Hearing Board found that no matter how much time was allowed, about 10 per cent of the Pilot Area home owners were simply too poor to finance rehabilitation without some outside help. Guy T. O. Hollyday, head of a title company and a member of the Housing Bureau Advisory Council, called together a group of businesmen, and they organized a $10,000 fund, on a non-profit basis, to lend these homeowners the money they were not able to borrow from banks or savings and loan associations. William A. Andrews, an attorney who was also a realtor, was employed to administer the Fund and to advise the poverty-stricken 10 per cent on how to handle their finances.

The Fight-Blight Fund completed the task force for rehabilitation. In every division of the force, there was at least one dedicated individual who was not content to sit in an office and regard the Pilot Area residents merely as social statistics, or as names in a stack of file cards. These key individuals spent their working hours, their evenings, and, if necessary, their weekends in the neighborhood, learning the residents' problems from firsthand knowledge. It is worthy of note that the people who did this came from widely separated backgrounds. Three were city officials; three were business or professional men; three were volunteers, and one was a minister. The problems they encountered—in the living rooms and on the front stoops of the Pilot Area—had deep roots in the social and economic conditions that had created the slums of Baltimore in the first place.

Poverty and Ignorance, Segregation and Exploitation:

The first problem encountered in the Pilot Area was money, or the homeowners' lack of it. This had not been so important in previous ventures of the Baltimore Plan because the burden of making repairs had fallen on slum landlords. But in the Pilot Area more than 40 per cent of the families owned, or were buying, their homes. And many of them had money problems before the rehabilitation program began.

Few were actually in dire poverty: the men were steady providers, with year-round jobs in the steel mills or shipyards. Some were prosperous Negro families, to whom the outlying suburbs were still closed. But the median family income in the neighborhood was almost 20 per cent below the city-wide average. And the wage-earners' jobs were subject to strikes. The steel strike of 1952 hit the Pilot Area hard—at a time when the financial demands of rehabilitation were at a peak. There were other complicating factors. The

family income often included the earnings of wives and mothers, almost half of whom were working as domestics, cleaning women or waitresses. And the household supported by the family income was likely to be a large one, because of the Negroes' high birth rate and the necessity of taking in elderly relatives. Mothers who spent their evenings and weekends taking care of the children and old people had little time to work on their homes. The fathers, irritated by crowded conditions at home, and frustrated in attempts to solve their financial problems, were apt to turn to liquor or gambling, further straining the precarious balance between income and expenses.

Money—or lack of it—was not the only problem. Many Pilot Area residents were newcomers to the city: transient tenants who lacked basic knowledge of how to cope with urban life. Some were migrants from Southern farms, but even the long-time residents had been inhibited by the difficulties of life in a racially-segregated city. There were some well-educated and sophisticated families in the Pilot Area, but the average adult resident had finished only seven grades of school. Almost 25 per cent were illiterate.

The Pilot Program began in a time of nationwide prosperity, and incomes in the neighborhood were rising. For many of the residents, long repressed by poverty and ignorance, this sudden affluence proved treacherous. They overspent what money they had. Vernon Hoffman, who lived and worked in the neighborhood for four years as director of the volunteer unit, concluded that "slum dwellers, who of all people should be the best at practicing economy and making a family income stretch as far as possible, turn out in reality to be the least economical of all." The head of a family, Hoffman explained, did not know how to budget his money, and it was only a block or two from the Pilot Area to the cut-rate stores on Gay Street, where everything from television sets to bedroom suites was offered for sale with "no money down."

Merchants were quick to recognize the wage-earner's weakness. Salesmen poured into the Pilot Area, taking their glib talk and easy-credit offers from door to door. It made no difference whether the resident could carry the additional debt involved in one of these deals. The down payment could be obtained from a small loan company. Then, if the buyer did not meet his payments, the credit salesman repossessed his refrigerator or television set and kept whatever had been paid on it. The buyer not only lost the payments he had made, but he still owed the small loan company for the down payment. If he defaulted on that, his other household goods were subject to seizure.

In one case that was referred to the Fight-Blight Fund, a Pilot Area couple were making weekly payments to four finance companies, six retail stores and the holder of their mortgage, in addition to the building and loan association from which they obtained a loan to make repairs. Their weekly payments added up to $75.17, and their weekly income to $45. According to Hoffman and his co-workers in the neighborhood, many other Pilot Area residents were suffering from unwise budgeting when the Pilot Program began. Debts were mounting faster than incomes, and the added expense of rehabilitation threatened to be the final blow.

Even this does not explain the full impact of the rehabilitation program. It is necessary to realize that the law enforcement drive took place at a time when housing for Negroes was extremely short in Baltimore. The 1950 census, taken about six months before the Pilot Program began, showed that Negroes made up 23.8 per cent of the city's population, but they occupied only 18.8 per cent of the dwelling units. This shortage was not alleviated during the span of the Pilot Program, and in the Pilot Area itself the shortage was intensified: first, by the demolition of a block of homes to make way for a new school, and second, by the relocation of more than 30 new families in the neighborhood from slum clearance projects elsewhere in East Baltimore.

At the same time, Negroes continued to pour in from the South, and the demand for Negro housing was greater than the supply. The rising level of incomes magnified this demand in terms of dollars. Speculators could rent or sell slum housing at prices that would have provided decent quarters in a white neighborhood. In 1951, the United States Public Health Service found that the quarters rented by Negroes in the Pilot Area were about 19 per cent worse, in terms of substandard conditions, than the units rented by white families. Yet the Negroes' rent averaged $10 a month higher.[3] A Negro had little choice but to pay. His ramshackle apartment in the Pilot Area was likely to be the only one he could find. For all families, both white and Negro, the median rent in the Pilot Area in 1951 was $36.13 a month, plus $11 or $12 for utilities. This meant that the average family was spending about 20 per cent of its income on housing, compared with the national average of 13 per cent.[4]

When law enforcement began, it put an end to one of the ways in which tenants had been able to make ends meet: by subletting por-

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[3] Johnson and McCaldin, *op. cit.,* reproduced by the Baltimore City Health Department, Housing Bureau, January, 1955, pp. 23-24.

[4] *House and Home—Life,* "Housing Conservation Round Table: Report and Recommendations," *House and Home,* October, 1953.

tions of their apartments or homes. This would often overcrowd a dwelling in excess of the legal limit, and the law enforcement officers were obliged to clamp down on the practice. At the same time, the tenants were afraid their rents would go even higher if the landlords were forced to make expensive repairs. In this, they were proved to be right. After eighteen months of housing law enforcement, a survey showed that the median rent for the neighborhood had climbed 17.6 per cent. In the city as a whole, during the same period, the increase had been only 6.5 per cent.[5] Some tenants were willing to pay more rent for improved living quarters, but they were also afraid to report the landlord's housing violations for fear they would be told to move. As a result of both reactions—fear of higher rents, and fear of eviction—tenants greeted the rehabilitation program with misgiving, and gave little cooperation to the inspectors.

Many landlords, on the other hand, openly resisted the program. Long inured to dealing with semi-literate tenants, they felt the improvements required by the city would be wasted. One landlord wrote to the Housing Bureau that he considered the program a "grievous injustice" to both landlord and tenant, and added that it would make alley properties "cost more to maintain than high grade properties." A number of the Pilot Area landlords owned properties in other parts of town where the Baltimore Plan had been at work, and they knew that even repeated fines could be cheaper than paying for substantial repairs. (The average fine invoked for Pilot Area cases in Housing Court was $22.17.) Landlords also knew that a clever lawyer could gain a delay of six months to a year, simply by exercising his client's right to be tried in Criminal Court instead of Housing Court. In six months, a landlord could make cheap repairs, or dispose of the property.

Many did dispose of their properties, even before the first 30-day notices expired, by selling out to their tenants on a no-down-payment, weekly installment contract, or contract of sale. This had the advantage of leaving title to the property in the hands of the landlord. A typical contract would provide that if the tenant-buyer missed one weekly payment, the seller could declare the contract void, confiscate all the previous payments as damages, and order the buyer to vacate the property or be prosecuted as a trespasser. To the tenant, this sort of buying was much the same as renting. The landlord continued to collect the weekly payment, as before. But there were differences: the payment was higher, because a "sale" was not subject to rent control; and the tenant-buyer was now responsible for repairs and

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[5] Johnson and McCaldin, *op cit.*, p. 21.

for seeing that the house complied at all times with the city laws and regulations.

Tenants who wanted to buy usually found that the contract of sale was the only instrument available to them. Even if they understood the distinction between a conventional mortgage, which would protect the investment, and a contract of sale, which would not, they were not likely to have the required down payment for a mortgage. With low income and poor education, the Pilot Area residents had poor credit standing. Those who were Negroes found the banks especially reluctant to advance funds. Tenants who realized all of this, and preferred to continue renting, were sometimes faced with a choice between a contract of sale and an eviction notice.

The city announced the Pilot Program in December of 1950, but inspections did not start until May of 1951. During the interval there was a wave of contract sales in the neighborhood. By July, when the notices of violations were sent out, more than 50 Pilot Area families were buying their homes on weekly installments.[6] As the program progressed, it gradually became evident that the contracts had opened the door to sales that were fraudulent. The buyer would have a "payment book," showing how much he had paid, but often it did not show how much was applied to principal, and how much to taxes, insurance, interest, settlement charges, or to ground rent—that system of divided ownership peculiar to Baltimore and a few other old cities. It was evident that some tenant-buyers could have gone on paying indefinitely, without ever knowing that they had paid off the purchase price.

In one case, the Hearing Board discovered that a seller had been deducting an annual ground rent of $69 from the buyer's payments, although no legal ground rent existed. On the same contract, it was later charged in court, excessive sums had been applied to interest, and although the weekly payments were supposed to cover all expenses, the year's taxes had not been paid and were accruing penalties.

Even if a contract of sale were legally conceived and administered, it was likely that the buyer was paying too much for his shelter. The Baltimore *Sun* made a survey of installment-contract sales in 1954, and reported that "dealers in the field acknowledge with great frankness that they do not sell houses under contracts of sale at their fair market value. They argue that they must demand from $1,000 to $3,000 more than the open-market price to compensate them for the

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[6] Report of the Law Enforcement Committee for the Pilot Program, p. 20.

hazards of the business."[7] As a result, many Pilot Area homeowners were in even deeper financial straits than they had been placed by their low incomes and ignorance of budgeting techniques. The effect of this on the rehabilitation program was considerable, because owner-occupants accounted for more than 50 per cent of the homes in the neighborhood by July of 1951.

These owner-occupants were unprepared for the sudden additional expense of bringing their homes up to the city's standards. For each home, the cost of rehabilitation was no small matter. The bare minimum that was needed to bring the average house up to standard was $400 to $700, and more often the repair bills amounted to $1,000 or $2,000. In the Pilot House, to cite one carefully controlled example, it cost $1,086 to comply with the various city ordinances, and an additional $1,665 to provide such amenities as a kitchen and bath, wire fence and hot water.

Few owner-occupants were well enough acquainted with building methods to know exactly what was required of them, or how much it should cost. They were staggered by official notices ordering them to rebuild walls, cement cellars, install toilets and rewire their homes from top to bottom. In panic, such a homeowner would call in a contractor and turn the notice over to him, with a plea to take care of everything. This opened a golden opportunity for unscrupulous or simply greedy contractors. Many of the home improvement contractors, according to the records of the Better Business Bureau, turned out to be merely salesmen, who were drawn into the business by profits to be made under the FHA guarantee of home improvement loans.

Such a "contractor" would draw up his own specifications for repairs, and his own estimate of the cost. He would persuade the homeowner to sign a note for that amount, and sell the signed note to a bank. The "contractor" collected his money from the bank, and he could then subcontract the work at a huge profit. The homeowner was left owing the full amount to the bank, whether the subcontractor's work passed inspection or not. There were homeowners who found out, too late, that their contracts required only that the workmen "put in a wall," or "change a wall," and said nothing about how it was to be done. Some owners discovered that in their panic-stricken haste to sign a loan for the work, they had also signed the FHA completion certificate—agreeing that the work had been done in satisfactory manner—before the repairs were even started.

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[7] "Small Clique Turns 'House-Selling' Business into Get-Rich Scheme," by Odell M. Smith, *The Sun*, Baltimore, December 13, 1954.

One homeowner in the Pilot Area signed a contract for $1,700, only to learn from the inspectors afterward that the work was inferior and partially completed, and all the electrical repairs made without a permit. In another case, an owner signed a contract to have his front wall repaired for $1,800. The inspectors discovered that identical walls in the same block had been repaired for as little as $800. There were cases of residents who were sold plastic stone facades that later had to be torn down because the brick walls underneath were cracked. In at least two cases, Pilot Area residents were sold new gas heating systems when it was obvious that they could not afford such elaborate equipment. In both cases, the gas was later turned off because they could not pay the fuel bills, and they had no heat at all.

If the city had enforced the 30-day notice limit against homeowners like these, the result would have been the loss of their homes, rather than a "rehabilitation of the people." This could have discredited the law enforcement effort and ended housing rehabilitation in Baltimore. As Yates Cook put it, wryly, "I could wreck this program in six months . . . by insisting on enforcing the letter of the law in the time allotted."

As a solution, the law enforcement agencies adopted a system of education, rather than coercion, with families who owned or were buying their homes. Miss Biddison and the inspectors took on the laborious task of explaining, guiding and persuading the homeowners to do the work required. As long as a cooperative attitude was shown, a homeowner was not taken to court. The Brethren volunteers went into the homes, and provided unskilled labor for home-owning families who were willing to do some of the work themselves. The Neighborhood Committee, led by Mrs. Jackson, drew up a list of reliable contractors whose work and integrity could be trusted, and distributed the list throughout the neighborhood. Problems that the inspectors could not handle were brought before the Hearing Board. When a homeowner was faced with a fraudulent or improper contract, lawyers were provided by the Legal Aid Bureau or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Meanwhile, the rising level of income in the Pilot Area undoubtedly helped to make the rehabilitation program possible by providing families with new money with which to pay for repairs. The 10 per cent who were still unable to handle the cost of rehabilitation were referred to the Fight-Blight Fund. Since the Fund was not connected with any official agency, Andrews, the Fund's attorney, was able to represent the residents in dealing with lending institutions, speculators and contractors. Families whose ignorance and poverty had left them easy victims for every conceivable flim-flam, legal or illegal,

Another Pilot Area block from the rear, before law enforcement. The hoppers containing the outdoor toilets lined the alley from one end to the other. This is the 2000 block of Mura Street.

The same block, after law enforcement. Not beautiful yet, but the sunlight is there and the rats are gone. The hoppers are only a sickening memory.

were provided with the services of a real estate expert and lawyer. This service was free to the residents, and it cost the Flight-Blight Fund about $70 a case, in terms of Andrews' part-time salary. The cost was low, as Andrews put it, compared with the satisfaction of seeing a family "after their home has been withdrawn from a sale and a solution found to their problem, and they say, 'Do you know, last night was the first night that I have slept right through in two years.' "

Delight and Disenchantment:

When the coming of law enforcement was first announced in the Pilot Area, the residents greeted it with fear and misgiving. Then the violation notices were mailed out, and fear turned to sharp resentment. Some of the home owners panicked, visualizing themselves dragged off to jail. Others stood in their doorways with clenched fists, defying the inspectors to return. One man, a chronic worrier, became violently ill after each visit from an inspector, and had to go to bed for two or three days.

But in spite of these feelings, the program brought quick and dramatic results, on the surface. For the first time in decades, the neighborhood was cleaned up. Rotting old board fences were ripped out of the alleys; streets were scraped and cleaned; back yards were cleared of tons of trash, garbage and raw sewage. The residents began to clean because they were ashamed, as one inspector put it, "to be caught as dirty as they can be." A family never knew when an inspector might appear to go through the house, and the pressure of neighbors' opinions worked in the same direction. Every one was "fixing," like it or not, and there was a natural tendency to compare notes. This pressure was increased when the fences went down, because the man whose yard remained trashy knew that every passer-by would see it. Some of the residents protested the destruction of fences because their privacy was eliminated. On the other hand, privacy was increased in a more basic area of life when the toilets were moved inside.

The urge to clean snowballed as law enforcement progressed. Shame for the bad conditions was gradually replaced by pride in the improvements brought about. The residents' efforts became more and more painstaking. Many of the poorest families began arranging their shabby furniture and knick-knacks with an eye to neatness. Bright colors of paint were splashed on windows and doors, and flowers bloomed in garden boxes made of battered buckets or old automobile tires. Homemade lawn furniture was patched together out of spare boards and parts. On evenings and week ends, steel workers and

stevedores could be seen watering roses or painting neat trim around their doors and windows.

The back yard became an important addition to the living space of many a family, in spite of the rigid Baltimore tradition of front-stoop sitting. Where trash and filth had collected before, awnings and lawn chairs were placed, and friendly talk wafted back and forth between the back yard patios. This spirit of pride and cleanliness seemed to carry over into the personal habits of the people. The owner of the neighborhood movie theatre, watching his customers stream past during the changing of features, observed that "the people are cleaner. They dress better, and act better. . . . In housing, it's a human thing to go along with the dirt—or with the cleanliness—isn't it?"

The change in the neighborhood was not merely esthetic. The elimination of trash and garbage, combined with work on walls and basements, soon starved out the rat population. For the first time they could remember, hundreds of mothers did not have to live in fear that rats would attack their babies.

Gradually, with the change in atmosphere, the attitude of the residents toward law enforcement itself began to change. By the time the Pilot Program ended, two years later, the initial resentment had been replaced by almost unanimous approval of the program. "If you had come around here when we was cleaning and fixing, I'd have taken a butcher knife to you," an interviewer was told by one cheerful housewife, "but now I could bless you." Said a steel worker: "Boy, I remember the headaches we had, but it pays off." This enthusiasm spread to other neighborhoods, and inspectors began to receive requests for law enforcement from people who had visited friends in the Pilot Area. Signs of cleaning and repair work began to show in blocks outside the Pilot Area boundaries. In 1954, the Housing Bureau extended the boundaries in response to requests—from Pilot Area residents, who wanted their investment protected by the rehabilitation of the surrounding blocks, and from residents of the surrounding blocks, who had seen what happened in the Pilot Area and wanted the same benefits for themselves.

The law enforcement program, meanwhile, went much farther than a cleanup and anti-rat campaign. Among the violations found by inspectors in the neighborhood were 272 broken plumbing systems, 121 buildings with exposed electric wires, 222 "blind" rooms, 145 leaking roofs, 39 uncapped gas jets, 46 bulging walls, 12 dangerous heating plants, and 92 buildings where more than 10 persons shared a single toilet. These violations, and many more, were distributed

among the 785 properties in the Pilot Area. Altogether, the first inspections produced 16,671 different violations, and 1,410 notices were sent to property owners and tenants.

By 1953—two years after law enforcement started—89 per cent of the violations had been corrected. The United States Public Health Service, which made a "before" and "after" survey of the houses, reported that substandard conditions in the average dwelling had been reduced by 35 to 45 per cent. The most dramatic changes were in maintenance, where the researchers found an average improvement of 74 per cent. This, it was concluded, showed "the degree to which the dwelling unit is restored to its original condition."[8]

Some families carried the improvement of their houses well beyond the standards required by the city. There was a great deal of painting and wallpapering, although the city required only that faulty paint or paper be removed, not replaced. One family laboriously paid off its debt to the Fight-Blight Fund, and then borrowed more to make further improvements. The Public Health Service reported that "private baths or showers with hot running water were voluntarily installed in slightly over 100 dwelling units, and private toilets for each dwelling unit were installed voluntarily in about 40. . . . This may be considered a direct result of the educational efforts applied in the Pilot Area. . . ."[9] Much of this was made possible, no doubt, by the rising level of incomes. But Vernon Hoffman put it this way in 1955: "The Pilot Area has seen an over-all change from ice boxes to refrigerators, from wood stoves to electric stoves, from space heaters to furnaces. This is part of the national pattern over the last five years, but I think that forcing the people to make other changes—to repair their bad heating equipment, wiring and so forth—has speeded up the trend in this area."

This effect, unfortunately, was limited to homeowners. The landlords, for the most part, did only what they were required to do, and the required standards were still the minimum standards under existing laws. The city did not require painting, bathtubs or showers, central heating, hot water, or even a toilet for each dwelling unit.[10] As a result, some houses slipped through the enforcement process without much improvement at all. Most of these were landlords' properties, which remained in the class of tenements, to the disappointment and disgust of homeowners living nearby.

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[8] Johnson and McCaldin, *op cit.*, p. 26.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[10] Some of these standards were raised when the city moved its law enforcement campaign to another neighborhood. See Chapter II, on the Mount Royal area.

As late as 1955, a young Negro couple with four children were paying $36.80 a month for a three-room apartment above a grocery store, where only one room was heated and the children could not play on the floor because of the danger from rats. "A city inspector was here," said the harried young mother, "and he made the landlord put in one cracked window pane. . . . One pane, when there's every window in here rotted out, and a hole in the wall all the way along under the sink. That's where the rats come in. I've seen 'em. I was bitten on the back of the neck one night."

In some of the blocks, with buildings like this one, the rats began to return soon after the enforcement campaign. Dr. David E. Davis, of Johns Hopkins, kept a careful check on the rat population in three blocks of the Pilot Area from 1949 to 1956. In two of the blocks, where rehabilitation was complete, the rats disappeared permanently after five months of enforcement. In the third—the block where lived the young couple described above—the rat population never went down to zero, and in five months it began to climb again.

While many landlords' properties remained pretty much as they had been before, the residents also found that the over-all face of the neighborhood was not much changed by rehabilitation. Heavy trucks still pounded through the streets, shaking plaster off the walls of the houses. The vast majority of Pilot Area children had no place to play, except the busy streets and alleys. There was no reduction in commercial uses, and one corner was actually rezoned from residential to commercial while the program was under way. At the end of the rehabilitation effort, there were still 15 liquor stores, taverns and thinly-disguised "social clubs" in the 14 blocks that made up the Pilot Area. Three of these places were across the street from the new school and its playground.

Most basic of all, perhaps, was the lack of any change in the sheer volume of people in the neighborhood. When the rehabilitation program began, the Pilot Area homes were more crowded than the average for the city, and this condition was intensified when families displaced by slum clearance doubled up temporarily with friends and relatives in the Pilot Area. By 1955, single-family homes were still being converted into apartments, and buildings with store fronts were being converted into dingy living quarters. The buildings were tightly crowded onto the land, with little open space except for the streets, alleys and tiny yards. This meant the neighborhood was literally teeming with people—4,000 of them in 14 square blocks of two- and three-story row houses. Violations of the minimum occupancy standards were found in only 6 per cent of the dwelling units,

but the space needed to meet minimum legal standards was not the same as the space needed for a satisfying home life.

The reasons for the lack of any basic change in the face of the neighborhood lay in the nature of the Baltimore Plan. All the blighting influences that were left—traffic, commercialization, taverns, lack of play space and crowding—fell outside the powers of city agencies operating in the Pilot Program. Rehabilitation was based on law enforcement, and law enforcement was based on the police power of the city government. With the exception of one block that was cleared for a new school, there was no attempt to use the city's power of eminent domain. Yet there was no other known way in which taverns and non-conforming uses could be eliminated, streets closed, play space opened up, or crowding reduced in landlords' properties.

It is not surprising, in the light of these drawbacks, that the Pilot Area did not become a sought-after place to live, even after rehabilitation. When the stimulus of law enforcement was removed, the neighborhood slowly but surely started to run downhill again. In 1955—two years after the formal program ended—the Housing Bureau surveyed the area, and found 47 properties with violations that required the issuance of new notices. Two of these properties were in such condition that full-scale rehabilitation was necessary, and one was posted as unfit for human habitation. The Advisory Council to the Housing Bureau appointed a committee to analyze the condition of the Pilot Area, and the committee reported: ". . . the conditions which prevailed prior to the rehabilitation program have begun to return. In too many instances, houses are badly in need of paint . . . The alleys are again becoming clogged with trash . . . The area is deteriorating, and unless something is done to check the trend, it may become little if any better than it was."

The residents were aware of this. People were not attracted to the Pilot Area from other neighborhoods, and a school teacher said, "I feel they're moving out rather than moving in. Those who have the means move out to other neighborhoods, where they can raise their children and be quieter. A housewife, who had labored hard on the Neighborhood Committee for the Pilot Program but did not have the means to move out, summed it up this way: "There's not much point in putting too much into this neighborhood. You can't make it as good as you'd like to. Just make it meet the requirements and keep it clean—that's the thing."

Family and Social Life:

The social changes that accompanied rehabilitation in the Pilot Area were as contradictory as the physical changes. At first, the case

load of the social agencies increased, when inspectors and other Pilot Program workers were on the lookout for families with problems, and directing them to the proper sources of assistance. Then a decline started, and by 1955—two years after the program ended—the Department of Welfare was handling 25 per cent fewer cases in the Pilot Area than in 1950—in spite of a city-wide increase in the welfare rolls of almost 20 per cent. Yet it was not clear whether this was due to the rehabilitation, or to higher incomes—or whether the residents had merely lost contact with the helping agencies again.

In some families, the Pilot Area workers felt, rehabilitation of the home produced unifying effects. If a family was basically stable, the process of working on the home seemed to pull the members of the family together. Fathers might take an interest in working around the house, and children would catch the spirit of making and coloring things. Yet Vernon Hoffman warned: "This is still not widespread in the community. Most of it involves activities of mothers and children. The fathers still seem to go their own way." Furthermore, the inspectors and volunteers noticed that if a basic conflict already existed in a family, the financial and legal burdens of law enforcement sometimes proved the last straw, which caused the family to break up. On the other hand, it was felt that such families would have broken up eventually, law enforcement or no law enforcement.

Outside of his home life, the major social interest of a Baltimore Negro was his religion. In the Pilot Area, churchgoing had always been widespread, and religion enjoyed great prestige. There were eleven churches located either in the area or within a half-mile radius outside, and there were perhaps twice that many "store-front" churches, where unconventional sects held forth behind the plate glass windows of converted first-floor shops. Of the ministers in the area, only one—the Rev. Graham—became a major figure in the Pilot Program. He launched his church into every phase of the task of "rehabilitating people." The national church board designated his Knox Church as a mission, and sent a full-time director for the community center, Miss Rachel Swann. With the Rev. Graham and six part-time assistants, Miss Swann organized Bible classes and scout activities, sports and teen-age clubs, and a nursery school enthusiastically named the "Kiddie Kollege." Neighborhood meetings were held in the church auditorium, with refreshments served from one of the kitchens.

These activities, and a host of others, kept the church and community building humming day and night, always on a neighborhood-wide basis, without regard to race or religious denomination. By 1955,

The Knox Presbyterian Church and its recreation center (left), where the Rev. Octavius Graham opened the doors for community activities of all kinds. The sturdy community building contains classrooms, gymnasium, kitchens, recreation rooms.

the Rev. Graham said, the congregation numbered 300, while the number of children and adults participating in the various community programs at the church was close to 1,500. If the result of this activity was an increase in actual churchgoing at Knox, the increase was too gradual to be measured. But churchgoing had been exceptionally high before the program began. A more clear-cut result of the rehabilitation work, the Rev. Graham felt, was an enrichment of the spiritual side of community life: "I think some of the people in the churches have become more responsive to community ideals," he said, "with respect to what a community ought to be. . . . Cleanliness is next to Godliness; you can worship better where things are clean."

A dramatic example of spiritual growth, in the broad sense, was described by Vernon Hoffman: "The first year the volunteers were in the Pilot Area—1952—I didn't notice any sign of Christmas in the neighborhood. When I walked through the neighborhood on Christmas Eve of 1954, almost every house had some sign of trees or lights

decorating the windows." The background of rising incomes cannot be ignored in this case. Yet it indicates that a change was taking place in the values of Pilot Area residents.

One reason why the church was an important social center for many Pilot Area people was the fact that their low level of income and education cut them off from most of the cultural activities of the city. They were also cut off—by segregation, either enforced or implied—from other forms of recreation, such as first-run movies, good hotels and restaurants, swimming pools and public parks.[11] As a result, many of the residents had turned to the forms of entertainment where race and education do not count: namely, television, automobiles and liquor.

Television proved to be a great equalizer. "It's one of the best things that ever happened for colored people," said Richard Brown, a Negro inspector working in the Pilot Area. "This is one place where they can see anything that any one else can see." Practically every family in the Pilot Area had a television set by the summer of 1955, and the effect on the residents' taste in entertainment was attested by the owner of the local movie house: "When we first changed from white to colored, we could play anything and pack them in. Our film bill was half what it is now. The trend has changed. Now, they're showing more intelligence in their selections. The pictures have to be good to do business." Unfortunately, the educational power of television was not harnessed to teach the appreciation of better housing standards and home life. The scenes depicted on a Pilot Area resident's screen were scenes from a life he could not hope to emulate. But television did bring top-flight entertainment to the people, in their homes. Both children and adults tended to spend more time there, as a result.

Like television, the popularity of large, colorful automobiles was originally a symptom of the slum dwellers' desire for escape. "Staying at home, you're always reminded of the conditions you live in," said Brown, who as an inspector had become close to the residents of the Pilot Area; "so you have an automobile to drive to another part of town. Even if you merely go to visit friends in another slum, it isn't yours." The Pilot Program, by turning the neighborhood into a place where people would not need escape, might have eliminated this automobile standard of life. It did not, however; possibly because the environment did not change very much.

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[11] Since the days of the Pilot Program, strides toward integration have been made in Baltimore. All city parks and swimming pools, for instance, have been integrated by court order.

The third route of escape open to Pilot Area residents was the corner tavern. And here the Pilot Program was deeply involved. It has been mentioned that rehabilitation brought about no reduction in the number of liquor licenses in the neighborhood, and there were 15 bars, package-goods stores and "clubs" in the 14-block area. In the end, many residents were more critical of this than of any other aspect of the program. Time after time, complaints were made that the liquor outlets threatened to spoil all the good work that had been done in the way of rehabilitation. Said one resident, sitting on his new concrete steps three doors away from a package-goods store: "The neighborhood is cleaner, I guess, but with all these bars, and the way people drop the bottles and paper bags on the sidewalks, and hang around drinking on the street, or in parked cars, and carrying on . . . it makes it look like a slum, an awful slum."

In the course of the Pilot Program, the homeowners of the neighborhood learned that taverns and bars could be kept out. The Neighborhood Committee appeared before the Liquor Board to fight at least a dozen applications for new licenses, or for the expansion of old ones. Yet the market demand for liquor in the neighborhood was so great, even at the end of the rehabilitation program, that an applicant for a liquor license would go to extreme lengths to produce evidence that another tavern was "needed." It was reported that tavern owners would offer free drinks and meals, or even money, to residents who would testify favorably at City Hall. In one case, when a would-be tavern owner presented the Liquor Board with a petition signed by 90 persons, the Brethren volunteers investigated. They found that only 46 of the signatures were valid. "The people we saw on his side at the hearing were really the scum of the neighborhood," said Vernon Hoffman. "Less than 5 per cent were homeowners." The Rev. Graham was the leader in many of the campaigns against new liquor licenses, and he became such a formidable opponent that one applicant for a license offered him $1,000 to stay away from the hearing.

Along with liquor consumption, the level of sexual immorality remained high in the Pilot Area after the rehabilitation process was complete, according to inspectors, volunteers and social workers. Yet some signs of improvement were seen. "There is an awareness of moral standards, and it is becoming more acute," said a probation officer who worked part-time in the Knox Church recreation center. An inspector added, "people don't have time to sit around and smoulder when they have to keep the house cleaned up, and go to meetings, and get out and see what's going on in the neighborhood. . . . Besides, there's no place to duck any more." All those who worked with the

residents during the course of the program agreed that prostitution, narcotics and other more damaging forms of vice had never been a problem in the neighborhood. If those things did exist, they said, the high level of official activity during the law enforcement effort would have made it impossible for them to continue.

The Pilot Area stood in a transition zone between the rough, bawdy neighborhoods circling the waterfront, and the quiet neighborhoods of stable, though poor, home-owning families farther out. The Pilot Area itself had never been known as a "trouble spot" to the police. Even so, officers who walked beats in the Pilot Area felt that crime had fallen off during the rehabilitation program. Two of these patrolmen pooled their experiences, and came up with an estimate that police problems had declined as much as 50 per cent between 1950 and 1955. "Before you had this program," said one officer, "it used to be hell-holes in the alleys up there. You used to feel rats running over your feet at night. There used to be a lot of yokings. . . . Now, with the fences down and the new street lights, it's safe anywhere. They can't hide in the alleys. You can see somebody five blocks away. You can spot a gang in a minute, and you can see what they're doing. I can't remember the last yoking we had there."

In addition to cleaning out the alleys, and eliminating the hiding places, the policemen felt that the rehabilitation program had brought about a change in the relationship between police and residents. "We used to get a lot of calls, and they thought they could get away with anything," one of the officers said, "but the roughnecks left. That kind seems to have disappeared. You have sensible people up there now. They speak to you: 'Good morning' and 'Good evening.' The sensible people will cooperate. And if somebody moves in and doesn't do the right thing, the others will tell you about it. Every house is O.K. now, except the rented ones." These policemen knew the neighborhood leaders, and praised the work that residents had been doing to bring play space into the neighborhood, and to keep taverns out.

The residents, on the other hand, had become sharply critical of the police. They felt that they were not receiving enough police protection, and pointed to the sacrifices they had made and the debts they had incurred at the city's insistence. The police, they complained, still spent most of their time patrolling the shopping area and the commercial blocks of the neighborhood. "I've been in Baltimore 25 years," went a typical comment from a housewife, "and this is one city where you don't get cooperation from the police. . . . They have lots of laws, but they don't enforce them. They could have cleaned up around here, good." Another resident, a Negro insurance

man and politician, remarked with finality that "for a policeman to walk a beat around here is a miracle."

This was apparently a new attitude for some of the residents. Having been awakened to the possibilities of law enforcement, they were aware that more protection was desirable. This attitude cannot, however, be attributed entirely to the Pilot Program. It was inextricably interwoven with a city-wide development of Negro civic pride and sophistication, together with a sharpening resentment of what Negroes considered as second-class treatment from City Hall.

Education, Formal and Informal:

When the Pilot Program was launched in early 1951, the Department of Education was already operating two adult education centers in evening schools accessible to the Pilot Area. Only one of them, however, was open to Negroes before the fall of 1954. That was at Dunbar High School, the school attended by Pilot Area teen-agers during the daytime. The principal of the Dunbar evening school joined the Education Committee of the Pilot Program, and made an effort to adapt the adult classes to the rehabilitation effort. No new courses were set up to teach the skills needed in rehabilitation, but the Pilot Program was made the theme of some of the existing courses.

The most important of these were elementary school subjects, which were being taught for adults who had missed schooling in their youth. There was a "family living" series, in which the teachers used the Pilot Program as subject material. The elementary teachers developed a list of city services, and how to obtain them, for this appeared to be the ignorant adults' strongest need. In a home economics class, there were instructions about how to save money around the home, but the questions of budgeting and home financing were deemed too advanced for adults who were on the elementary school level. (This did not prevent such people from buying homes and contracting installment debts, however.) The evening school principal spoke at Pilot Area meetings, to tell the residents about the courses that were offered. The result was hopeful: the enrollment of Pilot Area residents at the Evening School went up from 7 in 1951 to 48 in 1953. But the vast majority of 1,500 to 2,000 adults in the neighborhood were not reached by the program of formal adult education.

There was a branch library near the Pilot Area, and here also the staff tried to help provide the knowledge needed by Pilot Area residents. The librarians spoke at neighborhood meetings, describing the facilities at the library, and how they could be used. Pamphlets were

collected and put on display, covering such subjects as home repairs, home decoration, wallpaper hanging, furniture repairing and rat-proofing. But the chief librarian reported afterward: "There wasn't anything available except these pamphlets, and they were over the heads of the Pilot Area residents." The librarians felt they could have been more effective if they could have offered material on every level of sophistication: films and music, exhibits, models and demonstrations, with question periods and attractive, simple pamphlets designed especially for uneducated readers. A hunger for elementary education existed, the librarians reported. For years, adults from the neighborhood had been going to the library to borrow first- and second-grade readers, and teaching themselves how to read.

Meanwhile, periodic educational meetings were held in the Pilot Area by the Neighborhood Committee, and city officials explained the various elements of rehabilitation. But, like the adult education classes and the library pamphlets, these meetings attracted primarily the residents who were already trying to improve themselves—the people who needed the least help from the outside. The great majority of Pilot Area residents did not know what kind of education they needed. And when they began to feel their ignorance, through unfortunate experiences with loan sharks, landlords and speculators, they wanted lessons in how to deal with those specific problems. "This wasn't foreseen," said C. William Brooks, chairman of the Hearing Board; "we didn't realize what they needed to know until we got into the hearings."

When the real problems did become apparent, Hearing Board members and Housing Bureau officials listed the main educational needs of the Pilot Area residents as follows:

1. Simple instruction in the hygiene of housing.

2. Elementary reading and arithmetic. (The Housing Bureau's pamphlets were never fully effective, because so many of the residents could not read them.)

3. How to prepare a budget.

4. How to finance the purchase of a home.

5. The privileges and responsibilities of home ownership.

6. How to make simple repairs and maintain the home.

7. How to secure an honest and competent contractor, and how to ensure the fulfillment of the contract.

8. Neighborhood organization and how to deal with City Hall.

9. The nature and location of social agencies and the Legal Aid Bureau.

As a result of the Hearing Board's experience, one short-lived attempt was made to enroll the Pilot Area residents in a shop course designed especially for them, at Dunbar Evening School in the fall of 1953. Between 40 and 50 residents signed cards saying they wanted to join the course, but when registration day arrived, less than 25 showed up—too few to permit the school to hold the class.

In short, formal adult education had little effect in the Pilot Program, as far as the adults were concerned. But in informal ways, the volunteers, inspectors and other city workers had better luck in showing the residents how to handle their immediate problems. The first task was to teach them that there were agencies outside the neighborhood that cared about the problems of poor, ignorant people in blighted areas. The residents were accustomed to considering themselves beneath the interest of those distant, impersonal agencies that operated on a city-wide basis.

This attitude was changed, in many of the residents. Said Mrs. Jackson, the Neighborhood Committee chairman: "Many of the residents had attitudes of distrust and suspicion at first, but they changed that when they saw the earnestness and devotedness of a few of the city officials." Richard Brown, the Negro inspector, added: "The people have learned to respect the authorities. Often we are greeted in the neighborhood now as saviours." Some residents even lost their fear of the landlord. They began to complain about rats, or about violations the landlord failed to correct. Two years after the rehabilitation program, a public health nurse who worked in the Pilot Area, said, "When you go into the houses, you find people are more aware of what constitutes health hazards, fire and accident hazards, and so forth."

Some of the residents were also learning to communicate with the social agencies. A "referral center" was set up in the Pilot House, and manned around the clock by the Brethren volunteers. Families who were in trouble learned to go to the Pilot House, and the volunteers referred them to the Legal Aid Bureau, the Welfare Department, or the private organizations brought into the program by the Council of Social Agencies. Each social agency designated a "contact" person, to expedite cases from the Pilot Area.

By the time the Pilot Program ended, the residents of the neighborhood had learned to work with the city inspection officials and the social agencies. Unfortunately, this lesson did not stick. The social agencies did not maintain their close contact with the Pilot Area after the program ended; as a result, little is known about the residents' feelings toward those agencies in later years. But the relation-

ship with city agencies is easy to trace. The inspectors found that as long as they were making daily rounds in the neighborhood, they were constantly stopped on the street by residents who had complaints to make. When the law enforcement effort ended, and this face-to-face relationship was eliminated, the habit of making complaints also disappeared.

During the summer of 1955, a dozen residents selected at random were interviewed about their opinions of the neighborhood. Almost every one had a specific complaint to make: a stable that was blighting the neighboring homes; a tree root that had broken the sidewalk; the trash and bottles piled around a corner tavern; a back yard piled high with dirt and old lumber; the deterioration of a landlord-owned tenement; faulty drainage in the yard next door. But not one of these people had made a complaint to any city agency. The man with the broken pavement said, "Well, the tree's not right in front of my house. It's more in front of the house next door." The housewife who complained about the tavern said, "It seems like when the city people are around here, they can see for themselves." The young couple who resented the stable explained that the owner was a neighbor, and they did not want to make trouble for him.

There was another sort of informal education available to Pilot Area residents, however, and it gave promise of having more permanent results. This was the education that was filtering into the neighborhood through the school children. Teachers had studied the aims and problems of rehabilitation at workshops held by the Department of Education and the Citizens Planning and Housing Association. Then this knowledge was put to work in the classrooms, where lessons were built around personal cleanliness and home decorating, meal-planning and gardening techniques. The school children soaked up this sort of knowledge enthusiastically. And even more important, they took their new knowledge home with them—to parents who had no such education. The youngsters in many cases literally shamed their parents into learning the new standards that were being taught in the schools.

One teacher recalled the day she took her second-grade class on a tour of the alleys in the neighborhood, with instructions to "take a poll" of all the bad conditions they found. As they passed one yard, piled high with trash and rubble, one of the little girls was heard whispering, "Brenda lives here." When the class returned to school, little Brenda was silently weeping. The teacher said nothing, but waited to see what would happen. The next morning, Brenda arrived at school wreathed in smiles, and obviously bursting with pride. "It doesn't look that way now," she told her teacher. "When I went home

last night I cried and carried on until my daddy went out and fixed it."

Some of the teachers did not stop with their classroom work. They went out into the neighborhood after school hours, and talked to parents in their homes. In some places, the teachers helped with the work of planting flowers and cleaning up community alleys.

In the meantime, the families at the bottom of the economic heap were receiving from the Fight-Blight Fund an education that promised to be the most effective and lasting of all. William A. Andrews, the Fight-Blight lawyer, was the teacher, and his method was painstaking casework. There was the case of Mr. and Mrs. P - - -, an elderly couple with a combined income of $116 a month. They were making payments of $27.63 a month on their home, plus $3 for ground rent, and their city notice ordered them to rewire the cellar, rat-proof the entire house, replace deteriorated window sashes and stair treads, replaster two rooms, and repair a cornice, the front door and the dining room floor. They did not understand why all of this was necessary, but in fear of City Hall they had turned the notice over to a contractor. His estimate for the cost of repairs was $1,525. Crushed, the elderly couple turned to the Fight-Blight Fund.

Andrews' first step was to call in the Housing Bureau inspector, to explain the city's requirements in terms that Mr. and Mrs. P - - - - could understand. Next, they were shown how to figure out which repairs they could make themselves, with the help of the volunteers. Finally, Mrs. P - - - was instructed to obtain estimates from other contractors for the rest of the work. When these estimates were received, the cost came down from $1,525 to $512. Andrews decided this amount could be consolidated with the $300 that was still owed on the house into a single mortgage, with the term extended from three to five years. This made the total monthly payment for both house and repairs only $17.47—compared with the $27.63 that Mr. and Mrs. P - - - had been paying for the house alone. There was no need for any money from the Fund.

Although the new financing was agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. P - - -, Andrews found they had never been inside a bank. The "landlord" had collected the weekly mortgage payments, like rent, and they had no idea how the ground rent and taxes were paid. Since Mr. P - - - suffered from a bad heart, Andrews took Mrs. P - - - to each office where the payments were to be made. The bank made out a check for the repairs to Mrs. P - - -, and Andrews showed her how to endorse it over to the contractor—after the repair work had been approved by a city inspector. In all these transactions, Andrews was careful to maintain

a businesslike approach, supplying Mrs. P - - - with receipts for all the personal papers he borrowed, and verifying each transaction in writing.

In case after case like this one, Andrews was able to refinance the debts that families had accumulated for mortgages, repairs and credit purchases, and come out with a lower monthly bill than the home owner had been paying before. Homeowners who were suspicious at first later reversed their attitudes. Several actually refused help from the Fight-Blight Fund, only to return later and ask to be reconsidered. If a homeowner proved to be using the Fund to dodge his own responsibilities, or if he disregarded Andrews' advice, he was referred back to the Housing Bureau, for court action if necessary.

The results of all this were dramatic. Although the Fight-Blight Fund had $10,000 at its disposal, it soon became apparent that even the poorest Pilot Area families needed advice and education far more than money. In the first six months, Andrews used only $230 of the Fund's money, while supervising the completion of $6,912 worth of repairs, and $32,000 in home financing. At the end of 1955, three and a half years after the Fund was started, he had assisted 160 families in solving their financial and legal problems. Only 33 cases, or 20.6 per cent, had needed money from the Fight-Blight treasury.[12]

After they had been guided to safe ground financially, Andrews found that these families showed a new air of competence and self-reliance. "Only one or two expected charity," he said; "almost all of them saw charity only as a last resort, and they would avoid it in any way possible. Once the residents' rehabilitation problems had been worked out, they would sometimes come back for advice on other problems—auto accidents, social security, income tax, and so forth. They did not want me to take these problems off their shoulders. They expected advice only, and planned to take it themselves from there. When they were told they would have to pay for this kind of service, none of them objected."

Some of the Fight-Blight clients, like Mrs. B - - -, went on to establish new lives for themselves on the basis of what they had learned. Mrs. B - - - was referred to the Fight-Blight Fund when she had three court judgments against her for unpaid bills; she was ill and out of work; she was threatened with foreclosure and indebted to a dishonest speculator. Finally, she needed $1,430 for repairs and she was summoned to Housing Court and fined. Then, with Andrews' help, she

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[12] This same ratio continued in further operations of the Fund. In 1958, after helping more than 300 cases, Andrews reported that financial aid was not required in 80% of them.

managed to obtain a new mortgage that covered the cost of repairs. She was so encouraged that she borrowed another $1,000 for a hot water heater and a kitchen sink, which were not required by the city notice. Two years later, Mrs. B--- had not only managed to keep her payments under control; she had moved from a $30-a-week job on a factory assembly line to a $45 job as a physician's housekeeper. She was giving a home, rent-free, to her mother, cousin, brother, sister-in-law and three small nieces and nephews.

Andrews attributed much of Mrs. B---'s rehabilitation to the Fight-Blight Fund's decision to help her finance the extras that she wanted so badly. "It is necessary to go beyond the minimum city requirements," Andrews concluded, "to give these people enough of a lift to go on. There seems to be a point at which the will to go on comes into play. Below that point, no permanent change in attitude can be brought about. But in cases where we've added comfort and finish and decoration, there seems to be more of a lift than merely removing the fear of a notice. The residents are taking over and improving themselves."

Neighborhood Morale and Organization:

Perhaps the most crucial long-term goal of the Pilot Program was the creation of neighborhood morale, which could be organized into a force that would resist any future inroads of blight. At first, there were several areas where the "rehabilitation of the people" promised to produce results of this kind.

One was simply the residents' new pride in their neighborhood. The city agencies did their best to encourage this feeling. "Certificates of Merit" were issued to the homes that had been brought into compliance with the law, as recognition for owners who cooperated. The Hearing Board sent letters to homeowners who had difficulty finding enough money, praising the work they did and encouraging them to keep at it. When the city's garbage truck drivers went on strike in 1953, the Pilot Area residents kept their trash and garbage carefully covered in containers. In other neighborhoods, the overflow was permitted to scatter through the streets and alleys.

Two years after the law enforcement program ended, a young husband in the Pilot Area said, "When people move in, and aren't up to standard, they get the idea after a while. No one says anything to them. They get the idea just from watching the others. That family across the street—when they came here they were awful. Now they're out cleaning and washing the steps and all, just like every one else."

While the residents' pride in their neighborhood increased, they also became more sociable among themselves. Every one had received a notice from the city, and every one faced problems in getting the work done. It helped to know what other people were doing, and homeowners soon found themselves comparing notes with neighbors they had never spoken to before. The feeling of friendliness was heightened by the elimination of the fences. "There are flowers in our yards now," said one proud housewife; "people stop to ask about them, and tell you what theirs are doing. Before, they would have just walked on by."

When the pressure of law enforcement ended, the habit of sociability continued. Neighbors were acquainted now, and each one wanted his or her home to look well, for new friends to visit. "Before the inspectors came," said another housewife, "we had twice as many rats as people living in our backyards and in our homes. I was ashamed to entertain in my home. When I opened the doors the flies swarmed in, in such numbers I was afraid my guests would think my home wasn't clean. But the stable's gone now. So are the rats. And those awful flies. Our little homes are not fancy, but they are comfortable, and we have the same conveniences other people have." In one block, the homeowners pooled their resources and bought a set of outdoor furniture, for sitting on the sidewalk in front of their homes on summer evenings.

Still another factor in neighborhood morale, though difficult to measure, was the relation between the races. Inside the Pilot Area, Negro and white families had always gotten along well. In one block, which was about half Negro and half white in 1955, children of both races could be seen playing happily together in the back alley, under the tolerant gaze of their parents. When a Negro newspaper organized a "clean-block" campaign, the leaders in this block were the Negro mothers. The white families followed their lead, and all seemed to take pride in the results.

But the Pilot Program did come up against race prejudice—a sort of prejudice in reverse. The residents sometimes felt that white city officials were singling out poor Negro homeowners for law enforcement. The homeowners knew that no inspections had been made in past years, when their houses were owned by white landlords. A few Negroes resisted the program blindly, as a form of protest. One railroad worker, who was buying his home with a G.I. loan and going to night school to learn brick-laying, refused to comply with the city notice of housing law violations, or to appear before the Hearing Board. He was taken to Housing Court and fined $25. Then he was laid off during the steel strike and his mother died. Finally, he was

told his mortgage would be foreclosed, but he still refused to appeal for help. Rather than fine him a second time, the magistrate in Housing Court ordered him to report to the Fight-Blight Fund, and Andrews figured a way to hold off the foreclosure and refinance all his debts. Only then did this man realize that the white officials did not mean him harm, and his attitude changed. He cooperated willingly after that, and the rehabilitation of his house was completed.

With other, less stubborn residents, racial suspicions were gradually alleviated by the fact that some of the inspectors were Negroes, and their zeal did not vary from that of the white inspectors, except, perhaps, in the direction of a tougher attitude toward white landlords. Another strong influence on race relations was the Brethren volunteer group. These white youths moved into the neighborhood to live, and they helped any one, of either race, who needed help. "It has made the residents aware that every one isn't your enemy just because he's of a different hue," said Vernon Dobson, a Negro probation officer and recreation leader. "Sometimes, some one from the Pilot Area takes me behind the door to ask me confidentially if this can be real." For neighborhood leaders who served on the various Pilot Area committees, the experience was even more dramatic. Many of them were dealing with white officials and civic leaders on an equal, face-to-face basis for the first time.

The effort to "rehabilitate the people" in the Pilot Area also showed signs of succeeding in the Parent-Teachers groups, where the work of the school teachers paid dividends. The Pilot Area PTA's had been organized long before the Pilot Program began, and even then they were considered "strong" by the teachers. But they grew even stronger during the rehabilitation campaign, and PTA meetings were drawing overflow crowds by the end of 1955. "There was much more contact between parents and teachers than there had been before," said one teacher. "The parents saw some of the work the children were doing. There was a general loosening up of the usual strain that exists between parents and teachers."

Yet, in spite of all these signs of morale—pride in the neighborhood, sociability, improved race relations and strengthened PTA's—the Pilot Program had little success in organizing residents for the future benefit and protection of the neighborhood.

The city workers and volunteers had placed great emphasis on the formation of a neighborhood civic force. But even before they started, they were faced with formidable obstacles. One was the geographical nature of the Pilot Area. It was not a "natural neighborhood," where common interests would draw the residents together. Instead, it

included small portions of three larger neighborhoods, separated by the Broadway-Gay Street shopping area, and by a railroad overpass, both of which cut through the heart of the Pilot Area. Another obstacle was the traditional "leave-me-alone" attitude of the people who lived in blighted areas. Many residents were glad to have a protective coloring of anonymity. Others had decided, from long experience, that no good could come to them from any dealings with the city. This feeling was exaggerated by the Pilot Area families' experience with door-to-door salesmen and speculators. Residents who had been continually harassed by such people tended to withdraw from strangers and outsiders of all types.

In a predominantly middle-class neighborhood, it might have been possible for the Pilot Program workers to visit civic or improvement associations, and enlist the participation of residents who were already members. In the Pilot Area, there were no such organizations. The only community activity known to most of the residents was their church. Even in the churches, the effect was more divisive than unifying; there was a bewildering variety of denominations and sub-denominations, plus a number of sects that belonged to no denominational body.

The residents of the Pilot Area were unknown quantities to city officials and volunteers when the program started, and consequently the officials did not foresee the reluctance with which law enforcement would be greeted. They asked a well-known Negro civic leader to help in organizing a neighborhood committee to pave the way. He told city officials that there was no one in the Pilot Area capable of leadership, and named as chairman an outsider with political connections. Then the two men appointed block captains for the Neighborhood Committee.

When the Pilot Program was formally launched at a mass meeting, with the Mayor and other city officials on hand to explain the benefits of rehabilitation, hardly any one from the neighborhood showed up. Shirley Biddison, the Housing Bureau supervisor, decided the Neighborhood Committee would have to be reorganized. In Mrs. Jackson, the principal of a nearby school, she found a chairman who could supply the necessary spark. Mrs. Jackson set up orientation meetings, sending notices home with the children from school. From those who turned out for these meetings, Mrs. Jackson recruited a "steering committee" of housewives and working mothers, ministers, steel workers, nurses and a social worker. New block captains were chosen, and they went from house to house, explaining the program and attempting to smooth the way for the inspectors.

But still missing from the neighborhood organization were most of the ministers in the area. A meeting was held for all of them, and material was sent to them for distribution in their churches. "The people follow the ministers," Mrs. Jackson said, "and they like to know that the ministers approve." But she felt afterward that "we didn't do all we could have done to draw them in."

Also missing from the committee were the most prominent residents of the neighborhood—such as a Negro member of the city School Board, a commissioner of the Housing Authority, a Negro college professor, and a probation officer who later became the first Negro prosecuting attorney in Maryland.

Perhaps the most serious stumbling block of all, however, was simply the nature of life in a Pilot Area family. Both husband and wife were likely to be working at hard manual jobs, and in many cases, they worked on the night shift. In the little time they had at home, they were too worn out to have much interest in an abstract neighborhood "program." Some residents, who had accepted membership on the Neighborhood Committee, dropped out when they received their own violation notices from the city. At the beginning, committee meetings drew 45 or 50 residents, but by the end of the program, attendance had dropped off to 15 or 20. The backbone of the organization that remained was provided by a nucleus of housewives and mothers who had seen the vision of a decent, attractive neighborhood and were willing to work hard to make it come true. They did most of the Neighborhood Committee work, in company with Mrs. Jackson, Miss Biddison and Vernon Hoffman and his volunteer unit.

The committee's job was to interpret the Pilot Program to the residents, and to explain the residents' problems to the city. When the city officials wanted to convert a grassy public square into a paved playground, for example, Mrs. Jackson's committee objected, on grounds that the square was the residents' only green oasis in the desert of brick and macadam. The officials were convinced, and the Neighborhood Committee canvassed the Pilot Area for some other vacant space for the playground. After searching for a year, the committee persuaded the owners of two adjacent lots to rent them to the city, and there the playground was finally built.

With the Rev. Graham, Miss Biddison and the Brethren volunteers, the Neighborhood Committee organized mass protests against applications for new liquor licenses in the area. In these fights, Mrs. Jackson found that home owners quickly recognized the threat. This was different from the attempt to sell an abstract "program," and the

residents banded together without prodding. At one protest meeting, a score of residents donated $75 on the spot to hire a lawyer. When the Liquor Board granted the license over their protest, the homeowners raised more money and instructed their lawyer to appeal to the courts. In the end, they won their case.

The Neighborhood Committee also organized protests before the Zoning Board, against some of the "non-conforming uses" in the neighborhood. Here, technical assistance was needed from the Housing Bureau workers and the Hearing Board, because most of the residents did not see the blighting effect of commercial properties in residential blocks. There were grounds for their doubts, because some of the owners of small shops were among the strongest supporters of neighborhood rehabilitation. They lived above their businesses, in many cases, and maintained their properties in better condition than many of the houses in the area. Other commercial properties were absentee-owned, however, and these the residents were willing to fight.

In all of these community efforts, the strength of the neighborhood came primarily from homeowners. With tenants it was different. Some gave lip service to the program and attended neighborhood meetings, but disappeared when there was community work to be done. Many others were transients, who were often unable to understand rehabilitation, and who were sometimes living on the edge of the law. These wanted no contact with official agencies.

Yet to say that homeowners supported the program and tenants did not would be a dangerous oversimplification. There were many families who fell into neither pattern. This was true of families who were renting not apartments, but single-family homes. Some of them had been in the same house for decades, or even generations, and they were anxious to improve the neighborhood. They attended meetings, served on committees and did painting and minor repairs on their homes to make up for what the landlord failed to do.

In still another category were families who were buying homes that they could not afford. Of these Mrs. Jackson said, "They were afraid of the program, because it meant additional expense. They evaded the enforcement when they could. I saw some of them after they had been to the Hearing Board, where the program was carefully explained. They were in sympathy with it, but they couldn't afford the repairs, and they didn't like to borrow." Their reaction was more like the reaction of tenants. The tenants who were long-time, stable

residents of the neighborhood, on the other hand, reacted more as homeowners.

When the law enforcement drive ended, Mrs. Jackson and the city officials were determined to organize a permanent Pilot Area civic association, to keep up the work of the Neighborhood Committee after the pressure from City Hall was removed. A Pilot Protective and Improvement Association was formed; incorporation papers were filed, and a charter and by-laws adopted. By the end of 1953, the city personnel and outsiders on the Neighborhood Committee had withdrawn from the Pilot Area, leaving the P.P.I.A. in charge of neighborhood organization and morale. Twenty-seven members had been rounded up, and officers and directors were elected to carry on the organization's work.

As might have been expected, almost all of the officers and directors were women—the same housewives who had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the rehabilitation work. The men in the neighborhood never showed much interest. They were willing to deal with city notices, and handle the specific, dollar-and-cents demands of the rehabilitation program, but they never caught the vision that the women had seen.[13] The one man who was interested enough to serve on the board of the P.P.I.A. was elected president, because the housewives insisted that the leadership be in male hands. This was J. Edward Fisher, a soft-spoken and cultured young Post Office clerk, who had lived in the neighborhood all his life. Fisher and his wife had no children, and both had good jobs. With their combined income, they had been able to buy and remodel their comfortable row house before the rehabilitation program began.

In his quiet, serious way, Fisher organized the activities of the P.P.I.A. along the lines of improvement associations in more prosperous neighborhoods. He continued the distribution of the "Pilot News," a periodic information letter to all residents, which had been started by the Neighborhood Committee. The association organized "paint blitzes," in which neighbors combined their efforts to paint the trim on all the houses of one block at a time. Teen-age dances were held at Knox Church, and association members helped convert a second vacant lot into play space. The P.P.I.A. represented residents who had complaints about city services, and organized new protests against liquor licenses and non-conforming uses.

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[13] The same contrast between the interests of the women and those of the men was found in church work, where women outnumbered men, and even in politics, where a surprising number of precinct executives were women.

But the idea of organizing to protect the Pilot Area from the long-term causes of blight still did not catch on among the residents. By the end of 1955, the membership rolls of the P.P.I.A. had grown to more than 100, but the work was still done by the same few—all housewives except Fisher, and all living within a block or two of the Fishers' home.

Fisher worked to stir up interest in civic affairs and in politics. Politicians and city officials were asked to address the association, but the lack of interest in community goals was reflected in an equal indifference to city politics. This was vividly illustrated at election time. There were city-wide elections in 1951, at the time the Pilot Program was starting, and again in 1955. Between the two elections, there was actually a decrease in the number of registered voters in the Pilot Area, and in the percentage of registered voters who took the trouble to go to the polls and cast their votes. In both elections, the ballot contained a referendum on a bond issue for city schools. In 1951, there were 432 votes cast either for or against the bond issue in the Pilot Area. In 1955, there were only 224. One city councilman from the district commented that "the colored element in that area has never shown any interest in politics, except on election day, when they might make some money as workers." A Negro ward executive complained that he could not persuade other residents to register as voters—not even his well-educated friends.

The church was still the average resident's only tie to an organized group in the community. A volunteer, who polled the residents of three sample blocks in 1955, reported that "practically nobody belongs to the Pilot Association, but practically everybody goes to church." Fisher himself had two explanations for the failure of recruiting for community work. First was the lack of time, energy and money in the average Pilot Area family—making it either impossible or very difficult to join in spare-time neighborhood efforts. Second was a continuing lack of knowledge about housing and the causes of blight. Many of the residents, Fisher said in 1955, had bought homes because they had to, or because every one else was buying. "It's all new to them," he added, "and they don't think about what it means to buy a home, or about the importance of protecting their investment."

Another factor was the failure of landlords to meet the home-owners' standards. Almost half of the homes were still converted into rented apartments, and these discouraged the homeowners from believing that the neighborhood would ever become first-rate. Again and again, homeowners were heard to complain, "How come you let the landlords off?" Mrs. Jackson explained that "on the whole,

the landlords complied as well as the owners, but you got to feel that the owners did more, because they went beyond the minimum standards. . . . The residents expected the landlords to get away with more, and were quick to jump on any incident that might show that they did. One or two cases of absentee owners who got away with something had a big effect on the morale of the whole neighborhood."

When the school teachers made a new attempt to organize the Pilot Area in the fall of 1955, they found that many of the proven neighborhood leaders—who had fought the battles of zoning and liquor licenses in the City Hall, and carried on the work of the Neighborhood Committee—had moved away. They went to newer neighborhoods that had opened up for Negroes in West Baltimore, and they undoubtedly represented an important contribution of the Pilot Program to the city as a whole. These families had lifted their own sights, and their experience with rehabilitation was likely to be a valuable asset to other neighborhoods, wherever they chose to live. But they were lost to the Pilot Area, and their places were taken by lower-strata families who were upgrading themselves from the slums. After two years of hard, frustrating work, Fisher reluctantly concluded in 1955 that "I don't think the Pilot Association will ever grow. I think it will remain a hard core of workers and that's all."

The Education of Youth:

While the various attempts were being made to rehabilitate the attitudes of Pilot Area adults, the schools in the neighborhood were busy, too. In the end, it may have been the children—the young ones, at least—who gained the most from the Pilot Program.

The area was served by four elementary schools—three for Negroes and one for whites. The Negro schools, which accommodated probably 85 per cent of the Pilot Area children, were typical of schools in the blighted areas of Baltimore—aged, inadequate and overcrowded. School No. 135, the nearest to the Pilot Area, had been condemned in 1921, because of poor design and inadequate play space. But the growing population made it necessary to keep the building in use, and it was converted to a Negro school in 1943. It was located at the intersection of two heavily-traveled streets, and hemmed in by row houses, an alley and a sheet-metal shop, with a tavern across the street.

When the Pilot Program began, the school shortage was reaching its peak, and School 135 had more than half of its 1,000 pupils attending school on double, or part-time, shifts. A new school was opened in the Pilot Area in 1954, but it eliminated the overcrowded condi-

tions for only one year. By 1955, the old school again had 79 part-time pupils, and the new school had 384.

But in spite of the poverty of school facilities, the Pilot Program was able to tap the schools' best resource: the Negro teachers. School-teaching was a popular vocation for educated Negroes in Baltimore, and the teachers were not only capable, but interested in helping Negro children learn a higher standard of life. Since 1946, the Citizens Planning and Housing Association had been organizing housing workshops for teachers in the public school system, and the methodology of teaching better living conditions was partially worked out before the Pilot Program began.

The first target was the teachers themselves, who often came from relatively good neighborhoods, and did not realize the conditions under which the pupils in blighted-area schools were living. In the Pilot Area, between 30 and 40 teachers from the elementary schools attended after-hours workshop sessions, where they were taught the facts about the Pilot Area and the city's method of rehabilitating it. The workshop members went on tours of the area, observing the families in their homes. When a teacher realized that some of her pupils had never seen a bathroom until they went to school, she quickly realized the significance of education in the housing program.

After their workshop training, the teachers tried to show their pupils how to live by better standards. Each school worked out its own program of teaching, and the lessons of rehabilitation were applied at every point in the curriculum. "We took nothing out of the book," said one of the teachers afterward; "there wasn't anything in the book." The teachers taught children to clean and decorate first their own classrooms, and then the school building. Teachers made up stories about clean and dirty families. The children themselves made models of good and bad houses, wrote and acted out plays explaining the principles of rehabilitation. For older children, there were talks by city officials, and courses on rodent control, city planning, sanitation and how to make objects for the home. One sixth-grade class wrote and mimeographed a booklet describing all the social, medical and recreation facilities in the Pilot Area, for distribution among the adult residents. Other classes took trips to Housing Court, to rock-bottom slums, and to neighborhoods of good, new homes. The children "adopted" lots and planted community gardens in them. They helped adult residents clean their yards and alleys.

The results of this education in living were impressive, in the face of the handicaps of a Pilot Area home life. "Most of the children in our classes," said a teacher, "seem to have parents who both work

and are away from home. About one-half of these children are problem children—with normal I.Q.'s, but emotionally disturbed." Yet new attitudes took hold. The children came to school starched and clean. And even the old school took on a bright and colorful look on the inside, with posters and models made by the children. A model grocery store in one classroom was dusted and cleaned "five or six times a day, if I don't watch out," a teacher said. At the new school, eight or ten little boys insisted on cleaning up the school yard every day, the way they had been taught to clean up their yards at home. Another group of boys spent their summer vacation helping the residents of one block erect walls around their back yards. The inspectors and police sanitarians became the children's heroes, and one favorite inspector was followed by a string of children, Pied-Piper-like, on his tours through the neighborhood.

There was a clear reduction in vandalism. "The children have pride in their school," said one of the teachers. Before the Pilot Program, there had been hundreds of windows broken every year at the old school. In 1955, there were very few. The recreation director at the new school, who was assigned to the Pilot Area in 1955, was surprised at the lack of vandalism. "In other neighborhoods," he said, "we'd be filling out damage reports every other day."

The truancy rate in the Pilot Area had always been practically zero, thanks to the sparkle and ingenuity of the teachers, and the Pilot Program could have no effect there. The same was true of the children's attitude toward book-learning. "They have always had a desire to learn," said a teacher, "but there are so few homes where there are any books, any aids to learning—only television." Still, the teachers felt the law enforcement program gave the children a new sophistication, by introducing them to officials and leaders from outside the neighborhood. It was also obvious, as mentioned before, that the children taught their parents some new attitudes. "One mother told me she had been trying for 20 years to get the landlord to do something about the house," a teacher recalled. "Her little girl went over to the Pilot House and found out how to go about it. The mother thought that was remarkable."

The housing program in the schools, however, was limited almost exclusively to the younger children—those that were below junior high school age. With the teen-agers, it was a different story. They were, as one recreation leader put it, "the group that was sort of skipped by the program." The teen-agers from the Pilot Area made up only a small portion of the Dunbar High School student body of 3,500, and the Pilot Program was not so important to the high

school administration as it was in the elementary schools closer to the neighborhood. In addition, the departmentalization of the high school, and the training programs in which the teachers were already involved, kept them from concentrating on housing. The school administration did take an interest, however, and the principles of rehabilitation were included in social studies classes. Toward the end of the Pilot Program, the shop classes worked on skills needed in painting and repairing, and one social science class joined the residents of two blocks in the Pilot Area to clean and decorate a vacant lot as a combination tot-lot and "golden age" garden.

In the field of recreation, teen-agers in the Pilot Area received more benefit than the younger children. The problem of play space for small children was never solved, partly because the older children took over the only new facilities—the tot-lot built by the city, and the playground at the new elementary school. In addition, teen-agers were supplied with the facilities of three recreation centers: at Knox Church, at the new school, and at the Chick Webb Memorial Center, about six blocks away from the neighborhood. Even this was hardly enough in a neighborhood where youngsters had no other place to go. By 1955, the Knox Church center had a registration of 800, and teen-agers waited outside every day for the doors to open. The Chick Webb center, which served a large area of East Baltimore including the Pilot Area, had to reserve specific time periods for each age group. At the recreation rooms in the new elementary school, the director reported, "They come in when the doors open, and they don't leave until they are closed."

There was an element of young hoodlums in the Pilot Area, and they were not reached even by the recreation program. Yet the recreation leaders felt that the hoodlums' prestige among other teen-agers was markedly reduced. "These boys were all gang buddies when I first came into the neighborhood," said Vernon Dobson, the probation officer who worked in his spare time at the Knox Church Center. "They were proud of being taken to court. It was a mark of distinction, and their friends were proud of them. Now, there's a feeling of shame when this happens, and it is shared by the boy's family and his teen-age friends. Among the boys who come to the center, we have lost very few to institutions. When it happens, every one is shocked." Miss Swann, the director of the Knox Center, added that "the attitude of the children toward property has changed. When we first opened up, there was deliberate destruction. We'd come in and see the window panes riddled two or three times a week. Now the feeling is: 'This is something for us. This is ours.' Now, the windows that get broken are all accidental."

Outside the Knox Church and recreation center lay a graveyard, forgotten but still owned by a former congregation. The Rev. Graham wanted to use this large walled-in area for a playfield to be enjoyed by the entire neighborhood, but he could not obtain control of it. The only users of this valuable open space, as a result, were rats and mischief-makers.

None of the recreation leaders could tell how much of the change was due to the direct supervision the youngsters received at the centers, and how much was due to the more basic education their families were receiving through the rehabilitation program. In the area of sex morals, where family and home life might be expected to have a more direct effect, there was less change seen in the Pilot Area teen-agers. Two years after the program ended, sex was still the principal interest of the Pilot Area youth, and immoral sex practices were widespread, according to both Dobson and Miss Swann. They felt that this was encouraged by immorality among the adults, and by the activities that teen-agers could watch taking place around the neighborhood bars.

Yet Dobson felt that the years of the Pilot Program had brought a change in the teen-agers' attitude, if not their practices, and there was at least an awareness of what was right and what was wrong. The adults had shown no such change themselves, in Dobson's view, but

"they're glad it's happening to their children, and they're a little awed by it." Curiously, the girls seemed to have a harder core of resistance to moral awareness than did the boys. In 1955, Dobson said, some of the Pilot Area girls were still running in gangs. When the boys would meet with a recreation leader for a baseball or football game, these girls would stand at the edge of the field and taunt the boys with lewd remarks and gestures.

Perhaps the most promising change noticed in Pilot Area teenagers was a new respect for the recreation supervisors, and an increased willingness to cooperate in sports and other group activities. According to L. Clement Nixon, director of the large Chick Webb Center, "For the last couple of years, the kids who come from that section have been the backbone of our program here. The girls' club from the Pilot Area is entering its fourth year. Before the Pilot Program, groups would dissolve and reorganize in a very short time. Now, the boys' teams from the Pilot Area are being consistent. We can count on them. One of them established a junior team, and supported it as a 'farm team.' All we have to do is go up there and tell them the leagues start on such and such a day, and they carry on from there. In other sections, we have to go to see the parents, and drag the kids out."

What Happened to Outsiders:

Long before the Pilot Program was launched, civic leaders and businessmen in Baltimore were giving strong backing to the Baltimore Plan of rehabilitation through law enforcement. The civic leaders saw an opportunity of alleviating on a wide scale the suffering caused by the worst slum conditions. Businessmen saw also the threat to the city's tax base from the spread of blight.

Early in his Baltimore career, Yates Cook singled out several socially-conscious business leaders and appealed to their practical instincts on this point. Then he persuaded them to walk around in the slums, breathing the foul air and talking to poor families in their rotten hovels. The businessmen were convinced. They talked to others who had the same outlook, and by the time the Pilot Program was in full swing, there was a nucleus of 10 to 20 prominent businessmen who were ready to put time, energy and occasionally money into an effort to make rehabilitation work. These leaders prodded the trade associations to which they belonged—the Real Estate Board, Home Builders Association, the Paint, Lacquer and Varnish Association—to put their support behind the Pilot Program.

One result was the Fight-Blight Fund, which was born during a conversation between Cook and Guy T. O. Hollyday, a member of the Housing Bureau Advisory Council and chairman of the Committee on Housing of the Real Estate Board. Hollyday called a meeting of realtors, mortgage bankers and other businessmen to organize the Fund, and the Real Estate Board contributed $1,000. The other $9,000 was contributed by 170 corporations, building and loan associations, business groups and individuals. Once it was organized, the Fund retained the interest of these businessmen. After three years of operation, the counsel, Andrews, was able to report that "there have been no changes in the board of directors since it was organized. To a man, the directors are apologetic and write in if they can't attend a meeting."

When questioned after the Pilot Program ended, few of these businessmen felt that the experience had brought any change in the way they conducted their own business activities. (Though one home builder did say that he found himself "more patient, upon learning that many people just don't know how to help themselves.") But almost all said that their eyes had been opened by what they had seen in the slums, and by the slum dwellers' obvious desire for something better. As one prominent real estate man put it: "I was somewhat skeptical as to how the Baltimore Plan would be received by people who live in the areas to be rehabilitated. I was amazed at the favorable reception given to workers who had nothing to sell but opportunity for slum dwellers to help themselves."

In addition to the business leaders, a number of professional people were drawn into the work of the Pilot Program through their regular jobs as social workers, public health nurses, teachers, recreation supervisors, ministers, or housing officials. Most of these people already had a thorough knowledge of slums and slum residents. They served on the Pilot Program committees, assisted the law enforcement agencies, met with the Neighborhood Committee, delivered lectures at neighborhood meetings, and advised individual Pilot Area residents who had specific social problems. Some of these workers reported afterward that the rehabilitation program had taught them to do their professional jobs more effectively. The school personnel learned how to fit into their curricula the teaching of skills and standards of living. Social agencies learned, as one supervisor put it, "that we were weak on letting people know the services we had available."

Serving alongside the professional people and businessmen were civic leaders, who were drawn into the Pilot Program out of sympathy for the slum dwellers. The civic leaders included a broad cross section

of housewives, lawyers, college professors, educators, social and welfare agency executives, and church leaders, both lay and clerical. Many of them came into contact with the Pilot Program through membership in the Citizens Housing and Planning Association, which by 1951 had grown to about 2,000 members of all races and religions. The interracial, interreligious quality of the CPHA was paralleled in the Pilot Program committees, where Negro and white civic leaders came together to work for a common goal. The white leaders learned about housing problems faced peculiarly by Negroes, and the Negro leaders learned that there was an untapped reservoir of good will on the other side of the color barrier.

The field of "housing" seemed to have a pulling power for civic-minded Baltimoreans that has been equalled by few other causes, and the publicity given the Baltimore Plan added an aura of prestige to all these activities. For the most part, the civic leaders, professionals and businessmen maintained a high level of activity throughout the Pilot Program, and the Housing Bureau Advisory Council, which had the most responsibility of any citizen group, held the astonishing total of 63 meetings during the first year of the program. Yet it is doubtful whether many of the leaders outside the neighborhood completely understood the problems faced by residents of the Pilot Area and by the nucleus of officials and volunteers who were working in the field. "The civic leaders outside never really got close to the people, as far as action and friendships were concerned," said one of the Brethren volunteers, and a key member of the Neighborhood Committee added, "If they got out in the neighborhood more, maybe they could advise better."

A few of the citizen members of Pilot Program groups did become deeply involved with the program, however, and their lives changed as a result. Rouse and Hollyday became national leaders in the field of housing, and found themselves spending increasing amounts of time away from their businesses. The director of the Legal Aid Bureau cited the Pilot Program as one reason why he quit his legal practice and went to work full-time as a lay leader for the church. One housewife organized a city-wide Citizens Committee on Recreation, and launched what became almost a full-time career in the field of public recreation.

In almost every case, the effect of the Pilot Program on a civic leader, businessman, or professional worker was directly related to the amount of face-to-face, personal contact with slum dwellers in their homes and their neighborhood. A young Johns Hopkins doctor, who spent years visiting slum houses, summed it up this way: "I don't

think the change has been so much in the neighborhood people as in myself. . . . I'm beginning to see the way their minds work, but it's taken me three years to get to that point."

The Profit Motive:

In Baltimore, as in other cities, there was hope that the system of housing law enforcement would bring slum landlords to see the error of their ways, and begin voluntary rehabilitation on a large scale. The story of the Pilot Program gives no evidence that this took place.

The principal weapon for the education of landlords was the Housing Court. Here, the Baltimore Plan had replaced the police magistrates—who were unfamiliar with the housing and building codes and who sometimes owed political debts to landlords—with a carefully selected judge who made a specialty of housing law and sat in a glare of publicity. All defendants, with their lawyers, were summoned to Housing Court at the same hour. As each case was heard, the others were made a sort of "captive audience," forced to listen to the excuses of fellow landlords and to the rulings of the bench. With all housing cases centered in one spot at one time, the newspapers could—and did—assign reporters to relay the judge's rulings and lectures to the city at large.

Some landlords got the point, or said they did. One told the Housing Court that he planned to install bathrooms in 400 slum houses, "because for the first time in my experience I feel the city means business." But many others were unmoved by their experience with law enforcement. In 1954, the *Evening Sun* printed the names of eleven landlords who had been convicted more than ten times each. One had 26 convictions in Housing Court and five convictions in Criminal Court. One landlord had "gotten religion" during the early phases of the Baltimore Plan and publicly announced plans to rehabilitate all his 600-odd properties, at a cost of more than $600,000. But years later, when several of the Pilot Program workers had occasion to visit some of his houses, they found little sign of change. Six houses were inspected, and each one, according to Vernon Hoffman, was "either the worst or one of the worst in its block."

In the Pilot Area itself, the Public Health Service statistics showed that absentee-owned houses were in almost as bad condition "after" enforcement as the owner-occupants' houses had been "before." The law enforcement drive served mainly to accelerate the landlords' use of contracts of sale as a means of avoiding any outlay for repairs. When the judge in Housing Court announced in 1951 that title holders would be held responsible for repairs, in spite of contracts of

sale, landlords either signed the titles over to buyers or hired contractors to make the repairs and added the cost to the price of a house. In the Pilot Area, the cost of one such house was increased by 50 per cent, and the repairs were both illegal and incomplete. Another buyer, who had almost paid off a $4,500 contract for his house, found that $4,000 more was suddenly added for repairs. Much of the work he could have done himself, at the cost of materials alone.

Where the houses were not sold to tenants, landlords were likely to blame the tenants for conditions that were subject to city notices. The Housing Court was not impressed by this argument, and the court's attitude was disseminated throughout the city by the newspapers and through school classes and civic groups who visited the court. By the time the Pilot Program was ended, the philosophy that slum dwellers had created their own living conditions was rarely heard in Baltimore. But though the landlords were silenced, there is no evidence that their practices had changed.

Nor was there any incentive—other than humanitarian considerations—for the landlords to change their practices. The housing shortage among Negroes made it possible to rent apartments in substandard condition, and even repeated fines in Housing Court were cheaper than making major repairs. The landlord who incurred 26 convictions in the space of ten years paid an average fine of $39.80 in each case, while the bare minimum required to rehabilitate one Pilot Area house was $400 to $700. At the same time, the incentive for speculation in blighted-area properties continued high. In 1955, one Pilot Area house was bought by a speculator for $3,700, repaired for an additional $1,900, and sold to a Negro family for $8,900, under a contract of sale. When another house was bought by a Negro family at about the same time, an inspector found that the front wall was bulged and cracked, and the rear addition containing the kitchen was sagging away from the rear wall.

The Real Estate Board had been one of the earliest and staunchest supporters of the Baltimore Plan, thanks to the prodding of some influential and socially-conscious members, and the Board publicly supported rehabilitation as a policy of the city. But no action was taken against the real estate operators—some of them Real Estate Board members—who were employing questionable means, or worse, to extract profit from slums. A conviction in Housing Court did not disturb a man's standing in the Real Estate Board. The State Real Estate Commission was prepared to accept complaints against dealers who used misrepresentation or fraudulent methods. But the speculators were usually careful to stay within the broad provisions of the

real estate licensing law, and landlords or contract-of-sale operators were not covered by its provisions.

In the case of home-improvement contractors, the law enforcement program created an opportunity for both honest and dishonest profits. Yates Cook estimated in 1952 that the Baltimore Plan had brought about the installation of 25,000 new plumbing units alone, at an average cost of $300. This amounted to a total consumers' demand of $7,500,000. In the Pilot Area, the rehabilitation program provided a ready market for small contractors who were willing to take a fair profit and do honest work. The Neighborhood Committee's list of reliable contractors proved the best possible advertising. One man, a Negro carpenter who could neither read nor write, made enough money in the Pilot Program to move out of the neighborhood and buy a home in one of the better sections. Yet the unscrupulous home-improvement operators were still undeterred. A spokesman for the Better Business Bureau reported in late 1955 that "for the past three years, more than 60 per cent of our work has been concerned with home improvements."

A few reliable contractors became alarmed at the bad name their industry was acquiring, and in 1955 they launched a campaign to persuade other home improvement firms to join NERSICA, Inc.—the home improvement contractors' association—and subscribe to its code of ethics. Out of 450 of these contractors in Baltimore, only 30 were members of the association. James Ryan, executive secretary of the State chapter of NERSICA, reported that 85 per cent of the other firms were headed by salesmen who had little or no knowledge of contracting work, and who had entered the business because of easy profits to be made through FHA Title I home improvement loans. The membership campaign was a failure, and Ryan concluded that "the run-of-the-mill contractor is just looking for the immediate profit. . . . Most of them don't want to live up to a code of ethics."

In the eyes of the Pilot Area residents, banks and other lending institutions shared the blame for exploitation with the contractors. As Mrs. Jackson, the chairman of the Neighborhood Committee, put it: "The people had felt that when a building and loan put a house up for sale, it would be in good shape, and have everything it needed. The residents found out differently. To think they were buying a good house, and then have it almost condemned by the city, made them pretty bitter." The lending institutions were also criticized for their involuntary participation in the get-rich-quick schemes of the home improvement contractors. This criticism concerned the lack of supervision over home improvement contracts financed with FHA-

insured loans. "There are some lending institutions that have been much too lax," said an official of the Better Business Bureau. "It's not their money. If they don't get it from the homeowner, they'll get it from the government. . . . If it were their money, you can bet your bottom dollar they would check up better than they have been." If a contract were fraudulent, and the work failed to pass inspection, the homeowner was still responsible for the bank loan, while the contractor was likely to get away scot-free.

The Fight-Blight Fund made a small dent in this problem, through the detailed and painstaking work done by Andrews with the poorest 10 per cent of Pilot Area home owners. But at the end of the program, the official report of the Fight-Blight Fund, which numbered several bankers on its board of directors, said that "this tailoring of financing to meet the needs of a particular situation frequently demanded ingenuity and resourcefulness on the part of counsel far beyond the advice and consideration which would normally be given their over-all problem by a lending institution."

Andrews and the Better Business Bureau spokesman agreed that the lending institutions could have taken steps to investigate the reputation of a contractor, to see that the work covered in the contract would actually meet the requirements of a city notice, to check on the quality of the work in progress, and to see that the work was completed before the completion certificate was signed. The two experts felt that lending institutions owed this sort of protection not only to borrowers, but also to the government and to the banks' stockholders and depositors. Two years after the end of the Pilot Program, Andrews reported that "the banks had become aware, to a degree, that the home improvement companies are unscrupulous," but he added that no concerted action had been taken to correct the situation.

Attitudes in City Hall:

The Pilot Program was given an official send-off with a proclamation from the Mayor, but it soon became apparent that the majority of city officials were not interested in the program, if they understood it at all. Among those who did know what it meant, there was some silent opposition, from career officials inside City Hall, and from politicians outside.

Some career officials seemed to resent the Baltimore Plan simply because it was disturbing the traditional ways of doing city business. Others appeared to be jealous of the publicity received by Baltimore Plan workers, or resentful of implications that the neglect of city

agencies was to blame for part of the slum problem. In addition, there were heavy overtones of the nation-wide struggle between the real estate and public housing interests. Unfortunately, real estate people outside of Baltimore had hailed the Baltimore Plan as a cure-all for slums, and used it as a club to beat against public housing legislation. The administrators of public housing in Baltimore faced a threat of reduced appropriations, and they tended to minimize and criticize the effects of law enforcement.

To some of the politicians, the Baltimore Plan was a different sort of threat. As in most large cities, the politician's ability to "deliver" the vote of his constituents was closely tied to his ability to obtain favors for them at City Hall. The philosophy of the Baltimore Plan clashed head-on with this system of politics. Many of the favors sought by politicians and their friends—the zoning exceptions, liquor licenses or reduced assessments—were recognized as direct causes of neighborhood blight. The sensitive spots in City Hall, where politicians might gain the power to grant special treatment to their friends, were precisely the spots where neighborhood rehabilitation depended on strict and equal enforcement of the letter of the law.

Among these sensitive spots were the Bureau of Building Inspection (zoning enforcement and conversion of buildings), the Bureau of Highways (neighborhood street paving), the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (tax assessments and zoning exceptions), the Board of Liquor License Commissioners (the issuance and transfer of liquor licenses), and the Housing Court. All of these agencies were administered by personal appointees of the Governor or the Mayor. If a political machine could obtain the appointment of its friends, it could hamstring the Baltimore Plan without resorting to open interference.

The early history of Housing Court provides a case in point. The weight of public opinion brought about the creation of the court—by order of the Governor and the Mayor—after housing cases had been bogged down in the magistrates' courts by indifference, delay, and, allegedly, by political favoritism. The machine politicians did not openly oppose the creation of Housing Court, but they knew that in any event, the character of the court would depend on the magistrate who headed it. The Governor's choice was Harry S. Kruger, lawyer son of an orthodox rabbi, who had been working his way slowly up the political ladder in a series of appointive jobs. Kruger had experience with the real estate business, and a wide acquaintance among the landlords and real estate lawyers. Some Baltimoreans concluded that Kruger's appointment would surrender

control of the Housing Court to the Democratic faction with which he was identified. But they misjudged Harry Kruger.

At first, Kruger was frankly dubious about the Baltimore Plan. His friends among the landlords and property lawyers told him that the rehabilitation program was a waste of time, because people in the slums did not really want indoor toilets or rat-proofing, or paint and paper on the walls. But Kruger made an informal poll of the first few tenants and home owners who came before his court, and decided that the law enforcement program could be the best thing that had ever happened to them. Armed with this conviction, Kruger cracked down hard on the landlords, including some he had known since childhood. He judged each case as he saw it, though sometimes wincing at the political risks involved. "What else could I do?" he asked afterward. "The law should apply to rich and poor alike, to the important and the unimportant." Politicians knew very well what else he could have done. As a city councilman put it, "He made a lot of people mad in Housing Court. . . . He treated everybody alike." As for the landlords and property lawyers, Kruger said years later that "some of those people won't speak to me today."

When Kruger's second term on the Housing Court bench expired in 1951, the court had gained an international reputation, and civic groups, women's clubs, ministers and housing officials trooped before the Governor to plead for Kruger's reappointment. It was the largest campaign of support for an appointed official that Maryland had ever seen. But politics won out. Although the new Republican Governor, Theodore R. McKeldin, appointed a number of Democratic magistrates, Kruger was replaced with a Republican lawyer and politician, Helen Elizabeth Brown. The Pilot Program was just starting. During the next two years, the rate of convictions in Housing Court dropped from 71 per cent under Kruger, to 38 per cent of the Pilot Area cases.

By the time the Pilot Program was ended, two years of experience on the bench of Housing Court had apparently changed Miss Brown's attitudes to coincide more closely with those of Kruger. In the cases that went to Housing Court after the completion of the Pilot Program, the rate of convictions climbed from 38 per cent to 55 per cent, and the average fine from $22.17 to $37.12.

Two other sensitive spots, where the interests of rehabilitation were in the hands of political appointees, were the liquor and zoning boards, who ruled on applications for new taverns and exceptions to the zoning laws. Although each of these boards operated under a specific enabling act, decisions were based on the board members'

interpretation of the facts. As a result, the Pilot Area residents' only defense against new taverns or zoning exceptions was to appear before the board concerned, and present testimony. This meant raising money for a lawyer, and the loss of a day's pay for witnesses who traveled to City Hall for the hearing. After experience with a score of these cases, the neighborhood leaders came to feel that the burden of proof was on them—to show without a doubt that the liquor license or zoning exception would damage the neighborhood. They could not see why the residents should carry the burden of proof, when the city itself was requiring them to go deeply into debt for the sake of upgrading the neighborhood.

The Liquor Board did seem to change its attitude slightly by the time the Pilot Program was coming to a close. The neighborhood leaders became confident that the board would accede to their protest against any new license. But the board took no official cognizance of the rehabilitation effort (nor was there any evidence that the city administration had ever asked the board to do so). After the Pilot Program ended, the Pilot Improvement and Protective Association asked the Liquor Board to declare the neighborhood a "restricted area," where no applications for new licenses would be considered. Although this treatment had been granted for all public housing projects in the city, the Liquor Board refused to grant the Pilot Area residents even a hearing on their request.

The Pilot Area experience with the Zoning Board was similar. For instance, in 1955—two years after the program ended—the board overruled a protest from the president of the neighborhood association and granted an application for a new billboard in the Pilot Area. This was in spite of the fact that a new law had just gone into effect, giving the Zoning Board new powers to consider the influence of billboards on the value of adjacent property and the comfort of nearby homes. On the same day, the board turned down five applications for billboards in other neighborhoods.

The city administration left this situation undisturbed during the Pilot Program, and the Liquor and Zoning Boards were never drawn into the effort to eliminate blighting influences from the rehabilitation neighborhood or to prevent new ones from creeping in. The administrative organization that was set up to operate the Pilot Program left much to be desired in other ways, too. The director of the Housing Bureau was given the task of "coordinating" the anti-slum activities of all city agencies. Yet the Housing Bureau remained part of the Health Department, and Cook was not empowered to deal directly with the very people—the heads of other departments

and bureaus—that he was supposed to coordinate. Every official action of the Housing Bureau director required the signature of the Health Commissioner, whether it involved an appeal for help from another department, or the issuance of a violation notice.

It soon became apparent that agencies outside the Health Department could be "coordinated" only if they chose to be. The most crucial case was the Bureau of Building Inspection, which refused to assign inspectors full time to the Pilot Program. The head of the bureau said his men had their hands full with inspections of new construction. As a result, residents of the Pilot Area were unable to call on building and electrical inspectors to tell them whether repair work was proceeding in accordance with the law. This often gave landlords or unscrupulous contractors a free hand. During one short period, when a conscientious building inspector did spend all his time in the neighborhood, he discovered 28 houses where the repair work was being done in a manner that was either illegal or unsatisfactory.

In other city departments, the Pilot Program workers had to combat the traditional "double standard" of city services. The suburbs received good service as a matter of course, while the blighted areas received a lick and a promise. As the highways engineer put it later, "We don't have two sets of standards. A great deal of work is drawn to our attention by residents, and in the slums people aren't as alert. They don't complain." In the Pilot Area, the city workers in charge of law enforcement did the complaining, and there was a spurt of activity by the Bureau of Highways and the Bureau of Sanitation. But after the inspectors left the neighborhood, the complaints stopped, and services returned to the normal rate for a lower-income neighborhood.

Still other city departments simply did not react to the need for assistance to the rehabilitation program. The city acquired no play space for small children in the Pilot Area—even though this was reported early in the program to be a critical need, and foremost in the minds of the residents. The Housing Bureau workers and Neighborhood Committee spent a year knocking on doors until they located private property owners who were willing to lease vacant space for a tot-lot. The playground equipment was donated by the Home Builders Association, but the city never supplied personnel to supervise the lot. As a result, it was taken over by older children, who chased the little ones away and broke up the equipment.

Police protection was also a sore point with the Pilot Area residents. While the patrolmen on beats in the neighborhood developed sym-

A "residential" neighborhood. This is the 1200 block of Durham Street in the Pilot Area, after law enforcement. (The Pilot House is the third from the left). These trucks still loaded and unloaded at the bottling plant (rear) all day, shaking plaster off the walls in the rehabilitated homes. Nothing was done to separate commercial from residential properties or to improve traffic conditions.

pathy for the residents' problems, and the police sanitarians did yeoman work in scouring the neighborhood for sanitary violations, the police protection provided for the area—in terms of manpower—was not increased either during or after the Pilot Program. This fact caused considerable complaint from residents who had been forced to make large investments in their homes. Mrs. Jackson shouldered some of the blame for this on the Neighborhood Committee. "We could have had closer contact with the police," she said. "If they could have heard the dreams and desires of the residents, they might have helped more. Without knowing, the policeman will find that the person who is working for a better neighborhood becomes a nuisance, always complaining."

The problems and the roadblocks that confronted the Pilot Program were reported to City Hall, and Cook and his Advisory Council tried to find short cuts around the administrative setup and the indifference of other city agencies. They had little success, and the Advisory Council finally submitted to the Mayor a unanimous state-

ment that "it is hopelessly impossible for the Housing Bureau or its Advisory Council to carry out the job set forth." The Council recommended the establishment "at once" of a new kind of city agency—a Commission on Blight—to take over the slum-fighting powers of all city departments, and apply them to whole neighborhoods at one time.

This was opposed by the Health Commissioner, Dr. Huntington Williams, who had been one of the fathers of the anti-slum movement, and had pioneered the Hygiene of Housing ordinance. Dr. Williams argued that "the responsibility for the preservation of the health of the people of the city, and particularly in connection with the important matter of the hygiene of housing . . . should remain in the City Health Department."

Of the Pilot Program, Dr. Williams said later that "it was very successful in giving us an opportunity to feel our way into this most difficult exercise. . . . I like to call it research in public health administration." In answer to a question, he added, "The Pilot area has been rehabilitated to the level that it is possible to rehabilitate such as area."

The Mayor and his administration back Dr. Williams. The city solicitor investigated the question at the Major's direction, and concluded that "the present organizational setup . . . in my judgment is the best administrative plan for fighting blight that can be devised." The Mayor added, "I am confident that the Baltimore Plan can go on to even greater success in the future without creating an independent commission which would take away the responsibility and the authority of the Health Department, the Police Department, the Fire Department and other agencies of the government."

Cook protested in vain that "the important thing about the Baltimore Plan lies not so much in its accomplishments, as in the opportunities it has uncovered. It is a research study using the community itself for its laboratory. It is a growing program constantly drawing new forces into the city's fight for continuing improvement and neighborhood vigor."

The debate finally led to Cook's resignation as director of the Housing Bureau, and the resignation of James Rouse and Guy Hollyday as members of the Advisory Council. They took their argument to the State legislature at Annapolis, where former Judge Kruger and others joined them in arguing for a State enabling act, to prod the city government into making the administrative changes that the Mayor had opposed. This attempt proved futile, and Cook, Rouse,

and Hollyday dropped out of the rehabilitation program in Baltimore. When the field work in the Pilot Area was completed, they were followed by Shirley Biddison and C. William Brooks, the Housing Bureau supervisor and the chairman of the Hearing Board.

The Pilot Program had been an experiment, designed to find the best way to rehabilitate slums on a neighborhood scale. The difficulties that were encountered taught the Pilot Program workers how it should and, they felt, could be done. These lessons were documented in the reports of the Pilot Program committees and in the action of the Advisory Council. In short, the experiment produced the knowledge it was designed to produce, but many of the recommendations of those who took part in the experiment were ignored by the city administration. As a result, the Baltimore Plan moved on to another neighborhood, where it encountered similar problems and suffered many of the same failures.[14] In the meantime, the former leaders of the movement found their talents were being eagerly sought elsewhere, and eventually they saw some of their theories written into the Federal Housing Act of 1954, as part of the new concept of Urban Renewal.[15]

Yet back in 1951, in spite of all the disinterest and lack of understanding of the Pilot Program in City Hall, the Mayor's official support of what was called the Baltimore Plan had made it possible for individual city employees to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the work of rehabilitation. Not only housing officials like Cook, Brooks and Miss Biddison, but also rank-and-file inspectors, school teachers and police sanitarians labored far beyond the requirements of duty. They came to know the Pilot Area residents individually, and they often found themselves taking the residents' part in dealings with other city agencies.

The members of the Hearing Board repeatedly volunteered to make on-the-spot investigations of problem cases, even though this usually meant night or Saturday work. The Housing Bureau attracted a type of inspector that is not normally found in city law enforcement agencies. In 1954, 15 of the 21 inspectors were college graduates—drawn to rehabilitation not by the small salaries paid, but by the character

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[14] See Chapter II.

[15] Rouse was chairman of the Subcommittee on Urban Redevelopment, Rehabilitation and Conservation, of the President's Advisory Committee on Government Housing Policies and Programs. Cook and Brooks were consultants to the subcommittee, and Hollyday, who was commissioner of the F.H.A. at the time, backed the creation of F.H.A. aids to rehabilitation. When Federal funds were made available for urban renewal, the city reconsidered the question of a separate agency, and in 1957 established a single, powerful Urban Renewal and Housing Agency, after this solution had been recommended by a panel of outside experts.

of the work. Police Inspector William J. Forrest, who organized the Sanitary Squad, said he had "found that if not only myself but the men selected by me were not personally interested and concerned in this type of work, it would not accomplish the real purpose for which it was designed. . . ."

It is not easy to forget the sight of one of his officers, in full uniform, scrabbling through heaps of litter and garbage, in hopes of finding some scrap of paper with the name and address of the guilty party who had thrown the trash where it didn't belong.

It is impossible to say how much these attitudes owed to the Pilot Program. It is possible, however, to draw one general conclusion from the opinions and actions of City Hall personnel in the years 1951-55: the closer a city official was to the problems of the Pilot Area, and the more experience he had with the residents on a face-to-face basis, the more likely he was to understand rehabilitation and sympathize with the plight of the slum dweller.

At the top of the hierarchy in City Hall, there was little consciousness of the Pilot Program or of its needs. More than 50 persons who had either official or volunteer contact with the Pilot Program were asked in 1955 what the effect had been on their own attitudes. Only three answered that there had been no effect. These were the heads of large city departments, who were far removed from the law enforcement and social work that was done in the field.

Conclusions:

The Pilot Program showed that there is a ripe field for rehabilitating the attitudes, and therefore the lives, of the residents of slums and blighted neighborhoods. But it also showed that the task is a great deal more complicated, and success is far more elusive, than any one had anticipated.

Because the rehabilitation program was launched with little time to prepare the residents, the city officials did not know what the people in the Pilot Area were like, and the people did not know what the city was up to. Their first reaction, understandably enough, was one of fear, resentment, or even panic at the formal city notice requirements. As the program went on, these feelings were strengthened, rather than lessened. They were strengthened by the apparently insurmountable problems facing the residents: their own ignorance of financing, contracting and budgeting methods; the low incomes with which they were forced to pay for improvements; and the willingness of landlords, speculators and home improvement salesmen to exploit the vulnerability of slum dwellers. These problems were the

creatures of the rehabilitation effort, but they were compounded by other social, legal or personal problems that were uncovered as the program progressed.

In spite of all this, the rehabilitation program sold itself to the residents of the Pilot Area. When they were finally persuaded or forced to raise their own standards, many of them dropped their old, fatalistic attitudes and embraced new feelings of pride and optimism —not only for their neighborhood, but for themselves. In most cases, this took the form of appreciation of the physical improvements: the neighborhood was clean; the rats were gone; the outside toilets and festering heaps of refuse had disappeared from the backyards.

But for some, the change went much further. They were the ones who were brought face to face with their own problems, and then were shown workable solutions that they could bring about through their own efforts. If they were already imbued with middle-class standards, and lacked only the opportunity to "live right," they became neighborhood leaders and took up the cudgels against the threat of blighting influences like taverns and non-conforming uses. If they were among the uneducated poor, their experience with the Fight-Blight Fund gave them an unforgettable lesson in how to deal with bank loans, contracts and housing maintenance. But the Pilot Area residents were realists—even cynics—and they were little moved by exhortation, or by lectures on the theory and the promise of rehabilitation. Wherever attitudes were changed, they were changed by the hard experience of solving real problems.

The problem-solving process was not limited to housing matters. In case after case, the housing problems were entangled with other problems, which required the expert attention of almost every form of social, legal and educational service that the community could provide. The interdependency of housing with every other aspect of urban life was never more graphically illustrated. Before the Fight-Blight Fund could find an economic solution, it was often necessary to deal first with a mental case, a divorce action, or an incorrigible delinquent. Without the facilities of the Council of Social Agencies, the Legal Aid Bureau, or a neighborhood minister, many a case would have failed from the housing point of view.

A gratifying number of cases did not fail, and the cumulative effect of these successful families seemed to bring a change in the climate of attitudes over the neighborhood as a whole. The evidence is spotty, and hardly conclusive, but there were at least temporary signs of increased community consciousness, of more sociability among neighbors, of improved race feelings, of a healthy drawing-away from crime

and immorality, and of salutary effects on teen-agers, who learned new respect for property and authority.

The grade-school children were perhaps the greatest beneficiaries of the Pilot Program, when all was said and done. They eagerly devoured the lessons in clean living and community idealism taught by creative teachers. They pitched in to clean and paint and plant gardens, and they turned out to be a powerful influence on their parents. Some parents picked up their first education in decent living standards this way; others were shamed into making improvements that they had been too listless to attempt. Wherever these children go in the future, the experience will go with them, and the community as a whole will benefit proportionately.

In addition to these lessons for residents of the neighborhood, the Pilot Program held a dramatic lesson for the city at large. This was the proof, repeated over and over again, that many residents of a neighborhood like this one have a real, though often submerged, desire for self-improvement. As one prominent home-builder put it: "It has been amazing to see the complete ignorance of many people as to how they can help themselves. . . . but the people will help themselves, if given the initiative and shown the way." The Fight-Blight Fund found that its clients wanted advice far more often than money. This may prove in the end to be the most crucial lesson of the Pilot Program, because without such motivation on the part of the residents, a rehabilitation program may never generate momentum of its own. It will always remain something done "to" the residents rather than "by" them, and the chance of rehabilitating attitudes will be slim, indeed.

A question that remained after the Pilot Program was: how to turn the desire for self-improvement into a habit of action, and give a slum-dweller enough confidence to carry on by himself? In the Fight-Blight experience, where the most painstaking attention was given to individual problems, it was found that rehabilitation had to go beyond the minimum housing code standards before the urge for self-improvement took hold. When this was done—when families were not only freed from the yoke of exploitation, but were also enabled to add a bit of comfort and beauty to their lives—Andrews found that they were likely to take over their own affairs and carry on with maturity and self-reliance. Another case in point was provided by the families in better circumstances who become neighborhood leaders. They learned to deal with City Hall, and with other outside forces, and some of them acquired the confidence to upgrade themselves out of the Pilot Area into other neighborhoods.

Still, this self-confidence—this ability to "take over"—never materialized on a neighborhood scale. The lack of real neighborhood organization and lasting morale was both a symptom and a cause: a symptom of the lack of a community spirit in the Pilot Area, and a cause of the neighborhood's inability to protect itself from a new cycle of blight. The nature of the Pilot Area was partly to blame. There were no natural boundaries that held the residents together in a common bond of self-interest.

But the blame must also be shared by City Hall, and by the business interests who make a profit from blight. The city did not back up the residents' own efforts at rehabilitation, with support in such matters as zoning and liquor licensing, and it did not take the drastic steps that were needed to eliminate traffic, overcrowding, and the lack of open space. This marked a failure to change the attitudes of officials outside the rehabilitation program itself. At the same time, there was no change in the attitude of the speculators, landlords and grasping contractors. The Housing Bureau, the Fight-Blight Fund and, on occasion, the Housing Court, all attempted to squeeze the profit out of the exploiters' operations. But every move along these lines was met with a new evasion, a new technique, a new subterfuge. The failure of the business community to take action against these practices was one of the sharpest disappointments to the residents and the city workers in the neighborhood.

That the Pilot Program had the success it did have was a tribute to the selfless devotion of a few city employees and volunteer workers, who went into the neighborhood and shared the rehabilitation experience with the residents. Their attitudes were probably not changed—they were that type of people to start with—but they learned a great deal. Others, who did not serve inside the neighborhood, showed by their unflagging enthusiasm that civic work in the field of housing has a pull on people that is matched by few other "causes." But the farther they stayed from the physical boundaries of the neighborhood, the smaller was the chance that their attitudes would be changed, or that they would learn the real lessons of rehabilitation.

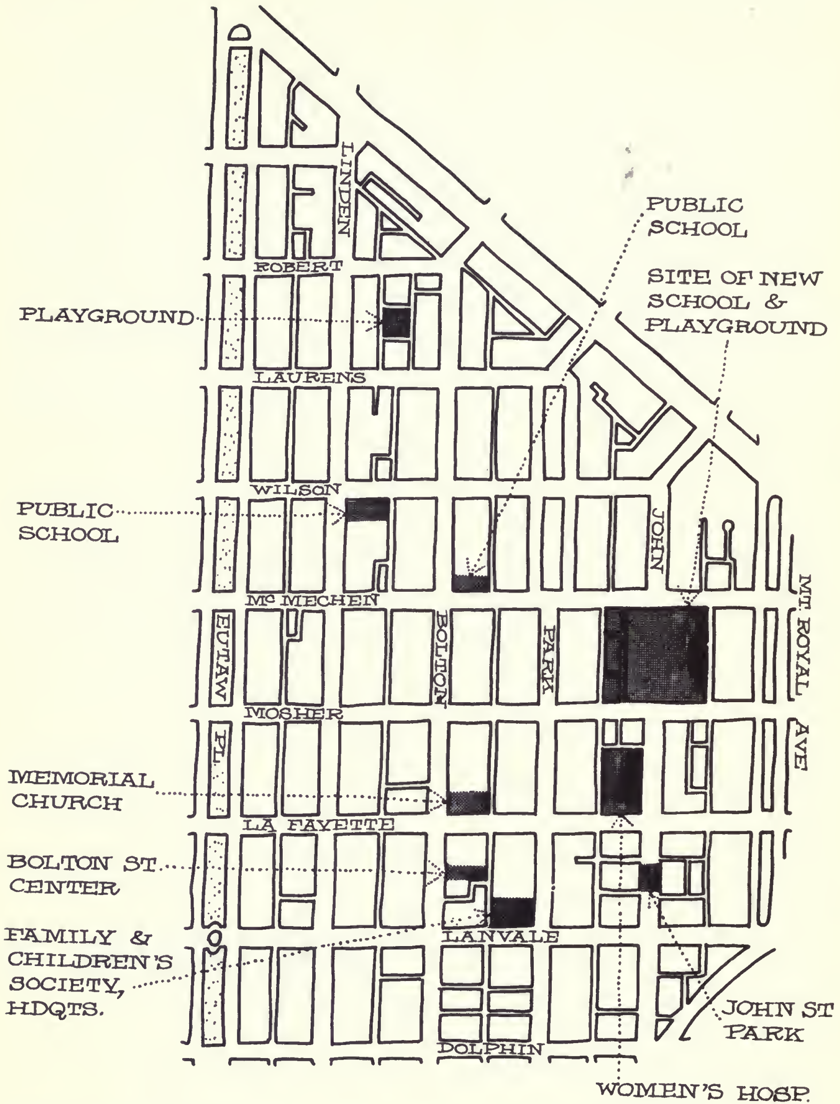
One last word should be said about the Pilot Program. While the results were spotty, and much of the success in "rehabilitating people" proved to be transitory, some one had to start the rehabilitation movement by *doing* it. The home and neighborhood life of hundreds of varied urban families does not lend itself easily to paper blueprints or sociological generalities. The Pilot Program workers had no precedents to guide them, but they hammered out a rehabilitation

program in the field, meeting each problem as it arose with the tools they found at hand. In many cases, their solutions proved to be ingenious, and even inspired: the Hearing Board, the Fight-Blight Fund, the resident volunteers.

While each neighborhood has its own personality, and a full spectrum of individual families—each one with its own aspirations and its own problems—the lessons of the Pilot Area have a universal ring to them. The Pilot workers dug deep, and they let daylight fall for the first time on some of the underlying forces that create blight. Their findings were raw material for many of the urban renewal sections in the Housing Act of 1954, and they are being proven again by many neighborhoods in other parts of the country. This may have little meaning for the 1,000 plain families who submitted to the Pilot experiment, but they should have credit for a large part in the battle to save the American city.

CHAPTER II

CAN "CHANGING" NEIGHBORHOODS RENEW THEMSELVES?



Baltimore's second law enforcement neighborhood, Mount Royal, with North Avenue as the northern boundary, Redevelopment Area #12 to the south. (For map showing location of Mount Royal in the city, see Page 2).

BALTIMORE: The Mount Royal Area

Rehabilitation by law enforcement alone failed to stop the tide of blight in one of Baltimore's finest old neighborhoods. But the effort produced leaders who devised new tools to carry on the fight, and aroused the residents behind an urban renewal movement. The exodus of middle-class families was stopped, and the hope of success was in the air.

When blight struck the Mount Royal area, it struck one of Baltimore's best downtown residential neighborhoods—a section with a proud history. There were upwards of 1,500 graceful and imposing old homes in the area, most of them spacious, high-ceilinged row houses. On Eutaw Place, the first residential parkway in the United States, the city's first families had lived until World War I in brownstone mansions. This was traditional Baltimore at its best.

Between the two World Wars, the Mount Royal neighborhood had held its own against the outward lure of suburban living. Although many of the wealthy moved from Eutaw Place to country estates north of the city, many well-to-do and middle-class families remained. They were professional and intellectual people, in large part, and they liked the cultural advantages of downtown living. The bigger houses became too expensive for single families to maintain, but they were purchased by clubs or converted into large apartments, which became popular with bachelors and young married couples.

Then came World War II, and Baltimore was transformed into a booming industrial depot. The city swarmed with war workers—104,000 new residents in the space of three years—and housing was critically short. The big, old homes in the Mount Royal area were ideally suited for apartments, and professional landlords began converting them into multiple units for war workers. Even with these conversions, the housing shortage was not alleviated, and city officials were forced to close their eyes while apartments were reconverted into smaller and smaller units, and more and more families were packed into each house.

Holding out against blight: a typical block of homes in the Mount Royal neighborhood, as they appeared both before and after the rehabilitation program. Appearances occasionally are misleading, however: one of these houses had been acquired by a landlord, contained 14 apartments. (Photo by A. Aubrey Bodine, Baltimore Sunday Sun Magazine.)

After the war was over, the housing shortage persisted, and there was no reversing the trend that had started. In the Mount Royal area, including about 40 square blocks, the census showed a population increase of 16.5 per cent between 1940 and 1950. Although there was no new construction, the number of family units increased by 20 per cent. With the increase in population came opportunities for small stores and taverns, and the number of commercial uses in the neighborhood also grew.

The newcomers who swelled the population were rural Southerners, in large part, attracted to the city by jobs created during the industrial boom. They had little or nothing in common with the urbane families who had been living in the Mount Royal neighborhood for generations. The latter began to move away from crowded blocks where "hillbillies," as they called them, had become the dominant group. Home ownership dropped from 21.3 per cent of the Mount Royal families in 1940 to 14.9 per cent in 1955. The newcomers were

not the home-owning type. Packing their belongings into late-model automobiles, they moved about with bewildering rapidity, following the shifting manpower needs of the factories. In one survey of 2,400 dwelling units in the Mount Royal neighborhood, more than 10 per cent were found to be vacant because of this transiency.[1]

By 1953, the neighborhood had developed a split personality. The transient factory workers were concentrated in about one-third of the blocks, where the houses were 95 per cent tenant-occupied, and where most of the taverns and commercial uses were located. But around the corner from every block of tenements was a block where the old residents lived in quiet respectability. These older residents probably accounted for the fact that in 1950 the educational level in the Mount Royal neighborhood was 20 per cent higher than the city-wide average, and the neighborhood had an unusually high proportion of professional and managerial workers. Many of these were students or teachers, however, or young college graduates starting their careers, and this helped to account for the low average income in the area. (The median was $2,185 in 1950, compared with a city-wide average of $2,817.)[2]

By 1953, the neighborhood was also faced with a serious new problem: racial pressure. The Mount Royal population was still 85 per cent white, and practically all of the new dwelling units provided by wartime conversions had been occupied by white war workers. But the heartland of the city's Negro population abutted the Mount Royal area on the south and west. There was no natural barrier, and by 1953, the miserably crowded Negroes were on the move in all directions—pushing into older neighborhoods vacated by suburbia-bound white families. Negroes began to move into the Mount Royal area in small numbers, but many white residents feared the initial trickle would become a flood and bring a total change-over to Negro occupancy. A few white home owners fled from the neighborhood, because they equated Negro occupancy with a nose-dive in property values, and a spread of overcrowding and deterioration. Those who did not move were disturbed, and they watched each new development with nervous apprehension.

This was the scene when rehabilitation came into the picture. Commercial uses and overcrowding were marring the neighborhood with

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[1] Figures obtained from the Housing Bureau of the Baltimore City Health Department, and based on U. S. Census reports and house-by-house inspections in the Mount Royal neighborhood.

[2] From census figures reported by the Baltimore Council of Social Agencies in "Progress Report of the Social Services Committee for the Mount Royal Area," mimeographed, 1955.

litter and accelerating the deterioration of many buildings. The newcomers from the South had no roots in the neighborhood and little incentive to maintain the standards of the old Mount Royal. The older residents were resentful of tenement-dwellers, and fearful of Negro in-migration. The neighborhood appeared to insiders and outsiders alike to be rushing downhill, caught in an irresistible tide of blight.

The Rehabilitation Effort:

Several civic leaders who had been connected with the Baltimore Plan of neighborhood rehabilitation lived in the Mount Royal area. By 1953, the rehabilitation of the Pilot Area in East Baltimore was nearly complete,[3] and these civic leaders asked City Hall to name the Mount Royal as the second neighborhood to be rehabilitated by housing law enforcement. City officials agreed because the Mount Royal area presented an opportunity to test housing law enforcement in a section where blight was still in its early stages—where the problem was not to root out a slum, but to conserve a good neighborhood by preventive measures.

The Mount Royal area was already a key section in the city's Master Plan. The slum to the south had been declared a redevelopment area, and plans were made for clearance to make way for a new State office building center. On the eastern boundary, the city was planning to build its first great expressway, which would channel traffic around the Mount Royal neighborhood, and cut it off from the railroad yards beyond. To the north lay a dignified apartment house section populated mostly by middle-class Jewish families. That left only the unprotected western border, where the Negro ghettoes were straining against their seams.

In March of 1954, the city launched the Mount Royal program of rehabilitation through law enforcement, modeled closely on the program worked out in the Pilot Area. The housing, building, electrical, sanitation, fire prevention and zoning codes were applied to each house by a team of inspectors from the city agencies responsible for those codes. Violations were reported to the Housing Bureau of the Health Department, which sent long, detailed notices to the owners, requiring compliance with the law in 30 days. Though no more than 20 per cent of the Mount Royal dwelling units had been rated as substandard in the 1950 census, the inspectors found only an occasional house with no violation of any city code. Most of the

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[3] See Chapter I.

houses in the Mount Royal area were found to have between 13 and 24 violations.

The enforcement work was aimed at higher minimum standards than any previous work done under the Baltimore Plan. After the Pilot Program ended, the city Health Commissioner had issued new regulations, requiring an inside toilet for each dwelling unit, instead of merely one for every ten occupants; and for the first time requiring a bathtub or shower, a basin and hot running water in every dwelling unit. New occupancy standards required a minimum of 150 square feet for one occupant, and 90 square feet for each additional person in a dwelling unit, instead of the old minimum of one and a half persons per room.

In addition to these higher standards, the Housing Bureau streamlined its enforcement techniques, in order to obtain quicker and more uniform rehabilitation. Before inspections were started, the Housing Bureau conducted an orientation campaign by letter, advising residents of the operation of the Baltimore Plan and asking their cooperation. Each violation notice was accompanied by another letter, explaining the reasons for law enforcement once more, and courteously asking for compliance. Where the violations were relatively minor, a letter was substituted for the formal notice. Full-time building and electrical inspectors were obtained from the Bureau of Building Inspection, and all inspectors were instructed to recommend legal action as soon as a notice expired with little or no work done. Instead of organizing a Hearing Board, the director of the Housing Bureau summoned recalcitrant property owners to his office to decide whether a case should go to court.

In spite of these efforts to streamline the process, the work of enforcement was slow and plodding, as it had been in the Pilot Area. By the end of 1954, only about half of the houses in the neighborhood had been inspected. And by June of 1956, Franz J. Vidor, who had succeeded G. Yates Cook as director of the Housing Bureau, reported that only 56 per cent of the violation notices had been completely abated—more than two years after the beginning of rehabilitation.

The Mount Royal program was not delayed by the problems that had been faced in the Pilot Area. In contrast to the ignorant and poverty-stricken homeowners who had made enforcement so difficult in the earlier program, Mount Royal property owners were, in most cases, either substantial middle-class families or professional landlords. (In the Pilot Area, 10 per cent of the homeowners were referred to the Fight-Blight Fund. In the Mount Royal program, the Fund handled only five cases.) Yet the middle-class homeowners and

A Mount Royal space-saver: same room doubles as kitchen and bath in a single-family home converted to apartments. This sort of health code violation was stamped out by the law enforcement program, although the exterior of the building showed no change.

How to make two apartments out of one. This was a single doorway in a Mount Royal neighborhood home. When the house was converted to apartments during World War II, each half of the room beyond became a separate "dwelling unit."

the professional landlords presented enforcement problems of their own.

Older residents of the neighborhood were affronted by some of the requirements of the city codes—particularly the demand that they cement their cellars. They felt the health authorities had no business telling well-educated people about "sanitation" or the "hygiene of housing," when the real target of rehabilitation should be to rid the neighborhood of tenements and their occupants. After conferences extending over a period of many months, the Housing Bureau succeeded in holding to the principle that rehabilitation could not succeed unless every one was treated alike.

Landlords, on the other hand, resisted some of the standards required by the law enforcement program for multiple-family dwellings—particularly the requirements for exits from the upper floors. Most of the landlords had permits—obtained from the city when they converted Mount Royal houses to apartments during World War II. Standards had been greatly relaxed during the wartime housing shortage, but the landlords argued that what had once been approved by the city should be permitted to remain as it was. The Bureau of Building Inspection accepted this argument, and as a result, landlords were not forced either to erect expensive fire escapes or to reduce the number of apartments in their buildings. The Housing Bureau did not give in, and the stiffer regulations of the Health Commissioner were enforced without exception. This brought a challenge in the courts, and a Mount Royal landlord fought the "bathtub regulation" all the way to the State Court of Appeals. The court upheld the Health Department, and resistance to the new regulations collapsed.

As in the Pilot Area, the Mount Royal rehabilitation program extended to the schools, churches and social agencies. In the schools, a teachers' workshop was set up by the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, which had pioneered with this technique in the Pilot Area and other Baltimore Plan neighborhoods. Teachers were taught the principles of good housing and rehabilitation, and then they were shown how to use this knowledge in classroom projects and assemblies to give the pupils a realistic enthusiasm for the neighborhood program. For adult residents of the neighborhood, the teachers' workshop turned out a handbook with instructions on how to deal with the problems of urban life—from rat poisoning techniques to "how to call an ambulance." Meanwhile, the Housing Bureau and one of the churches in the area tried to establish a program of tenant education. A series of "home-makers' meetings" were held at the church

parish house, with instruction in sanitation, budgeting, community facilities and civic responsibility.

The Baltimore Council of Social Agencies agreed to make a study of the social needs and problems of the Mount Royal area. Although the study was not completed until the law enforcement program was nearly over, it presented the city and the neighborhood leaders with an analysis of the long-term weaknesses that threatened morale in the neighborhood. The study showed that social problems in the Mount Royal area did not arise from the burdens of law enforcement, as had often been the case in the Pilot Area. Instead of a stable group of poor homeowners, who wanted to learn how to rehabilitate themselves, the Mount Royal area contained an amorphous collection of nomadic tenant families, who had not made the transition from rural to urban life. Many of these families had good incomes from their factory jobs, but their standards of cleanliness were those of the rural South, and their children roamed the streets unshod and unsupervised. They had no feeling of identification, apparently, either with the physical boundaries of the neighborhood or with the permanent residents around them. They did not know or care about the social agencies that might have made life easier for them, nor did they seem discontent with life in a teeming tenement. Attendance at the educational "home-makers' meetings" never exceeded a dozen women from the tenement blocks.

A Social Services Committee for the Mount Royal area, organized by the Council of Social Agencies, recommended the establishment of a referral service, to bring the tenants into contact with the agencies, and also the creation of a day-care center for small children. Neither of these needs had been met by the time the rehabilitation program ended. One church—the Memorial Episcopal Church, where the "home-makers' meetings" were held—launched a campaign to bring the newcomers into the neighborhood socially as well as physically. The church was designated a pilot Episcopal parish, to test the role of a church in all phases of urban neighborhood life, and a staff of social workers and organization specialists was assembled. These workers attempted to introduce tenant families into the church congregation, alongside the well-to-do or middle-class residents of "good" blocks. The church workers also went into the tenements, offering advice and assistance in meeting the demands of city life.

In the field of recreation, the Mount Royal area was similar to many downtown residential sections. Some worthwhile attempts had been made to provide facilities, but they were inadequate and ill-equipped, and there was always a shortage of personnel to supervise.

There was no recreation for adults, except in the churches, and the churches—with one or two exceptions—tended to be operated in the interests of congregations that had moved to the suburbs. Efforts were made during the rehabilitation program to meet some of the needs for recreation. An open lot owned by the city Department of Recreation and Parks was taken over by the School Board, paved and fenced, and equipped with swings, slides and jungle gym. This lot, 50 square yards in size, became the neighborhood's first public playground. The Bolton Street Center—a small recreation building with several rooms and a small gymnasium—was supported by Memorial Episcopal Church and Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church. Contributions were solicited to pay for sending underprivileged children from the center for short stays at a summer camp. Volunteers were found to staff the new playground and the playground of an old school in the area, which had been closed after school hours.

By the end of the rehabilitation program, something more substantial in the way of recreation and education facilities was on the drawing boards: a new, combined school and recreation center, slated to cover a full city block. In 1953, there had been two old schools in the Mount Royal area—both of them overcrowded and obsolete. Neighborhood leaders went before the School Board and pleaded for a new school, on grounds that the Board had been neglecting downtown neighborhoods while concentrating on schools for the burgeoning population in the suburbs. The School Board was finally convinced, and plans were laid for a new elementary school on John Street. By this time, the city Planning Commission had shown school and recreation officials that they should pool their resources and build combined centers wherever possible. So the John Street School was planned with classrooms, auditorium, gymnasium, playground, and additional outdoor open space—all designed for use after school hours by the whole neighborhood, children and adults alike.

The John Street Park:

While the struggle to obtain the school was going on, another trailblazing project was being nursed into existence by residents of the Mount Royal area. This was the now-famous John Street Park—a one-block oasis in the desert of brick and macadam. The idea originated with city planners: to close a street that was not needed for through traffic, and replace the street bed with flagstones, grass and trees, where small children could romp or adults sit in peace and quiet. The city declined to use the power of eminent domain to put this plan into effect; so it was up to private citizens to do it themselves. A group of young couples living in one corner of the Mount Royal

area found that they had an ideal block for such a park: the 1300 block of John Street, where through traffic was not necessary, and the 150-year-old homes were already graced with half a dozen big shade trees.

The group organized their own ten-block improvement association, and set about obtaining permission to close the street, from property owners in the block. This proved to be a monumental task, because the rights in each deed were shared by owners, heirs, ground rent holders, mortgagors and the city. The title searching and signing of papers took more than a year, and signatures were obtained from more than 40 states, Hawaii and Alaska. Then, when the project was finally in the clear, the city Park Board balked at the suggestion that the park be built with city funds. Board members said they would "have every block in the city asking for the same thing," and the parks budget would be swamped. The John Street association was backed by civic groups of city-wide influence, and an appeal was taken to the Mayor and Board of Estimates. The Park Board was finally persuaded, after carefully noting that this was a special case, and not to be regarded as a precedent. The park cost $10,500, and it was opened for use in the fall of 1955.

Disillusion Sets In:

Meanwhile, from the beginning of the rehabilitation program, heavy emphasis had been placed on citizen organization in the Mount Royal neighborhood—to provide channels of communication between the residents and City Hall. There was one large organization already in existence—the Mount Royal Protective Association, established in 1928. The association had fought sporadically against the influences of blight in the neighborhood, and had managed to have the Mount Royal area closed to any new liquor licenses. But by 1953, the leadership was concentrated in a minority of the older residents, and there was some criticism that the association was primarily interested in restricting the neighborhood to the white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon families who had dominated the population before World War II.

When the rehabilitation program started, the Housing Bureau attempted to reach all elements of the population. A mass meeting was held to launch the program, and several hundred residents turned out. Plans were laid for setting up block organizations, but it was found that "people won't go to a block meeting until you have a crisis," in the words of one neighborhood leader. As a result, the Housing Bureau concentrated on the organization of a Neighborhood Council, to bring together spokesmen for all the groups that already

existed. The Council functioned as a clearing house of information, and it brought into the program the institutions and the Negro residents, both of whom were excluded from the protective association. Altogether, the Council included representatives of 28 churches, civic associations, social agencies, schools, garden clubs and institutions.

The Mount Royal Protective Association, which was one of these member groups, took on the role of the Council's action wing. An office was set up with a full-time, paid secretary to investigate neighborhood problems and maintain liaison with the city agencies. The Council assigned other member groups to handle problems that arose in those groups' own fields of activity.

For the first year of the rehabilitation program, this arrangement worked smoothly, while the neighborhood and the city agencies concentrated on the house-by-house enforcement effort. When outsiders remarked that they could detect no difference in the looks of the neighborhood, housing officials replied that most of the rehabilitation work was on the inside of the buildings, and not visible from the outside. But by the summer of 1955—about 15 months after the program started—the long-time residents of the Mount Royal area began to realize that rehabilitation had failed to accomplish what they had expected. They complained that the character of the neighborhood had not really changed, that the tenements were as much of a nuisance as ever, and that the downward trend had not been reversed, or even stopped.

One reason for this was the split personality of the neighborhood, and the city's inability to change it. Law enforcement was based on minimum standards, and in the tenement blocks, landlords were not inclined to do more than the minimum. Consequently, these blocks remained on a level of housing far below the level of the "good" blocks. At the same time, the city provided only the minimum in the way of public improvements. The residents of the neighborhood managed to obtain the new school and the street park, but elsewhere no streets were shut off to through traffic, and no land was cleared for recreation or open space. The congested back alleys still collected broken-down automobiles, trash and debris. Although the Liquor Board maintained its ban on new licenses in the area, there was no effort to eliminate the bars and package stores that were already there, catering to the more anti-social elements of the transient population. As late as 1956, when a bar and restaurant was condemned in the block set aside for the new school, the Liquor Board agreed to permit the licensee to relocate across the street.[4]

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[4] This decision was later reversed on appeal to the courts. See below.

A typical group of Mount Royal houses from the rear. These three were originally zoned for five families each, but exceptions had been granted, permitting 10 families in each house.

Probably the most important failure of City Hall, in the eyes of the Mount Royal homeowners, was the lack of any real reduction of overcrowding in the tenement blocks. In most of the Mount Royal area, the zoning law set up fairly stiff limits on the number of families that could be housed in one building. But these requirements had been broken down by the exceptions granted during World War II, when the conversion of single-family homes to apartments was considered a patriotic gesture. In one block of Linden Avenue, nine such exceptions were granted during the war years, and on Eutaw Place it was not unusual to find 15 or 20 apartments in a house built for one family. The Health Department regulations set up minimum space requirements, but they were too low to prevent this. Such a miniature tenement could produce between $5,000 and $10,000 a year in rental income in 1955.

The zoning of all properties in the Mount Royal area was reviewed during the law enforcement program, and in borderline cases, the Board of Zoning Appeals was required to decide whether a legal exception existed. In these cases, the Housing Bureau submitted "comments" to the Zoning Board. The comments were mild enough, to wit: "It is . . . the considered opinion of this Bureau that to house ten families in this property would not be in line with the objectives

of the neighborhood rehabilitation program currently being carried out in the Mount Royal Area." The Zoning Board was unimpressed. In the case from which the above quotation was taken, the Board permitted a landlord to put ten families in a house zoned for five. This exception was granted in March of 1955—a year after the rehabilitation program began. The Board said that, due to the large number of exceptions that had been granted in the same block during World War II, "it would be arbitrary and unreasonable to deny this application."

While the city was failing to deal with overcrowding and the lack of public improvements, another threat was plaguing the Mount Royal area. This was the "block-buster"—the unscrupulous real estate operator who exploited the Negroes' drive for more housing, and the whites' prejudice against living in mixed blocks. In the Mount Royal area in 1954 and 1955, block-busters were buying houses in all-white blocks, and renting them to low-income Negro families, whose living habits were learned in the slums. The block-buster would then urge white homeowners to "sell out while you can." Elsewhere in Baltimore, this practice was more successful than it was in the Mount Royal area, where the homeowners were often sophisticated, well-educated people. But the practice brought an influx of low-income Negroes into the Mount Royal, and this further convinced many of the white residents that a complete changeover to Negro occupancy was inevitable.

Because of this racial pressure, and the persistence of over-crowded tenements, morale in the Mount Royal neighborhood reached a low point in the summer of 1955. A representative of one of the largest real estate firms in the city said there was a growing demand for homes close to the downtown section, but "people are afraid of the Mount Royal area." Social conditions in the neighborhood were such that police records showed the number of major crimes—murder, rape and robbery—increased from 6 in the first six months of 1954 to 24 in the first six months of 1955. The Social Services Committee estimated that the proportion of delinquents among the Mount Royal juveniles may have been "as high as 9.8 per cent" in 1954, compared with a city-wide average of 2.7 per cent in 1950.[5] Both the major crimes and the juvenile delinquency were concentrated in tenement blocks, but the homeowners around the corner suffered too, and one leader of the neighborhood association said, "Everyone I know keeps a loaded gun in the house."

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[5] Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, *op. cit.*

New Leadership Emerges:

At this point, when morale was lowest, the leadership of the Mount Royal Protective Association passed from the hands of the older residents into the hands of younger men, who had more recently moved into the neighborhood, bought homes and mortgaged their futures there. Like the older leaders, these young men were business and professional men, and they were socially and politically conservative. But they were able to adapt to changes that the neighborhood could not hope to avoid. Three of them—Pleasonton L. Conquest, a broker; John P. Mollett, an insurance man, and Edward G. Howard, a corporation lawyer—had won their spurs in the fight for the John Street Park. When they succeeded in that fight, their own little improvement association was invited into the larger Mount Royal group. The Mount Royal group, meanwhile, had elected a young attorney, Charles C. W. Atwater, as its president. He and the three newcomers were joined by some of the "old guard," notably Harry Berman, a real estate man, and Albert Baker, a securities analyst and long-time volunteer secretary of the Mount Royal association. This nucleus of leadership managed to reverse the trend of neighborhood morale.

The first break came when Baltimore housing leaders began to realize the possibilities of urban renewal, as drawn by the Federal Housing Act of 1954. Conquest made a study of urban renewal for the Mount Royal board of directors, and shortly after, when he succeeded Atwater as president of the association, he persuaded the other leaders that urban renewal was the answer to the neighborhood's problems. With urban renewal, they agreed, the power of condemnation could be invoked to do what law enforcement had failed to do. The zoning of the entire neighborhood could be redrawn, with exceptions eliminated, overcrowding ended, and commercial uses restricted to a neighborhood shopping center. With Federal aid, the city should be willing to provide recreation facilities, to close streets, clear open space and—possibly—raise the minimum housing standards that landlords would have to meet in their rented properties.

When Conquest and his friends went to City Hall with a request that the Mount Royal area be selected as an urban renewal neighborhood, they were told that Mount Royal had already received its share of attention from the city, and other neighborhoods would be considered first. They refused to take no for an answer, and went back into the neighborhood to sell the idea of urban renewal to the rank and file of homeowners. In November of 1955, they held an urban renewal rally, and 500 residents—most of them property owners—voted their

approval of a resolution demanding that the city choose their neighborhood. In this way, the Mount Royal became one of the first neighborhoods in the nation to go to City Hall and insist on renewal treatment, at the risk of condemnation and even stricter law enforcement. This the city could not ignore, and urban renewal was promised for the Mount Royal area.

Urban renewal was still in the early planning stages, however, and action was a long way off. In the interim, the Mount Royal leaders stepped up the fight against blighting influences, improvising their own techniques as they went along. They obtained an audience with the police commander of the district, and persuaded him to put extra patrols of plainclothesmen in the neighborhood. When the police captain did this, Conquest praised his efforts in a newspaper interview, and the captain was so pleased that he redoubled his efforts. The attitude of every policeman in the neighborhood, Conquest reported afterward, showed an increased alertness and aggressiveness.

Another milestone was reached when a score of homeowners in the neighborhood—both newcomers and "old guard"—got together to form a private real estate corporation of their own, called Bolton Hill, Inc., to protect the neighborhood in ways that law enforcement was not able to do. The corporation was authorized to issue $100,000 worth of stock, and its avowed purpose was to buy up homes that might otherwise fall into the hands of speculators. Then these homes could be modernized and rehabilitated to the best standard of the neighborhood, and resold or rented at a profit to families who were acceptable to the other homeowners. The president and driving force of the corporation was B. Ogle Tayloe, an insurance man who owned property in the area, but lived elsewhere. Atwater, who had moved out of the neighborhood but retained his property there, became counsel of Bolton Hill, Inc. It was, he said, "a practical step—the only thing that can be effective until urban renewal can be started in the neighborhood."

By the end of the first year of operation, Bolton Hill, Inc., had 211 stockholders—all owners of Mount Royal property—and $57,500 in capital. Ten houses that were threatened by "physical or ownership deterioration" had been bought up, and three of them had already been renovated, with a committee of stockholders' wives pitching in to do the interior decorating. Two of these houses were rented and the third was sold—all to "desirable tenants and purchasers . . . at rents and prices earning satisfactory profits to the corporation," in the words of Bolton Hill's executive vice-president, George Thomas. The other seven houses were in the process of rehabilitation, but more impressive, Thomas said, was "the important

by-product of strong neighborhood morale. . . . more than one skeptic has become favorably impressed; many old-timers see reason to hope for restoration of much of the section's former glory."

Meanwhile, the improvement association doubled its efforts to combat liquor licenses and non-conforming commercial uses. The Zoning and Liquor Boards, and the City Council as well, were made to feel the pressure of large and vocal delegations at every hearing affecting the neighborhood. When the Liquor Board allowed the tavern to relocate across the street from the new school, the association took the case to court and won a clear-cut victory. The storekeepers and tavern operators began to realize that they could not win a case against this sort of civic know-how, and Conquest seized the opportunity to offer them representation on the board of the Mount Royal Association. The result, he hoped, would be an alliance based on a trade of support: the shopkeepers would support a renewal plan calling for a single shopping center to replace nonconforming uses, and in return the improvement association would support the shopkeepers' claim to priority on space in the shopping center. Such an agreement would be politically potent in Baltimore, where the civic associations have been warring with neighborhood merchants for years.

A Bi-Racial Pact:

The most significant move by the new Mount Royal leadership, perhaps, was a bold step to alleviate racial pressure. The leaders persuaded their association to change the "Protective" in its name to "Improvement," and to open its ranks to Negroes. Then, having shown their good faith, they worked out an understanding with leaders of the Negro community, calling for acceptance of Negroes by the Mount Royal neighborhood, and acceptance by the Negroes of an informal percentage quota, plus a screening process to keep out undesirables of either race. The Negro leaders, or some of them at least, recognized the tendency of neighborhoods to change color entirely as soon as the percentage of Negroes goes above a certain, indefinable point. They did not want the Mount Royal to be an all-Negro neighborhood, any more than they wanted it to remain all white.

Said Furman L. Templeton, executive director of the Baltimore Urban League: "We know that a number of Negroes must learn the value of preserving their housing after they obtain it, and the Urban League is ready to take what would appear to be drastic action, in order to achieve a stabilized, integrated neighborhood, which is, after all, the democratic goal in housing."

For this reason, the Urban League was willing to consider a percentage goal for Negroes in the Mount Royal area. The level should be kept under 25 per cent initially, Templeton said, and the 1956 representation of 12 to 15 per cent was not too low as a start. At the same time, the Urban League agreed to employ its prestige and its contacts in the Negro community, to encourage social selectivity of Negroes moving into the Mount Royal area, and to request real estate dealers not to sell or rent Mount Royal property to Negroes who would be undesirable to the neighborhood. Templeton emphasized that the success of the plan would depend on an understanding that the entrance of qualified Negro homeowners was not "block-busting," and that the newcomers would be welcomed into the improvement association. The Mount Royal leaders agreed to this, and agreed to apply the same technique—approaching real estate dealers and landlords—to keep out undesirable families of either race.

Having made peace with the Negro community, the Mount Royal leaders were free to launch a frontal attack on block-busters—always a ticklish business where Negroes feel they must resort to any means in order to expand their housing supply. The Mount Royal group alerted its members in each block to relay a complaint to the association at the first sign of the block-busters' scare tactics. As soon as a complaint was heard, one of the officials of the association would visit the offending real estate operator, and issue a warning. The association's only weapon was a threat of exposure, through newspaper statements or hearings before the State Real Estate Commission. But the face-to-face warning, coupled with the growing militancy of home owners in the neighborhood, seemed to be enough. Eight months after the campaign started, Conquest was able to announce that the block-busters had been stopped, although he admitted that "if we let up, it wouldn't stay that way for 15 days."

Promise of Success:

All of this activity, stirred up by the leaders of the improvement association, revived the confidence of the Mount Royal residents. Membership in the association climbed from 450, at the time of the summer low point, to 600 the following May. Even more impressive was the willingness of these members to pitch in and work on neighborhood problems. About 50 members were serving on committees by the summer of 1956, and board meetings became so crowded that it was decided to split up into subsections. Ten lawyers were prepared to take the neighborhood's part in cases that required litigation.

At this crucial time, a combination of circumstances suddenly laid Mount Royal's problems before the whole city. Two disastrous

fires broke out within four weeks in converted row houses in the neighborhood, and seven persons were killed, including four small children. The city was shocked as it had never been by mere warnings against blight and overcrowding, and the resulting publicity prompted the Mayor to appoint a special investigating committee. The committee reported that the fault lay in conditions created during World War II and allowed to persist since that time, and the Mayor pledged his support for action that would break the stalemate. It took more than a year, but the result was a city-wide ordinance requiring the licensing of all multiple dwellings, coupled with administrative measures to tighten the regulations of the Bureau of Building Inspection. By this time, the bureau had a new chief, a conscientious young engineer named Raughley L. Porter. Many of the Mount Royal houses that had passed inspection in 1954 or 1955 were inspected again, and marked down for violations. Landlords complained that this amounted to a sort of "double jeopardy," but the courts upheld the action of the building inspection engineer.

In the meantime, there were signs that the neighborhood was already on the upswing by the summer of 1956. A trickle of young couples with children had started to buy homes in the area. Real estate prices held steady, and few homeowners were selling at a sacrifice. In the vicinity of the John Street Park, middle-class families quickly snapped up the few houses that went on the market. One house facing the park had sold for $7,800 in 1953, before the park was built. In 1957, with about $1,000 worth of remodeling, it sold for $13,000. Another house, around the corner from the park, sold for $7,200 in 1954. By 1957, it was assessed for $7,500, and appraised at $12,500.

The quickening of neighborhood activity also stimulated the birth of small improvement associations in portions of the neighborhood with special characteristics or special problems—like the North-Linden Merchants and Professional Men's Association, which was organized to solve the traffic problems of the commercial blocks on the neighborhood's northern boundary. Farther to the north, a rival and antagonistic improvement association reversed its attitude and proposed a merger with the Mount Royal Improvement Association. Best of all, shop and tavern keepers were told by city councilmen that they could not expect to obtain privileges unless they first obtained the approval of the Mount Royal group.

At Memorial Church, the rector and his staff were making headway with their efforts to integrate tenants with the older residents, by inducing the newcomers to attend church functions on the same basis

as socially prominent families who had been members for generations. By the middle of 1956, Conquest was able to say, "The white people in the neighborhood, at least, are now homogeneous, instead of being divided into good guys and bad guys. The idea is being accepted that if you offer the tenants some culture, they will reach out and take it, rather than ripping it down. This is mostly true of the children and teenagers. The adults still won't have anything to do with it, but they're not antagonistic because they feel their children are getting a good shake."

There was less success with integrating whites and Negroes in the neighborhood. The Rev. Arthur C. Kelsey, rector of Memorial Church, reached the parting of the ways with his congregation over this question. When the congregation balked at his plans for social integration, he felt obliged to resign. Conquest explained afterward that the Mount Royal is "essentially a Southern neighborhood, but Father Kelsey left many seeds of thought behind him." There were signs, furthermore, that the alliance of white and Negro leaders was beginning to bear fruit. Conquest, himself a Virginian who had settled in Baltimore after World War II, concluded in 1956 that "the neighborhood is stabilized, *with* Negroes." Templeton, the Urban League executive, added that "we have noticed a welcome change in the attitude toward Negroes moving into the neighborhood. Resistance has been softened, and replaced by an understanding desire to see that those who do come in can meet the standards of the neighborhood."

The rehabilitation program also had its effect on some of the businessmen serving the Mount Royal area. Two neighborhood hardware dealers offered discounts to residents who were forced to make repairs under the law enforcement drive, and two large savings and loan associations offered special consideration to Mount Royal home owners who needed loans to improve their properties.

Some of the landlords in the area received an education in the financing of rehabilitation. One said that after he had renovated a row house from top to bottom, he had 20 applicants for the first vacancy that occurred. He gave his tenants paint if they wanted to redecorate, and he decided that "the so-called hillbilly can be educated to keep up his apartment if the landlord shows a little interest." Another landlord said that before he rehabilitated, vacancies were costing him $1,500 a year. After rehabilitation, he was saving the $1,500 and spending much less than that on maintenance. Still another said he planned to cut back one house from 15 apartments to 9, at a cost of $9,000, but expected to make a good profit in the long run.

Desirable in-town living. This view shows the type of neighborhood the Mount Royal residents pictured within their grasp, with urban renewal. This is one of the blocks that remained proud and sought-after by those who like to live close to the center of the city. (Photo by A. Aubrey Bodine, Baltimore Sunday Sun Magazine).

This lesson was not learned by all of the landlords, however. One, who owned 13 houses in the neighborhood, estimated that he had to spend between $27,000 and $28,000 to comply with the law enforcement standards. But he did only the minimum amount of work required, and continued to rent tiny, two-room apartments in rabbit-warren tenements. He still suffered from vacancies, and could not understand why.

Conclusions:

There was little evidence that rehabilitation alone had a very deep effect on the attitudes of the Mount Royal residents. The changes that did appear were more pronounced among the tenants than among the homeowners. Many of the tenants made clear their appreciation of the improvements that landlords had been forced to make. Tenant families began to insist on the living standards required under the law, and by the end of the rehabilitation program, the Housing Bureau was receiving as many complaints from tenants as from homeowners. Some of the tenement families were living in violation of the overcrowding rules, and these had to face the questions of health and sanitation, often for the first time in their lives. "They're impressed in a way that the landlords never are," said Ellsworth Andrews, the Housing Bureau supervisor in the area. In addition, a few tenant families learned a new appreciation of social amenities such as church suppers and "coffee hours," through the efforts of the Memorial Church staff.

But the inspectors still found it difficult to make the transients recognize their own problems—whether social, moral or sanitary. "You have to go into their homes and sit down with these families to show them what's wrong with the way they are living," Andrews said. The Housing Bureau had no staff for that sort of work, and the social agencies rarely knew about these families' problems, unless the families themselves could be persuaded to go to the agencies, or unless some one complained about a condition that was hazardous to the children. Transiency was reduced only slightly by the improvement in the quality of living quarters, and few of the tenants were induced to put their roots down in the Mount Royal neighborhood. Andrews tried to persuade some of the tenement families to buy inexpensive homes in new neighborhoods near their factory jobs, but he found that "many of them do not want the responsibility of owning property."

The Mount Royal homeowners, on the other hand, were hardly aware of even a physical change in the neighborhood. As Conquest put it, "The law enforcement gave them a better idea of whom to

complain to, but otherwise it was just an annoyance. The tenements must be better inside, but the neighborhood looks the same. The program didn't leave anything behind. It was not a showy job that would make anybody aware of a neighborhood-wide effort. Each one knows what he spent himself, but that's about all."

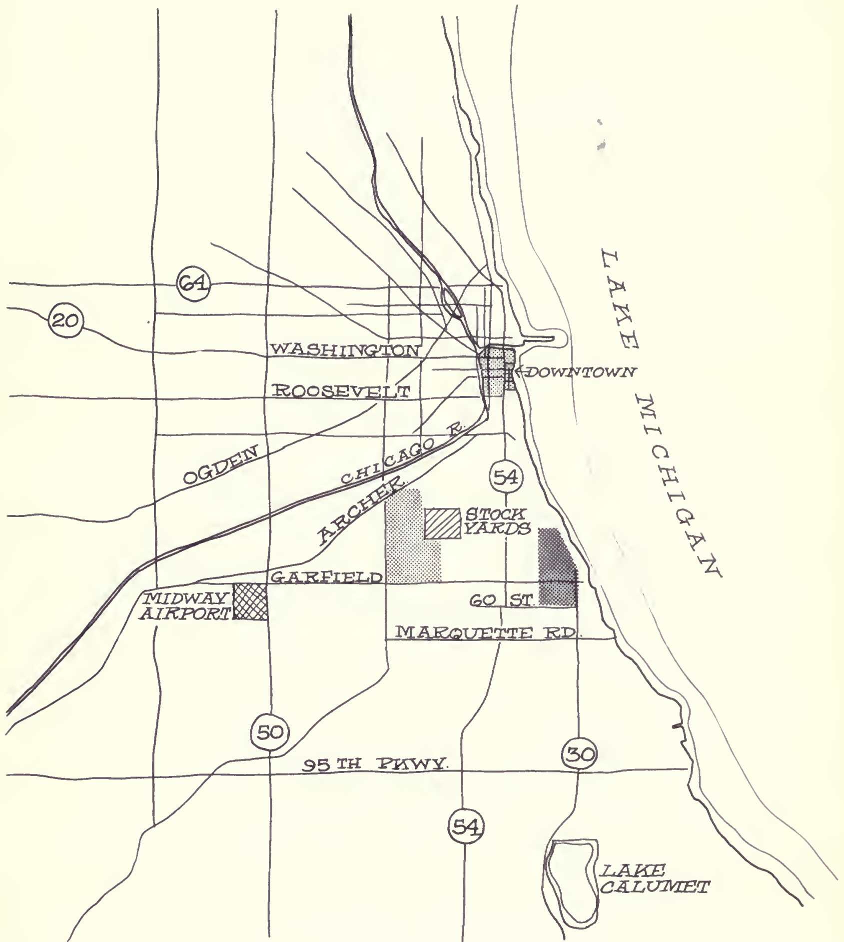
Yet, while individuals and families were not much changed by law enforcement, there were new currents of feeling in the neighborhood. The greatest, perhaps, was the budding tolerance between whites and Negroes, and a parallel tolerance between old residents and new. These things seemed to depend on the morale of the stable center of the population—the home-owning, middle-class families. When the neighborhood organization was able to show it could guide the neighborhood's destiny, a new feeling of security pervaded the neighborhood. And the increase in secure feelings reduced antagonisms based on fear or prejudice.

The new currents of feeling, therefore, were born of action—action by an effective neighborhood group that was tackling its own problems and solving them. The right leadership at the right time had more to do with this than anything else, apparently. But there was still the question of whether this leadership was unique, or whether other leaders could have done as well. One neighborhood leader answered the question this way: "The knowledge it takes to do these things is so hard to acquire that there are not many people who are willing to go through the process. There are some impulse leaders, but they have no idea of how to go about doing what is necessary. I'm afraid that if the key men all pulled out, the neighborhood would have a rough time." Other residents pointed out that through a happy accident, one or more of the leaders had sufficient spare time to devote to neighborhood affairs, after a full-time staff was no longer available.

Even with their know-how, there were signs that the leaders' success in propping up the Mount Royal neighborhood was based largely on the promise of urban renewal. It appeared likely that, if urban renewal were not put to work in this neighborhood, the newly-won morale might collapse and the downward trend resume. This would undoubtedly bring a disintegration of racial and social attitudes, if fear for the future of the neighborhood should become widespread once more.

By the middle of 1958, the Mount Royal neighborhood had become part of a huge urban renewal area designated by the City Council. Surveys and planning were slow in getting under way, but it appeared that the area had bright prospects for achieving the rebirth

that the Mount Royal residents were seeking. In addition to the optimism and determination of the homeowners who had struggled with rehabilitation, there were already on hand many of the tools with which urban renewal was expected to work: the redevelopment project to the south, the street park, the private rehabilitation corporation, the interracial cooperation. More and more, Baltimoreans were looking to the Mount Royal area as a testing-ground of the future of downtown middle-class neighborhoods.



Chicago, showing the relation of Back of the Yards (west of the stockyards) and Hyde Park-Kenwood (between 60th Street and the Lake) to downtown and the Loop. For a description of rehabilitation in Back of the Yards, see Chapter IV.

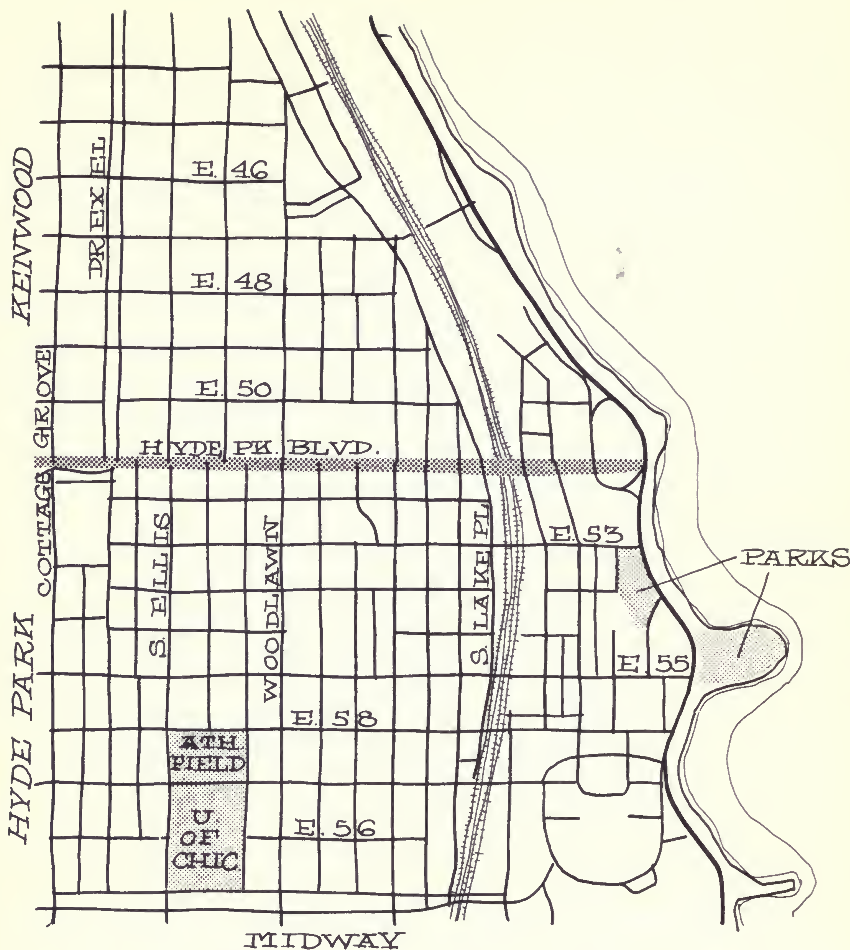
CHICAGO: Hyde Park and Kenwood

For years a high-class residential enclave around the University of Chicago, Hyde Park-Kenwood began developing pockets of slums, then found itself turning from a white to a Negro neighborhood. Concerted community action, with citizen participation on a scale perhaps unmatched in the nation, has done much to slow the drift toward blight. Moreover, the neighborhoods set out to do so on a deliberate interracial basis. In the process, their residents learned much about how the ideals of brotherhood differ from the practices. Leaders of the effort found out how to make the city government help them enforce decent living standards. But continuing Negro pressure for more housing raised doubts as to whether this unique and pioneering effort could succeed in the face of overwhelming odds.

From the 1850's up to 1949, the story of Hyde Park and adjacent Kenwood is an archetype of the rise, glory, change and decline of rich big-city neighborhoods. Its problems today revolve around the ugliest aspect of the US social scene: ethnic conflict, triggered by Negro in-migration.

The Hyde Park-Kenwood neighborhood (pop. 75,000) was once one of Chicago's finest residential communities. The two adjoining districts cover a little over two miles along Lake Michigan, only 10 to 15 minutes from the loop by auto (via the Outer Drive expressway) or by Illinois Central Railroad, whose tracks bisect Hyde Park. The area abounds with parks, museums, good private schools, trees and many beautiful old homes. The lake-front beach is handy. So are picnic areas.

Daily commuter trains were serving the area as early as 1856. When the Chicago fire of 1871 wiped out the old Gold Coast, many fashion-



The Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods, close by Lake Michigan, and anchored on the South by the University of Chicago.

able families moved to Kenwood. From then until the late 20's, Kenwood was home to some of Chicago's millionaires. Its high grade orientation was anchored in 1890 when the University of Chicago was founded through a gift from John D. Rockefeller. The university and its multimillion dollar structures stand at the south edge of Hyde Park, and for many years have dominated the neighborhood.

Few millionaires remain in Kenwood today, but both Hyde Park and Kenwood are inhabited largely by well-to-do middle class people —doctors, lawyers, professors, scientists, business and civic leaders. They support 18 Protestant churches, two Catholic churches, nine synagogues, and (until recently) a Buddhist temple.

Kenwood is still a small residential neighborhood of big single family homes—from mansion to small town house. But around these lies a belt of rundown apartments.

Hyde Park, originally developed as a community of big one-family houses, later attracted luxury apartments. In the 1920's small apartments and hotels went up to house an increasing number of elderly residents and single men and women. Today, it is a hodge-podge of building types. Along its tree-shaded streets, many of the big old houses and apartments have been cut up into tiny flats. Turn-of-the-century walkups and old frame houses persist next to new skyscraper apartments.

Both neighborhoods have been decaying for years, Hyde Park more so than Kenwood. It was in the late 1930's that the big houses and apartments built for rich families began to be converted into small flats and rooming houses. The accent on conversions during World War II, when war workers poured into Chicago, accelerated this trend.

After the war, wealthy families began leaving their old mansions for new houses in the suburbs. Under rent control, absentee landlords neglected maintenance of apartments and rooming houses, whose numbers continued to increase. The rise in auto ownership made parking a problem. Street cleaning and lighting, sometimes even garbage collection, were neglected in spots. Crime and disease rates rose in the pockets of blight. By the end of the 1940's, Hyde Park and Kenwood were sinking toward slums. The worst problem was panic at the increasing Negro population. In 1940, the non-white population of the two neighborhoods was 2%. By 1949 it was 7%. Rumors circulated that the entire community was "going black."[7] As the American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods has reported,[8] "Unsuccessful realtors were known to have started some of these rumors hoping to profit from a wave of panic selling. They called worried homeowners offering them scare prices 'before it was too late.' Often they were successful, and fact was added to fancy as another old home was divided into flats." Despite community efforts to build an amicable interracial neighborhood, white families were fleeing. In fact, flight from Negroes was the dominating neighborhood problem and change.

Some experts contended that this confronted the University of Chicago with the unhappy prospect of finding its multi-million dollar

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[7] By 1957, it had gone 36% Negro (27,502 out of the 74,862 total population), according to the Chicago Community Inventory.

[8] In its pamphlet, "Organization of Block Groups for Neighborhood Improvements," from which this chapter has drawn much of the history of the community.

What Hyde Park faced was typefied by this dreary row of apartment houses on 55th Street. They may have been beautiful when they were built during the Columbian Exposition in 1893, but by the mid-fifties few people but transients would live either in them or where they had to look at them. Stores at street level were too small for anything but hole-in-the-wall firms. Such ugliness with an outmoded plan, Hyde Park residents agreed, was blighting everything in sight. (Photo by Fritz Goro, Life)

realty investment, in perhaps ten years' time, become completely surrounded with a collar of Negro neighborhoods—some slum ghetto and some polished ghetto. Even the most pessimistic prophets agree that the few blocks closest to the University will remain a circle of white occupancy—people who want to live close to their jobs.

Attitudes in Hyde Park and Kenwood revolved around the "Negro problem." The prevailing undercurrent seemed to be that if the Negro percentage of residents reaches a certain point, a major increase in white flight will result. Indeed, some Chicagoans contended this point had already been reached as of 1956. But perhaps this was too early to make a final judgment.

Where other neighborhoods have needed physical rehabilitation, Hyde Park-Kenwood's first problem was primarily one of conserving the good housing that it had and simultaneously preventing the spread

of blight by rooting out illegal conversions to prevent overcrowding. Later, the neighborhood added massive demolition and redevelopment to its efforts to stem blight. But that phase is largely outside the scope of this inquiry and will be dealt with sparingly here.

It was in Hyde Park that the neighborhood conservation movement in Chicago—and probably in the nation—was born. It dates from one night in September, 1949, when eight members of the 57th Street Meeting of Friends gathered in the little living room of Harry and Julia Abrahamson. She was co-chairman of the society's social order committee. "Let's be really practical," Mrs. Abrahamson urged. "Instead of getting off into international relations somewhere, why don't we try to do something here in our own neighborhood?"

The upshot was a citizens' meeting in November, 1949. Forty Hyde Park-Kenwood residents attended, adopted a program for what later became the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference. Its aims:

1) Enforcement of zoning and building laws;
2) More schools;
3) More playgrounds and other recreational facilities;
4) Better street cleaning, lighting and garbage pickup;
5) More parking space—or garages;
6) Cleanup and home maintenance drives;
7) More cooperation from city officials and their departments;
8) Redevelopment of slum pockets.

The fact that the neighborhood was composed largely of professional men and women made technical committees of experts easy to recruit. A planning committee, a public school committee, a recreation and a clean-up committee were formed. But broader citizen participation, Mrs. Abrahamson and her cohorts felt, would be essential to making any progress against the staggering list of problems. Thus came into being Hyde Park-Kenwood's unique contribution to the know-how of slum fighting: its block-group organization.

The first block meeting of 15 home-owning families was held under the guidance of four conference leaders in January, 1950.

They were confronted with Hyde Park's typical problem: Negroes had bought an apartment house across the street. Rumors were growing that a landlord planned to crowd a Negro family into every room. Fearing this was true, four residents had put their houses up for sale.

As the neighbors talked before the meeting started, they revealed a range of viewpoints. Some hoped the session had convened to plot

strategy to oust the Negroes. At the other extreme, a few felt the aim was to convert the neighborhood into an interracial area. The chairman commented that the group would have to accept the fact that its attitudes toward Negroes varied. But he suggested the meeting consider what the neighbors should do about the fact that Negroes had bought the apartment. They could, he noted, 1) form a pitchfork group to drive them out, 2) ignore them, 3) ask them to agree to keep the neighborhood a pleasant place to live.

The group voted for the third alternative and appointed a welcoming committee. The meeting turned to discussion of the untidy appearance of the block.

From that first meeting in the Abrahamson apartment, the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference evolved. By late 1955, in 344 of the area's 390 blocks, captains had organized their neighbors into block groups. They kept watch on building and zoning violations and other conditions that breed slums. Chicago city officials who are supposed to do this job had been notoriously ineffective. Chicago neighborhoods that want to stamp out or prevent slums must do their own police work.[9]

Julia Abrahamson's network of block captains was probably the most comprehensive citizens' organization ever formed to help do a job which the city government had defaulted. The conference operated on a budget (in 1955 of $58,000 a year). It has a full-time staff of seven.[10] Some 7,000 community residents (out of a total population of 72,000) were cooperating in one or more of its activities. Twenty lawyers, for example, were donating their time to provide the council with one of the best citizens' legal panels in the nation to fight slums.

The conference makes much of its role as a self-styled "grass roots" organization. It depends for effectiveness directly on local residents and property owners and their powers through the democratic process. True to Julia Abrahamson's Quaker philosophy, its only club has been persuasion.[11] Confronted with a recalcitrant slum owner, Mrs. Abrahamson's approach was not "You had better reform." It was: "How can we share this problem?"

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[9] The city has lent a big helping hand to neighborhoods organizing for this purpose, through the Office of the Housing and Redevelopment Co-ordinator.

[10] By 1957, this increased to nine paid staffers, a $60,000 budget, and 3,000 dues-paying members (at $3 per individual or $5 per family). But the conference counted only 60 block captains.

[11] Mrs. Abrahamson resigned as head of the conference in 1956 when her husband's job took him to North Carolina. Her successor: James Cunningham, 34, former director of the Independent Voters of Illinois.

Poised behind this mild manner has been the bludgeon force of the South East Chicago Commission and its thundering executive director, Lawyer Julian Levi. The commission, representing the prestige and financial resources of the University of Chicago, supplements at top levels the ground-floor work of the conference. If a slum owner refuses to "share" his problems with the conference, he may be clubbed into line with the legal and financial might of the commission.

The SECC was formed in May, 1952. Though the citizens had organized to fight physical blight, they seemed unable to cope with the accompanying social blight. Finally, an increase in crime unmatched by an increase in police protection shocked citizens and the University of Chicago into vigilante action—on a civilized plane. Two mass meetings at the university, each attended by more than 2,000 people, resulted in establishment of the commission.

How the commission works is explained this way by Don Blackiston, Levi's assistant in charge of law enforcement: "The city has building, police and sanitation departments. The services are there but it's up to our organization to get the very best services out of these agencies. Of course, the rest of the city should get the same services, but they don't go at it the right way. They don't put on the pressure and cooperate at the same time."

Levi's pitch to government officials from the beginning has been: "This is a neighborhood project that the residents are willing to undertake themselves. We aren't looking for handouts. All we want is authorization to go out and do a job." This contrasts sharply with the plea so often heard elsewhere: "You people down at city hall ought to get together and do something about this."

The commission acts as a listening post. Citizens who stumble on things that look suspicious might not run the risk of getting involved as a witness by calling the police themselves. But they will call Criminologist Blackiston. In return, he keeps his sources confidential. First, he checks the tip himself. If it holds up, Blackiston eases down to the district police station. There, gossiping with the captain, he will casually mention his information and suggest how it might be handled. Later, he sends a written request to the captain as a reminder that the commission has not forgotten about it.

What Blackiston does not do is to use the downtown authorities as a club over the district captain's head. "My big credit with the police department is that I'm carrying on their public relations work," he says. In matters of crime, the commission has yet to go to the mayor or police commissioner to get something done. Police, in return, are delighted to get professional help from citizens. Says

Captain Albert Anderson: "Our relationship with the South East Chicago Commission is a new era of cooperation between citizens and their law enforcement agencies."

When Levi gets a particularly tough slumlord, he doesn't simply go wailing to city hall. He goes to work on the slumlord, using extra-governmental avenues of coercion, such as banks, insurance companies and management firms who can kill a mortgage loan, cancel fire insurance or refuse to refer new tenants to blighted apartments.

City officials recognize this and like it. When Levi occasionally must call in government, he finds officials willing to lend a hand.

Take the case of Knob Hill, a heavy-smelling saloon and cabaret. Owner Al Feinstein held a four o'clock license, which in Chicago means he could stay open legally until 4 a.m. every morning. Actually, he did the best business after 4 a.m., when the drunks were turned out of legitimate drinking parlors and sought a place to finish the night.

At the Knob Hill, which operated directly across the street from the Hyde Park police station, they could find plenty of liquor and, moreover, B girls to help them drink it. There was a postage-stamp dance floor and a band (partly staffed from nearby 5th Army Headquarters personnel) that was loud, if not always in tune. The Knob Hill was only a few blocks from the University of Chicago. But most of its patrons were soldiers from the Army headquarters, Negroes from the nearby South Side Negro areas, and wandering Chicagoans looking for excitement—and, sometimes, trouble.

The Knob Hill eventually and naturally became a hangout for petty criminals, drunks, prostitutes, dope addicts and other small insects of the late night. It—and five or six other joints scattered along Lake Park Avenue at the eastern edge of Hyde Park—were attracting into this old neighborhood the riff-raff of which slums are made.

Citizens had been protesting vainly for years to the police who passed by the Knob Hill doorway with every change of the watch. Shortly after the South East Chicago Commission came into being, one citizen protested to Julian Levi.

Levi had been preparing to do battle with Al Feinstein and the operators of the other Lake Park joints. He already had organized a committee of legitimate tavern operators concerned about preserving the tone of Hyde Park. He had formed an alliance with officials of the bartenders union and he had enlisted the support of the Illinois Liquor Dealers Association.

Then, with bluntness exceeded only by presumptuousness, Levi issued a "summons" to Al Feinstein. It notified him to appear before the commission at a "compliance hearing" based upon complaints that he was operating in a manner detrimental to the neighborhood.

While Feinstein may have questioned Levi's authority to summon him to a "hearing," there was something about the language of the summons that behooved him to attend. One hot afternoon he walked into the hearing room at the SECC's offices in the Hyde Park YMCA. Awaiting him was Levi, his staff criminologist, Blackiston, and—to his astonishment—a committee of nearly a score of Hyde Park tavern operators. Seated at the head of the table was the business agent of the bartenders' union.

"We've got enough on you to close you up for keeps," Levi warned Feinstein. "We're reasonable, but neither the commission nor any of these gentlemen sitting here want your kind of place operating in Hyde Park."

"You're trying to crucify me," Feinstein wailed. "I'll go broke if I do what you want."

"You'll go broke if you don't," Levi prophesied.

The happiest finish for this episode would be for Feinstein to have turned over a new leaf, become a pillar of civic virtue, and for the Knob Hill to have become a place to treasure. Such was not the case, although most tavern owners and slum keepers summoned before Levi's "compliance hearings" do, in fact, comply.

Feinstein chose to ignore Levi's warning. A few weeks later, a special detail of police from a district in another part of the city raided the Knob Hill. Feinstein was charged with illegal operations. He was convicted in court, and his tavern license was revoked. He sought help from the barkeepers union and from the liquor dealers' association, but found both of them arrayed alongside Levi. Feinstein took up selling umbrellas.

Of five other undesirable taverns along Lake Park, three were closed and boarded up; two became respectable, law-abiding places under new management.

Even more important than his function as middle-man between the citizens and the police is Blackiston's job of following through in the courts. Court prosecution of housing code violations has long been one of the weakest spots in Chicago's fight against blight. But Hyde Park is doing better than many other neighborhoods.

Realist Levi considers one of his main jobs as a slum fighter is keeping out of Kenwood and Hyde Park the conversion-minded slum owner and the blight-prone tavern operator, while giving religion to those who are already established. His attitude is down-to-earth: "The thing to do with those bastards is hit them over the head. Don't play around with them."

Tenement operators undergo a treatment much like that accorded the Knob Hill's proprietor.

First, Levi calls them to his office. They come. They're afraid of how many inspectors Levi would soon have swarming over their violation-ridden properties if they didn't. In his office, Levi gives them the big stick flourish. "You try anything around here," he implies, "and we'll lower the boom." His philosophy: a man who owns slum property isn't entitled to respectability; you've got to treat him like a criminal.

Levi's boom-lowering begins with a credit report to get the facts on his victim: where he banks, his credit rating, his mortgage situation, his insurance companies, the properties, his income, past law suits, his address and any social organizations to which he belongs. Then Levi sends Blackiston to the police for a history of all arrests at his properties. A retired fire marshal, Anthony Seaman, gets code violation history from the building and fire departments. Then Levi can threaten to telephone the victim's bank, insurance company and clubs. He asks them if this is the kind of client and member they like to have. Faced with possible loss of credit, insurance and social respectability, many such men stay away from Hyde Park or comply with the commission's wishes.

Like the hardened saloonkeeper, the hardened slum operator is unfazed by such attacks. When Levi took over the commission early in 1953, he decided to make slum landlord Joseph Schwind a public example of all the things Hyde Park was fighting. Schwind owned at least three tenement properties in Hyde Park. Levi concentrated on one, at 808-18 Oakwood Boulevard, which Schwind had owned (without mortgage) since 1944. The building housed 159 persons. Before the commission was formed, Schwind had been in court just three times and fined a total of $75 for building violations such as lack of exit stairways, water and sewage backing up, cockroaches, vermin, open and deficient wiring, rubbish obstructing fire escapes.

In April, 1953, Levi compiled a full dossier on Schwind. It included photographs of existing violations—of which 13 were those listed in his 1951 and 1952 suits, still uncorrected—and certified copies of all

records involved. He presented the data to Mayor Kennelly, who publicly promised to clean up. With the assured cooperation of all city agents, Levi week after week sent his staff building inspector, Seaman, to go over the Schwind properties every Monday. For nearly a year, Levi thus kept a list of 20 to 30 violations under suit continuously. By August, 1955, Schwind had been fined $2,645 for 93 building code violations in four South Side tenements,[12] and Schwind was facing possible seizure of his properties under a new Illinois law unless he completed some $30,000 worth of remodeling. But Schwind was still operating, still collecting rents.

Levi, as befits his fighting zeal, simply wheeled up bigger guns. In the process, he struck an effective blow for a sterner judicial attitude toward all slum landlords. Levi arranged for the building court judge to pay a personal visit to slum properties. He was accompanied by prosecutors, inspectors, the building commissioner, the health commissioner, and—of course—by Levi. The judge, who had been giving token fines for "violation abated" cases, saw enough to change his attitude. The 40 cases currently pending against Schwind were bundled into one package and ordered for trial before Judge Cecil Smith. The judge called a pre-trial conference at which he invited all interested parties to bring in proposals for permanently abating the violations. These proposals included architects' drawings for improvements which would bring the buildings into compliance with all city ordinances. On the basis of these, Schwind agreed to install an additional bathroom on each floor of one building and to reduce its occupancy by 50%.

In time, Levi gradually gained the upper hand. Schwind was arrested. By early 1957, he was no longer managing properties. His fight had cost him $65,000 for building repairs, $7,000 in fines and $10,000 in legal fees.

Against a high-powered adversary like Schwind, Levi has often had real trouble. But for the modest slum landlord who merely wants a profitably-overcrowded rooming house as an annuity for his old age, Levi has proved an extremely dangerous and almost always victorious antagonist.

In Chicago, nothing connected with housing is easy. Sometimes Levi spends days to land one blow at local blight. In 1952, a two-story home near the university campus was gutted by fire. A brother and a sister died in the blaze and the surviving sister, Mrs. Jeanette Pratt, never touched the charred house after the tragedy. The house

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[12] Chicago *Daily News*, August 10, 1955.

stood hollow-eyed for five years, its second story serving as a pigeon loft. It was a good example of how a seemingly harmless eyesore can start blight in a whole block. In May, 1954, Levi decided to get the Pratt house demolished, using a municipal ordinance which provides that Chicago can condemn and raze a house that is 50% destroyed.

First, he ran a tax search. To his delight, the house was delinquent since 1934 plus non-payment in 1932. Including penalties, Mrs. Pratt owed the city $8,400. Julian called on the assistant state's attorney in charge of tax foreclosures to get proceedings started, though he had no intention of waiting the two years this would take. Foreclosures were a weapon in case of legal countermoves by Mrs. Pratt.

A year earlier, the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference had reported the house to the building department. But city inspectors did not go inside and so reported it less than half-destroyed. Levi visited the new acting building commissioner, Gen. Richard Smykal, who agreed to correct the inspection mistakes of his bumbling predecessor and tear the house down. But first Levi needed a statement from an architect that the house really qualified under the ordinance as over half-destroyed. Next morning, Levi got the university building and grounds department to set up an extension ladder so that he, his aide Seaman, the commission architect and a local contractor could climb in and look. Smykal got the resulting affidavits that afternoon. Levi thought he had won.

But Mrs. Pratt also visited Commissioner Smykal. She insisted the building was not half-demolished. She planned to repair it. She threatened to sue the department if the building were torn down. So to protect himself, Smykal sent three inspectors to look again. Unfortunately, these were the same three inspectors who had already certified the building as repairable. Levi met them at the house and supplied a ladder to make sure that they got inside this time. But the inspectors (all political appointees and Democratic precinct captains) didn't like Smykal, who was in the process of shaking up the building department. They didn't like Levi, whom they held partially responsible for the shake-up. They reported the house was only 45% damaged.

Levi, right back where he started, simply took a bigger wind-up. He had pictures taken inside the house and went back to Smykal. Says Levi: "When I'm in a poker game like this, I hold one big card. Nobody wants me to go to the newspapers with my troubles." Moreover, he offered the services of Illinois Tech's engineering department for another inspection. And finally, he recalls, "I told Smykal: 'This woman came in and said she would repair it. If she does, okay. But

Burned-out house (center) stood in this condition for years, only half a block from the University of Chicago campus. A pigeon roost and eye-sore, it was so enmeshed in red tape it took Julian Levi a year and a half to get it demolished. Such wedges of blight, experts say, hastened Hyde Park's transition to Negro occupancy. The reason is that white buyers shied away from homes near the gutted building. Negroes, hungry for almost any kind of housing, did not. (Photo by Fritz Goro, Life.*)*

you've had ragtime from this woman for five years. Tell her she's either going to tear it down or fix it.' "

Levi won. Today, the charred remains have been torn down.

Levi is a salesman. When he isn't selling city hall on more cooperation, he is just as effective selling the work of his commission to get financial support. The commission operates on a $45,000-a-year budget, of which $10,000 comes from the University of Chicago. The balance comes from private sources, chiefly banks, hotels, business groups and individuals.

On occasion, Levi can be a lobbyist. He conceived and steered through the Illinois legislature anti-slum statutes with great, though as of 1958, still unrealized potential for fighting slums. It is the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation Act. Levi found a long-unused 1941 law that empowered citizens in slums to form a corporation and acquire

the right of eminent domain for slum clearance. The law required the corporation to obtain the consent of owners of 60% of the property in the corporation area. Levi got this amended to include salvageable conservation areas. Thus, says Levi, the law became "preventive medicine and not medicine for use only after the patient is ill."

Next came formation of the Southwest Hyde Park Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation. With consent of the requisite property owners, it moved to acquire and raze four square blocks, sell it to the University of Chicago which would then build quarters for married students. Litigation was still bottling up the project in 1958, but, as Levi points out, "This has to be anticipated with a new statute."

Urban Renewal Project:

Looming even bigger than Levi's brass knuckles fight against slumlords is his role in promoting into reality a major urban renewal project to cut away the most blighted heart of Hyde Park.

The effort was started by Julia Abrahamson's Community Conference. It invited Chicago's Land Clearance Commission to identify Hyde Park's most blighted blocks for eventual demolition and redevelopment. But where the Conference had been treading lightly, Levi bulldozed his way to the mayor's office, loudly blowing the Conference's horn. He made it clear the area was perfect for renewal because citizen support for the idea was already rallied. Hyde Park got its survey.

Levi persuaded the Marshall Field Foundation to give $100,000 for a planning unit. With this money for a five-year program, he hired away Jack Meltzer, planning director of the Michael Reese Hospital—another Chicago institution choked by a collar of slums. Three months later—an almost unbelievably short time as renewal planning goes—Levi was showing a finished plan to housing officials and city politicians. In less than a year—also a rare burst of speed for renewal—two renewal projects were pushed through all the governmental agencies that had to approve them. They are known as Hyde Park Projects A and B. They involve razing 209 decrepit buildings on 47 blighted acres and replacing them with 712 new dwellings, a shopping center, big parking areas, new playgrounds and a major thoroughfare. With demolition completed, the rebuilding contract was awarded in 1957 to redeveloper William Zeckendorf of New York City.

A year later, Jack Meltzer's giant renewal plan—financed with the $100,000 grant plus $198,000 in federal planning funds—won final approval of city officials despite last-minute efforts of the Catholic Archdiocese to block it. It involves what was probably the largest

The ugly jumble that characterized Hyde Park before rehabilitation began is studied by Planner Jack Meltzer, then with the South East Chicago Commission. First floors of apartments housed numerous small shops. One building on the rear corner was converted into tiny, crowded living units. (Photo by Fritz Goro, Life).

federally-aided renewal effort of its type up to that time: $43 million in federal and city funds to spur some $27.5 million of new building and perhaps $30 million more in rehabilitation in a vast area stretching from 47th to 59th Streets and from Cottage Grove to Lake Michigan. Roughly, it called for tearing down 20% of the area's housing units to save the other 80%, create more open space, parks and parking space in some of Hyde Park-Kenwood's most densely occupied sectors.

Results:

How nearly have Julia Abrahamson and Julian Levi, two pioneers in urban conservation, come to their goal of making Hyde Park and Kenwood a stable community of housing, schools, recreation, parking and shopping?

By the end of 1955, physical conversion of apartments into cell-like slum structures to be crowded with low-income (usually Negro)

families had been stopped cold. This was largely attributable to 1) the organization of the Conference's block captains to report remodeling not in conformity with building law, and 2) the vastly more effective legal machinery—thanks both to new laws and better administration—for stopping such conversions. But conversion by use—moving three or four families into one apartment—had not stopped. "It's more difficult to control," observed Mrs. Abrahamson, "because it is hard to find physical evidence of the change. It is seldom that all the tenants are home when an inspector calls." To fight such slum breeding, Chicago's building department was preparing to begin night inspections, and the city was rewriting its housing code to strengthen the law against overcrowding. A year and a half later, there was even more progress. Items:

• To rid the neighborhood of already converted buildings, Levi's South East Chicago Commission persuaded city officials to begin a series of neighborhood cases. Buildings were put into the hands of a court receiver under court order to apply all income to removing deficiencies. Results were good. By the time the first 20 buildings were in receivership, mortgage-holding insurance companies all over the state took alarm. When the city took over, their first mortgages became, in effect, second mortgages. So they began demanding that landlords clean up.

• Eight new schools were built or under construction in the area. These will help relieve overcrowding in the elementary schools. They left unsolved the problem of the area's secondary school, Hyde Park High. Heavy Negro enrollment there had sent many a white family scurrying into the suburbs. The trend had slowed down, but was continuing. The average freshman class was 1,100; drop-outs cut this to 400 by graduation time. In a university-centered community, this is a serious problem. In one freshman class of 24, a father complained his daughter was one of three whites. The alternative was the University of Chicago's Laboratory High School, which costs $700 tuition, or other private schools. The lab school was bulging at the seams. Negroes who could afford it sent their children there. But Hyde Park had only a relative handful of high-income Negro families. At Hyde Park High, so-called acceleration programs—courses for the gifted—ameliorated the situation by running a school for the ambitious alongside a school for the masses. But it was still a sore spot.

• Street lighting, cleaning and maintenance had improved so much that it was no longer considered a community problem.

• Crime, for years on the increase, had turned down.

Racial Balance:

One key aim of the Community Conference had been to establish a stable interracial neighborhood. Julia Abrahamson had said this perhaps meant stabilizing the Negro population at some point under 50%. Whites, being more free to move, would not remain in a minority position, she theorized.

Whether the critical racial mix is 10%—as some experts now believe—or 20%, or 50%, the fact was that Hyde Park showed only a few signs of racial stability. In 1949, it had been 9% Negro. By the summer of 1955, it was between 20 and 30% Negro. By mid-1957, the Negro population (as noted earlier) had climbed to 36%.

In the larger sense, Hyde Park and Kenwood were somewhat interracial. But two things were happening. The more stable areas were experiencing a racial stabilization—the first in years. There was less moving, a smaller vacancy rate. But in already predominantly Negro blocks, more and more Negro families were squeezing in.

The economic, social and cultural gap between average white and Negro families in Hyde Park was large. Median income in Hyde Park, according to Levi, was up to $7,500 per family—well above the national median for urban areas. Without its Negro residents, the income level would have been higher. The bulk of Chicago's Negro population are low-income migrants from the rural South, according to sociologists. Moreover, a quarter are in broken families. They mixed poorly with Hyde Park's middle-class white families, many of whom had no objection to middle-class Negro families whose way of life was generally indistinguishable from their own.

Because rents were high in much of Hyde Park, Negro families were often forced to double-up, sometimes illegally. One keen observer of the neighborhood has described the resulting sudden neighborhood changes in these words: "One white family would move out and three Negro families would move in. You could change the outward appearance of a block from all-white to half-Negro by changing the occupancy of one good-sized building. That's what happened. It happened so fast the effect was numbing. There was seldom a six-family for six-family swap from white to Negro. In two months, in one six-flat building, it changed from six white families to 12 Negro families. And it seemed as though each of the Negro families had at least eight members."

One result: the Community Conference set up a tenant referral service, hoping to persuade white families to move into predominantly Negro-occupied buildings and vice versa. As one Hyde Park resident

explained it: "The problem had shifted from making a neighborhood interracial by bringing in good Negro families to keeping it interracial by bringing in white families."

Another result: there was a marked increase in accusations of racial discrimination by Negroes, notably in the Chicago *Defender.* These centered around the Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation's plans. Negro spokesmen complained the projected new housing would price most Negroes out of the market. This was probably true of the recent Southern farm family. But upper- and middle-class Negroes—a minority of a minority—seemed solidly behind the renewal plans. They were not articulate about it, for a reason. Most of them are professionals who earn their income from the largely lower-income Negro population they serve. As Mrs. Adelina Diamond, then editor of the weekly Hyde Park *Herald,* has commented: "Their basic drive is to maintain and protect their homes and neighborhoods in middle-class splendor (by restricting population increase, by keeping an interracial neighborhood and, incidentally, by openly showing their class consciousness which is exactly the same as their white neighbors). But this creates conflict between their desires and their sources of income. It perhaps is one of the main stumbling blocks to encouraging this group to assume leadership."[13]

Hyde Park and Kenwood have been the most probed, dissected, studied, expertised, and surveyed renewal communities of their kind in the nation. Moreover, the two neighborhoods have been uniquely in the forefront of the Negro push for residential integration.

The problems spawned by interracial living are probably of secondary interest to the question of whether attitudes in Hyde Park suggest that interracial communities can be created at all in cities under pressure of rapidly expanding Negro population, most of which is of recent, low-income, rural status.

Interviews in depth with a limited sample of Hyde Park and Kenwood residents in mid-summer, 1955, suggested that interracial living—without fearsome tensions—was not yet feasible. The march of Negroes into Hyde Park and Kenwood was merely nudging more and more white families into flight.

Said an eminent University of Chicago social scientist, speaking only on the timorous condition that his name be withheld: "Despite all the efforts, the chance of maintaining a middle-class level in Hyde Park and Kenwood is awfully small. There is no chance at all to maintain it for the entire Hyde Park-Kenwood area. Primarily, this

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[13] In a private communication to the author.

is because there is not enough being done elsewhere throughout the city to improve housing conditions for Negroes. Besides, this is one of the best places in Chicago for Negroes to live. There is nothing you can do. When the Negro migrant stops coming here (i.e., because industrial jobs are scarce), Chicago is dead."

Hyde Park and Kenwood were in a social nutcracker. Julia Abrahamson, that summer, told friends she felt a stable interracial neighborhood required halting the percentage increase at some point under half the total.

In its pamphlet, "Organization of Block Groups for Neighborhood Improvement," the American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods reaches this conclusion: "The record of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference shows that a neighborhood, well on the way to becoming a slum, can reverse this process."

It seems a premature finding. There is little question that the block group technique is a useful tool for conserving old neighborhoods threatened with blight. The Community Conference has demonstrated amply that it is a big help. But the march of blight in Hyde Park and Kenwood had only been slowed, not stopped, and not yet reversed. Without the big club of Julian Levi's South East Chicago Commission to back it up, it seems likely that the conference's efforts would have been much less effective.[14]

The lesson of their inter-relationship has been well summed up by D. E. Mackelmann, who for many years was deputy housing and redevelopment co-ordinator for the city. Says he: "Both groups and programs were basic to success in the area. One would not have succeeded without the other. The problem for other areas is how to combine the two functions in one group since only under exceptional circumstances would it be possible to organize and support two such groups."

Attitudes:

Attitudes in Hyde Park and Kenwood, insofar as they are affected by efforts at rehabilitation, conservation and urban renewal, revolved, at the time of this study, around interracial living.

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[14] Levi modestly demurs. Says he: "Viewed against the magnitude of public and private effort and finances now engaged, I seriously question whether you can validly couch much of what has happened here in terms of any personality . . . The times have been with us. The problem of the preservation of the central city is truly national in scope . . . It is true that the South East Chicago Commission has been fairly effective. The main credit for this is in a professional, completely competent approach and this comes primarily from Blackiston on law enforcement, Jack Meltzer on planning, and not the least, Sarah Wexler, who has raised our budget without any real trouble at any time."

The reason is simple. There had been some rehabilitation in the two neighborhoods. But the community's efforts to fight the onrush of blight had been largely confined to halting illegal conversions and driving slum-creating landlords from the neighborhood. Most of these efforts involved Negro families, the neighborhood's newcomers.

It was therefore easy for residents to blame the rapidly changing social conditions they saw on "Negroes." It required more discernment to realize that the "Negro" objection might easily mask a more deep-seated objection to having one's children mixed into a group which was predominantly of a lower economic, social and cultural standard.

To state it another way, any assessment of the meaning of attitudes expressed by Hyde Park's and Kenwood's citizens is complicated by the fact that only a few of the newcomer Negro families appear to have had jobs, education and attitudes toward how-to-live comparable to the middle-class professional group already living there.

In any event, the range of views was wide.

At one extreme was the vehement comment of a bartender in a midtown hotel who lived in Hyde Park: "Negroes are moving into my neighborhood now—real good. I don't mind them living in the same area, but I don't want any in the same building with me. In ten years it will be known as the black city of Chicago."[15] Or the views of a fat young woman who sat fanning herself on the front stoop at 5449 South Lake Park at sunset on a torrid July day: "It used to be a pretty nice neighborhood. But Negroes began moving in a year ago. That apartment across the street (Negro-occupied) has been a lot of trouble. Why those kids carry knives when they're only two or three years old. You can't trust 'em around *your* kids. Six months and they (the Negroes) make a mess of a place."

At the other end of the gamut, Mrs. Jeannie Alinsky contends: "I think people welcome the idea of an interracial community." To this, her husband, Saul, (the brainfather of the Back of the Yards Council movement, who has lived in Hyde Park since he entered the University of Chicago as a freshman in 1930), adds: "I wanted to live in an interracial neighborhood. On the other hand, I don't want to live in a community that is 90% Negro."

Do block groups change people's attitudes?

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[15] Between 1950 and 1957, the number of white people living in Chicago decreased about 12,000 a year. Non-white population increased by more than 32,000 a year, according to estimates by the Chicago Community Inventory of the University of Chicago. Thus, the non-white population in six years rose from 14% to 19% of the total population.

In their manual, "Neighbors in Action,"[16] Herbert A. Thelen and Mrs. Bettie Belk Sarchet reach this conclusion after an extensive study of the Hyde Park Community Conference: "There is no question that many neighborhoods with active block organizations have improved physically and stabilized themselves psychologically. Illegal conversions have been stopped cold,[17] panic flight no longer happens[17] and people are investing money in their homes. There is a clear determination to stay on the block, and a feeling that the remaining problems can be solved, and that it is rewarding to try to solve them. Organized blocks are gradually being recognized as a social fact to be taken into account by real estate operators, housing speculators and mortgage-loan groups. The average speculator is not a dyed-in-the-wool destroyer of the community. Most real estate firms do not really set out to wreck a neighborhood; they know that the ruination of housing through speculative exploitation is also, in the long run, the ruination of their own business. Such people can be talked to and shown by a group of homeowners. Similarly, the mortgage-loan people, who, mostly on the basis of racial stereotypes, refuse to loan money on houses in areas where Negroes are moving in—these people know 'underneath' that such tactics contribute to the creeping blight that destroys, eventually, their own opportunity to invest their money. This final accomplishment of the citizen program is of vast importance to maintaining a community."

In a second study, "Block Groups and Community Change,"[18] Mrs. Sarchet reports: "The block program offers the citizen an opportunity to work with others to try to change the community, and in the process to find out more about his expectations for himself as a citizen." She explains: "Indifference and anonymity may be defenses which the urban person adopts because he feels helpless to bring about changes in the city, and it is less painful to do nothing than to try and be disappointed."

She also reports that two conditions seem to make a "significant difference" in whether block groups succeed or fail: "1) presence of a relatively stable population with some stake in the community; and 2) considerable homogeneity in social class and housing."

Similar views were expressed by Mrs. Maynard Kreuger, director of block groups for the Community Conference. She said: "There are

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[16] Copyright, 1954, Human Dynamics Laboratory, Department of Education, University of Chicago.

[17] The writer thinks these items are a bit over-optimistic.

[18] Human Dynamics Laboratory July, 1955, under a grant from the Wieboldt Foundation.

lots of people whose attitudes change. They change mostly with reassurance that the community is going to be maintained as a good community. When they hear about urban renewal they know they won't have to move. When Negroes move in and show they're going to be good neighbors, their initial panic subsides. But if they move in in the middle of the night (as some do—surreptiously) it is discouraging. If the neighbors wake up and see that two families are living where one family used to live, their worst fears are confirmed."

To most other leaders of the Community Conference, this substitution of hope for fear was the significant social result of their years of struggle. It was a feeling summed up in a monograph on urban renewal by Dona Sistler, who decided to stay with her husband and three children in Hyde Park instead of fleeing to the suburbs. She wrote: "Our staying is not pure chance. We are staying because we believe in the ability of our community to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. We are proud to be part of a pilot demonstration that would prove that the creeping blight which plagues all middle-aged city neighborhoods can be halted."

Despite such official talk, even the people helping the Community Conference's brave fight sometimes have dropped guarded hints that they feel their efforts will fail, although their devotion and zeal spur them on against overwhelming odds. "No one feels the battle is won," said Mrs. Wanda Van Goor, Mrs. Abrahamson's chief assistant, in mid-summer of 1955. "But the attitude has changed from an over-all apathy and a feeling that it is too late to a feeling that if we can identify this problem, we'll face it—not necessarily be able to solve it—but be able to do something constructive about it."

As Don Blackiston, Julian Levi's criminologist aide, observes, if Hyde Park had been any other neighborhood in Chicago, "there would have been a complete flight of families" by 1955. "If landlords would just not re-rent buildings to the wrong people when people move out, half our problems would be avoided."

"I think," says Blackiston, "that a person's attitude changes when he has a personal contact with a migrant Negro" (i.e., a recent arrival from the South, presumably uneducated and unused to city ways).

One Hyde Park resident who cheerfully admitted *his* attitude changed is newsman Ed Diamond, then an International News Service science writer, "I used to be a flaming liberal" (on Negro integration), he said. "Now, I'm not."

The views of Diamond and his wife, Adelina, carry particular weight not only because he, as a professional journalist, makes his living by observing and judging the contemporary scene, but also because Mrs. Diamond was editor of the weekly Hyde Park *Herald* from September, 1953, until the Diamonds moved to Washington in 1956. Her principal story in all that time was Hyde Park's efforts to rejuvenate itself.

The Diamonds, in the summer of 1955, were living in a three-unit apartment building at 5741 Kenwood. It was in a middle-aged neighborhood of some single-family homes and several three-story homes that had, like the Diamonds', been cut up into what still were relatively spacious apartments. Towering trees lined the sidewalks, giving the block a forest-like feeling. In the back yard and garden you could hear crickets at night as if you were deep in the country instead of only fifteen minutes from the Loop.

When the Community Conference started, said Mrs. Diamond, "At first the attitude was of terrific hope for saving the neighborhood. The people who started the movement were far ahead of popular opinion elsewhere, way ahead in understanding this problem. The conference based its entire philosophy on maintenance of standards. This meant it based its philosophy on having people of similar income, similar background, similar living standards and similar economic status living together. You just don't have enough Negroes here with high enough incomes to accomplish that. The Hyde Park-Kenwood area had about a $5,000 median income with 12.4 years median education."

Hence, she concluded, Negro in-migration coupled with a breakdown in standards required of tenants had meant continuing deterioration. Hyde Park, she thought, might have coped with an increase in population density alone. It might have coped with a shift in racial mix alone. Either would have produced problems. Both problems at once were "too much."

If renewal does not work in Hyde Park, Mrs. Diamond predicted, "it will be because there are too many Negroes here. You can't have an interracial community if it's predominantly Negro."

This view was echoed by one Negro leader. "If it doesn't work here," he said, "where there has been a favorable climate created, in every white community where the same sort of program is started, opponents can point to Hyde Park as a horrible example."

Ed Diamond noted that Hyde Park, by 1955, had achieved "more sense of community" as a result of its back-to-the-wall fight. But he was skeptical of the outcome. "I don't think there are enough white people of courage in Chicago to make Hyde Park an interracial neighborhood."

Added his wife: ". . . Until you have open occupancy in all Chicago, you can't solve Hyde Park's problem."

There was some talk that summer of establishing target "quotas" for the racial mix, lest too high a percentage of Negro families drive remaining whites elsewhere. Two years later, this was still just talk. As Julian Levi noted: "Quotas are still discriminatory, no matter how good your intentions are."

The community's struggles have also changed the attitude of public officials toward Hyde Park. Said Mrs. Van Goor, Mrs. Abrahamson's assistant: "When we started working with the building department and zoning people in 1949, they found it difficult to believe there was such a thing as a citizens' group trying to help them do their jobs. For quite a while they handled us with tongue-in-cheek."

Six years later, it was the accepted norm for even a judge to get a report from one of the conference's inspectors to check on compliance with an order to correct a building violation. If the Land Clearance Commission needed the name of a property owner, the Community Conference had better files on who owns the real estate in its bailiwick than any official agency in Chicago.

Viewing not only Hyde Park, but the whole city of Chicago, D. E. Mackelmann (who is still on the scene as a top-level consultant to the city planning department) observes: "When I look back over the last ten years, I am amazed at how much has been done, but even more at how attitudes of citizens, of citizens' groups, of city departments and agencies and of political groups have changed. The recognition throughout the city of the many problems involved in city growth and decline in turn brings about action on many fronts . . . I am not optimistic enough to believe that all problems—social, physical, financial, administrative, political—will be solved in the program for the Hyde Park area. I do believe that it will make a great deal of difference in Hyde Park and will be of enormous importance to the further development in urban renewal in Chicago."

Conclusions:

In Hyde Park were found almost all of the typical forces that make slums: middle-aged housing whose maintenance had been neglected, irresponsible real estate operators who deliberately overcrowded tenements for profit, a rapid shift in population make-up, inadequate police protection, inadequate city services, scandalously negligent enforcement of building and housing codes, inadequate off-street parking, run-down commercial property and disreputable taverns. The non-typical element was the relatively high income and education level of the families who originally made up the area.

It has been around these natural community leaders that efforts centered to save the neighborhoods. These efforts rested on the use of democratic procedures. And by their very nature, democratic procedures make either clear-cut or rapid action difficult.

At the end of 1956, the story of Hyde Park and Kenwood looked like a case of the right remedies applied too little and too late.

Hyde Park's slum clearance plans—intended as the anchor to make conservation and rehabilitation stick—were still on paper. By 1957, demolition was underway—but 1957 was very late. Who is to blame for why it took years to tear down the first tenement is a large and separate subject. It was late in 1958 before Chicago's City Council gave final approval to the really massive urban renewal plan to weed out blighting influences from the entire neighborhood.

In any case, while Hyde Park was tooling up for the job, the result was clear. Blocks marked for destruction were filling up with transients in overcrowded apartments—and the social ills this brings. As Julian Levi observes: "In urban renewal you're performing an operation on a live patient. The longer you keep him on the operating table the worse he gets."

Negro in-migration should not be blamed *in toto* for the spread of blight in Hyde Park. The chief reasons are:

1. Many buildings that became Negro-occupied slums were first white-occupied slums.

2. In tenement apartments, Negro-occupancy has often produced worse slums. But this is largely because Negro families, lacking the income to pay landlords what they exacted, packed themselves in at tighter densities than whites did.

This, in turn, is merely a reflection of the white community's general unwillingness—all over Chicago as in many another city—to give Negro families a place to live at the same prices charged white

families.[19] Negro families moved into Hyde Park and Kenwood because 1) it was adjacent to their "territory" and 2) it offered more amenities than the neighborhoods where they had been living.

In Hyde Park, the Negro, if not precisely and universally welcomed, at least found access to good houses in better neighborhoods than he could find with the same amount of house-hunting trouble elsewhere in Chicago. The Negro was received with *more* open mindedness, but still with detectable reserve.

In the long run, whether Hyde Park can become a stable interracial community may well hinge on two things: 1) instilling middle-class attitudes in enough Negro families so that their middle-class proportion approaches that of the white residents of the neighborhood, and 2) a general reduction in Negro housing pressure throughout Chicago to take some of the heat off a neighborhood which is now relatively defenseless against rapid change in population. Stated in other words, it is questionable whether Hyde Park can avoid the demoralizing effects of racial inundation unless Chicago takes much faster steps than it yet has to open more white neighborhoods to Negro occupancy.

With racial change the dominant neighborhood topic, the question of whether rehabilitation programs in Hyde Park have moved or will move its residents toward the goals of adult education got submerged in the overriding problem—at least in the minds of people who lived there. Yet the creation of attitudes that make possible an interracial

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[19] As HHFA Administrator Albert M. Cole has warned, the nation cannot hope to wipe out the slum rot that blights its cities until it overcomes the race prejudice that constricts swelling Negro populations in ghettos. In a speech to the Economic Club of Detroit (a city with a background of race riots and a mushrooming Negro population—about 17 percent in 1954), Cole said: "Regardless of what measures are provided or developed to clear slums and meet low-income housing needs, the critical factor in a situation which must be met is racial exclusion from the greater and better part of our housing supply. No program of housing or urban improvement, however well conceived, well financed or comprehensive, can hope to make more than indifferent progress until we open up adequate opportunities to minority families for decent housing. At least two-thirds of the slum families in many of our major cities are minority families who, regardless of income, would find it extremely difficult to get other housing. We cannot hope to meet the housing requirements of our low-income families—of which minority families constitute a disproportionately large number—until and unless we open the doors of an adequate supply of good private housing to them."

In the same talk, Cole also recited what real estate men and builders know, but many mortgage lenders publicly deny: If a Negro is "able and willing to pay the price" for an old house in a declining neighborhood, "he has difficulty getting financing on reasonable or even equal terms." But he added: "This is not primarily a federal problem . . . The real problem lies with the citizens . . . The blockade of custom and code, of unjustified economic fears must be breached, and Negro families must be given access to good homes in good neighborhoods. No citizen can afford to let this minority housing pressure build up to the explosion point, as it already has in some instances."

community, it seems fair to conclude, is surely one of the implied aims of the broader outlook on life. Viewed in this light, Hyde Park provides some hope. Certainly many of the people who have been intimately associated with efforts to save the neighborhood have acquired a greater appreciation of brotherhood for their fellow man, as well as all-important know-how about how to make the city government work to preserve their way of life, instead of neglecting it.

Stated another way, the social message of Hyde Park is that it is difficult indeed to stop the march of blight in the face of major in-migration of any new and lower social group. But Hyde Park also demonstrates that, by great effort, something CAN be accomplished—though not as much as the hopeful would want. This is a milestone in social progress, in itself.

Hyde Park can teach renewal experts much about how to get the nasty jobs done that must be done—even though Hyde Park's problems, at this writing, seem far from solved.

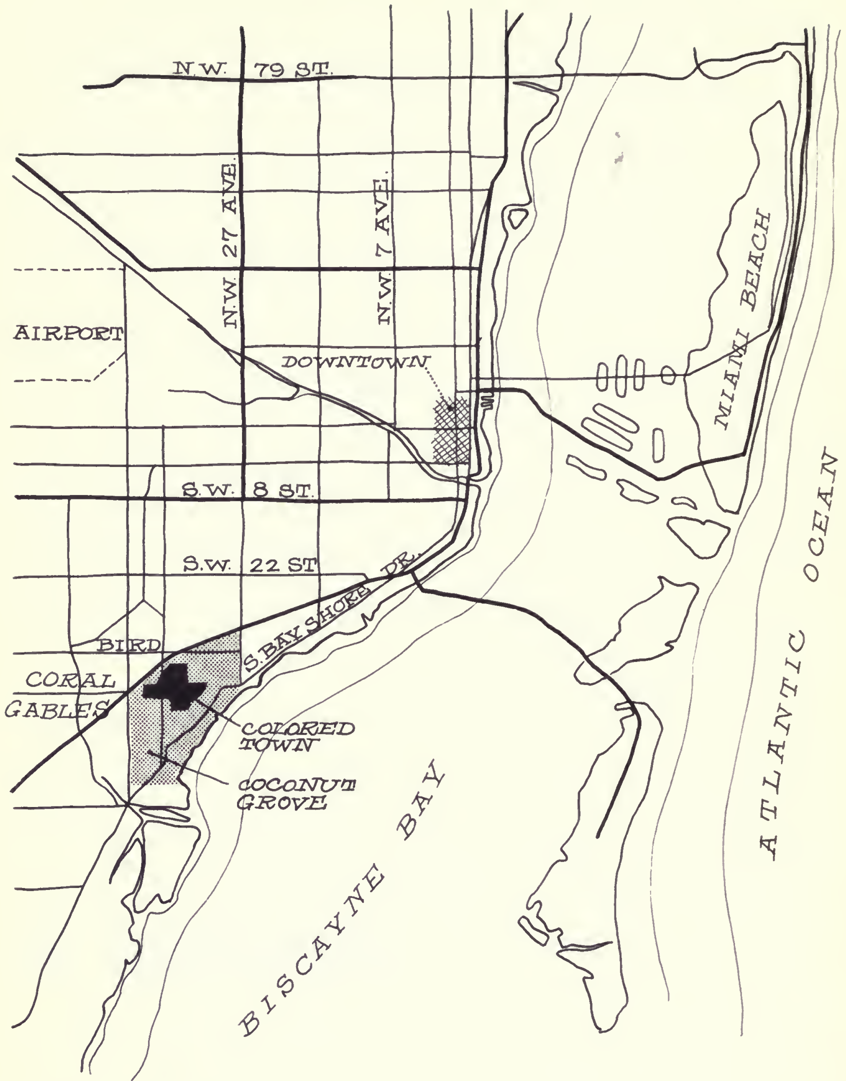
In most of Chicago (as elsewhere in the North), no matter how good racial equality laws are, there are too few well-educated residents of Negro neighborhoods to carry the burden of leadership adequately. This makes it all the more difficult to spark Negro families—through such a complex process as renewal or rehabilitation—to put more of their enormous energies into their homes—the focus of middle-class life and middle-class ambition.

Some experts think that politics further complicates this problem in Chicago. One Chicago newsman who has studied its slum problems intensively observes that the city's political machine has a stake in *not* wiping out slums. He says: "The power of the machine depends to a large extent on keeping people needy. Precinct captains derive much of their power from the fact that they constantly perform gratuitous favors for their constituents with the understanding—implicit or explicit—that this is in exchange for votes. This is, of course, government by favor—the greatest good for the fewest people."

There is no lack of know-how in Chicago about how to wipe out slums. The problem is in applying the remedies experts understand so well. But even though slums seem to be growing faster than they are being erased in Hyde Park and elsewhere in the nation's second biggest city, Chicago is clearly one of the nation's best laboratories for field-testing the tools to do the anti-slum job. And Hyde Park is one of Chicago's finest examples.

CHAPTER III

REHABILITATION AND THE SOUTHERN NEGRO



Map of Miami, showing Coconut Grove (shaded) and within it, "Colored Town," where rehabilitation was put to work.

MIAMI: Coconut Grove

For 50 years a neglected slum ghetto set amid a subtropical garden, Coconut Grove's Colored Town has lifted its sanitation, health and hopes, thanks largely to a one-woman crusade that swept the community along with it. The big question: Has the progress taken real root or not?

Coconut Grove is the Greenwich Village of Miami. But where Manhattan's celebrated artists' quarter is a dark, largely treeless huddle of tired brick buildings rising cheek by jowl above streets bulging with humanity, Miami's Coconut Grove is a bright oasis of luxuriant, subtropical gardens that almost hide the pleasant single-family homes. Coconut Grove is a quiet, old town, five twisting miles south of the dazzling white silhouette of downtown Miami. More than a quarter century ago, booming Miami reached out and swallowed up Coconut Grove. Swallowed it up politically, that is. But the Grove retains its individualistic flavor. Some residents continue to address their letters to Coconut Grove, Florida. As author Helen Muir, herself a long-time resident of the Grove, has reported: "While the rest of Miami clamors for sidewalks, Coconut Grove fights the idea militantly, demanding the right to keep its winding, tree-edged streets, rock walls and fences. When the city attempted to place lights on an ink-black street at the edge of the Grove, residents protested it would ruin their nightly inspection of the stars."[1]

In many ways, Coconut Grove much resembles Carmel, California. Carmel-by-the-sea is also a haven for artists, writers, scientists, naturalists, retired figures from military and academic life who like the feeling of nature close to their urban comforts.

Realtors often figure that a house in the Grove is worth perhaps $4,000 more than it would be elsewhere in Miami because of the artistic neighborhood.

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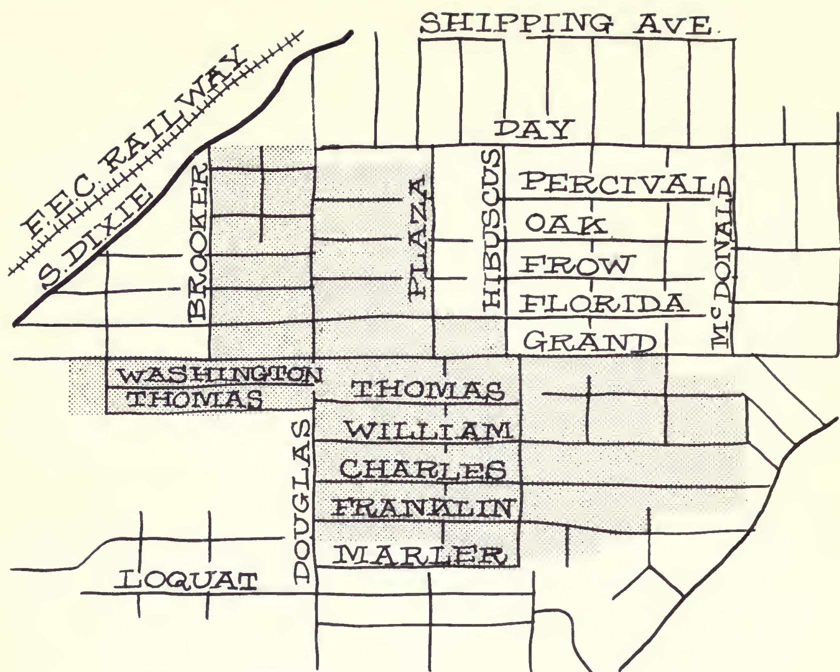
[1] *Miami, U.S.A.*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, New York.



Coconut Grove's Negro settlement (shown in shaded area), where Mrs. Virrick's Committee applied the techniques described in the following pages.

Inside this subtropical residential garden lies Coconut Grove's Colored Town, an area of 37 square blocks with a population of 6,000. Colored Town was originally set aside as a place for the Negro servants of wealthy Coconut Grove whites to live. The majority of Colored Town's residents still work at menial jobs—wives as maids, husbands as yardmen for their wealthy white neighbors. Some are construction laborers, a few carpenters, civil servants, postal workers. Colored Town boasts only a thin veneer of teachers, social welfare workers, policemen and Negro landlords.

Physically, Colored Town was—and still largely is[2]—a neighborhood of small, one-story frame detached houses, set on small lots amid a profusion of poinciana trees, vine-covered fences and blossoming hibiscus bushes. There were, of course, no sidewalks.

Colored Town is a stable community, with 27% home-ownership—unusually high for this section of the South. Many of the Grove's

[2] In 1955-57.

Negro families have lived in the same semi-shack for 50 or 60 years, since the days when their Bahamian ancestors first settled in that peaceful wilderness.

Yet until 1948, when rehabilitation of Colored Town started, life among the palmettos must have been as squalid and insanitary as life in a Harlem backyard peppered with air mail garbage. For years, each house had its own well, privy, yard and garden. When Coconut Grove acquired a water system, most white people installed running water, proper bathrooms and septic tanks. Colored Town went on drinking well water, which became contaminated. As Miami's population swelled, Coconut Grove's Colored Town grew crowded also. Many a family jammed a second flimsy board house into the backyard. In 1950, the census counted 1,535 dwelling units in the Grove Negro area's 37 square blocks. Three years later, another survey (by the Dade County Health Department, Planning Board and Miami Slum Clearance Committee) put the population density of the Grove's Colored Town at 42 persons per acre. This compared with 12 persons per acre for all of Miami.

Sanitation was appalling. Take garbage collection. The city used to require Negro householders to line up their garbage pails on the street to make it easier for city garbagemen to pick them up. But the Grove's sidewalk-less streets are so narrow that, with garbage pails awaiting collection, two autos could not pass. Pails of garbage were constantly overturned on the streets.

In the backyards were pit-and-can privies from which night soil was collected once a week by reeking honey wagons which moved only at night to minimize offense. People along the routes learned to turn their heads and hold their breaths when the carts went by—carts, incidentally, which cost the city of Miami $10,000 a year to operate. Dr. E. K. Cato, county health commissioner, and City Commissioner H. Leslie Quigg made an inspection tour of sanitation in the Grove's Colored Town in 1948. Next day, the Miami *Herald* reported: "Dr. Cato . . . became nauseated while making the tour."

Naturally, disease and delinquency rates were high. Bawdy houses operated more or less openly. Policing was sporadic.

Trash accumulated year after year around the tumble-down houses and apartments. Flies bred in the privies. Rats and mosquitos proliferated in the trash and garbage and swarmed into the homes, more than 70% of which had defective screens or none at all. The neighborhood was not zoned. Hole-in-the-wall shops, including grocery stores fringed by broken crates and rotting vegetable trash, were jammed in among the houses.

The only thing that spared residents of Coconut Grove, white and colored, from epidemics of disease, say health officers, was the sterilizing subtropical sun.

Miami, as some of its local philosophers have noted, is so young a city that "everybody has been too busy trying to grab his first million to pay much attention to civic virtue." Nobody seemed to notice what was going on in the Grove's Colored Town, nor to realize that the high rate of Negro delinquency, crime, disability, and disease was increasing tax bills by increasing the cost of welfare, hospitals, and fire and police protection.

In short, the Grove's Colored Town was a slum ghetto, leaderless and neglected, where living conditions were ameliorated to a modicum of livability only by the historical accident of low population density and the beneficent climate which hid the rotting shacks behind a profusion of trees and flowers.

Residents of Colored Town accepted their lot phlegmatically. Says B. J. Guilford, a 38-year-old Miami policeman who has lived 30 years in the Grove's Colored Town: "Most of us had lived in the mess so long we'd come to believe there was no help for it."

Formation of the Slum Committee:

The big change began in the summer of 1948. It began when a white woman heard a talk by the Rev. Mr. Theodore R. Gibson, minister of Christ Episcopal Church (Negro), describing conditions in the neighborhood. One sentence troubled her all night: "My people are living seven deep."

Next morning, Elizabeth Virrick went to ask Father Gibson what she could do to help.

Mrs. Virrick is a tiny, blue-eyed Miami Junior Leaguer and social registerite. She and her husband, Vladimir, own an apartment house in the Grove's white section, but live in a small house in a grove in the suburbs. More important, Mrs. Virrick is both tireless and resourceful. Now she went into action.

She called a meeting at her house of 24 Coconut Grove people —both Negroes and whites—to plan a major meeting at the American Legion Hall, one of the few places in Coconut Grove where the white people and Negroes could meet together in 1948. A friend financed mineographing 1,000 handbills, to the top of which a new penny was stuck. The notice read: "A penny for your thoughts— citizens of Coconut Grove and vicinity—here is your chance—to say what you think, hear what others think and help get something done

about—The Crowded Sub-Standard Unsanitary Conditions in the Coconut Grove colored section. How long are we going to close our eyes to this potential source of epidemic and menace to the health of every resident in this area? Let's wait no longer for others to act. This is your invitation to an Old Fashioned Town Meeting—to form The Coconut Grove Citizens Committee For Slum Clearance—August 30th, at the American Legion Hall."

More than 200 persons, Negro and white, came. They voted to incorporate the Slum Clearance Committee as a permanent non-profit organization. They elected Mrs. Virrick chairman of an executive board of thirteen citizens—both men and women, both Negroes and whites. It included ministers, a doctor, a teacher, businessmen, a policeman, a dry cleaner, a dentist, a writer, a lawyer, a welfare worker, and a housewife.

Work was parcelled out to four committees—survey, rezoning, sanitation and rents. Each of those present was asked to write a letter to each of the five city commissioners urging that Negro policemen be assigned to Coconut Grove 24 hours a day. Each was asked to write every city commissioner and county health boss Cato, urging an immediate health inspection of the neighborhood.

A blizzard of letters produced results. Miami police hired a Negro policeman. (By 1955, they had added a radio patrol car manned by Negro officers.) Russell Broughman of the bureau of sanitation, Dade County Health Department, was named to make a housing survey of the two principal blighted areas of Negro housing in Miami—Coconut Grove and downtown. He used the survey developed by the American Public Health Association's committee on the hygiene of housing—an appraisal method which still stands as one of the most scientific bases for slum clearance, rehabilitation or other forms of urban renewal. As fuzzy housing statistics go, Broughman's survey was unprecedentedly well-documented. He took a 100% sample in Coconut Grove Colored Town, a one-third sample in downtown Miami. Even seven years later, Attorney David Graves, long-time member of the executive board of the Slum Clearance Committee, recalled: "Broughman spent $5,000—all the money we had. I think it was worth ten times that much."

Broughman's report confirmed and emphasized the slum conditions. It classified 52% of the 746 structures in the 37-block Colored Town as slums. Surveyors found 3,609 persons living in 929 dwelling units on 85½ acres—an average of 42.2 persons per acre. (This compared to 160 per acre in the downtown Miami Negro ghetto; density was the least of Coconut Grove's problems.)

The survey showed 31.4% of the houses lacked electricity, 66% lacked bathing or washing facilities, all lacked city sewers. "Far too many occupants are forced to use polluted water from pitcher pumps," said Broughman's report. "In most instances, city water is available, but not all are using it. The extreme percentage (66%) with an absolute lack of bathing facilities can conceivably create a major health problem. In houses where bathing facilities are provided, hot water is almost nonexistent. Advanced deterioration of many of the structures suggests demolition if there was any other place where housing could be obtained for Negroes."

The report also showed that only 30% of the Colored Town families had incomes of $250 or more a month during the height of Miami's winter season when most were employed as domestics, yard, hotel or laundry workers. 70% earned less than $250 a month, as follows:

Below $100 a month	11.6%
$100-$150 a month	16.2%
$150-$200 a month	25.6%
$200-$250 a month	16.6%

Said the report: "The 11.6% of families whose income is below $100 a month indicates some form of assistance for these families is needed . . . The percentage of families whose income is $200 or more a month indicates the possibility that substitute housing could be provided profitably by private capital for a number of tenants." Significantly, Broughman's survey found only 3.5% of Colored Town families living doubled up—two or more to the dwelling unit.[3] But 12% of the households had seven or more persons—just as Father Gibson suggested. 37% of the households had four to six persons and 51% one to three persons.

What kind of housing did the 72.4% of Colored Town families who rented get for their money? Reported Broughman: "The more rent the tenant pays, the better housing he gets; but, in many instances, no matter what rent he pays, his housing is as bad as those in the lower rent brackets."

Rents in the rent-controlled area were low, as befit the housing provided. Some 18% of tenants paid less than $15 a month rent. Another 45% paid $15 to $25 a month rent. Another 26% paid $25 to $40 a month rent, but only 11% paid more than $40 a month rent for their dwellings.

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[3] Mrs. Virrick questions whether this is due to reluctance of Negroes to report crowding correctly for fear of eviction.

Broughman reported the following distribution of dwelling units by basic deficiencies and rent bracket:

CLASS OF RENT:

No. of Basic Deficiencies	$0.01 to $14.99	$15.00 to $24.99	$25.00 to $39.99	$40 per mo. or more
8	6.0%	1.2%	8.0%	2.8%
7	—	4.9	1.2	13.8
6	9.5	4.9	3.2	4.1
5[4]	54.3	30.4	9.3	1.4
4	21.6	21.2	14.2	16.7
3	4.3	13.1	18.5	4.2
2	1.7	4.2	7.4	11.1
1	.9	12.0	22.8	13.9
0	1.7	8.1	15.4	32.0
Total Number of D.U. reporting	(116)	(283)	(162)	(72)
Percent of total in rental class	18.3%	44.7%	25.6%	11.4%

[4] Example: The table indicates that of the D.U. having 5 basic deficiencies
54.3% pay less than $15.00 monthly rent,
30.4% pay from $15.00 to $24.99,
9.3% pay from $25.00 to $39.99,
1.4% pay $40.00 or more.

Clean-Up Drive:

In the fall of 1948, Mrs. Virrick's committee began trying to persuade the city commission to pass ordinances forcing people to connect with water mains and to install flush toilets, sinks and septic tanks. On the day the ordinance came up for consideration, Mrs. Virrick spoke before the commission. The room was packed with white and Negro members of her group. She said: "Two miracles have saved us so far from the consequence of this filth: the sun and the fact that these conditions have not been made public in northern newspapers—which could wreck our tourist seasons. No one has a guarantee from the Lord as to how much longer these miracles will be sustained. We have not come here to ask you to pass these ordinances. I am not going to insult you by arguing about it. All these people have come here for the pleasure of witnessing your unanimous, affirmative vote."

A few months earlier, the city fathers had voted down the water main ordinance. Now they adopted it unanimously, along with a requirement for toilets, sinks and septic tanks. The city immediately installed water mains in the six streets in Colored Town which were then without them; thus the entire Negro community became subject to the water mains law.

In this fashion, the main effort of Coconut Grove's slum clearance committee got underway. By the time the last honey wagon rolled its stench-laden way through Coconut Grove in January 1951, 482 Negro families had added bathrooms to their houses. Pit toilets were wiped out. Residents stopped drinking the contaminated water of their shallow wells (use of well water became illegal except for irrigation, sprinkling, air conditioning and fire fighting). And tons of filth, refuse, trash and junk, stock-piled in backyards and unoccupied property as the least troublesome method of disposal, had been carried off to city incinerators.

"After the clean-up," one aged Negro told Mrs. Virrick, "my house smelled so sweet I didn't wake up. I was late for work."

At the Carver School, teachers taught Negro children how to use toilets. Recalled Mrs. Frances Tucker, the principal: "The kids took the word home and educated their parents. Some of them had been throwing coffee grounds and garbage down the toilets and stopping them up."

For the clean-up campaign, leaders were appointed in each block in Colored Town. Judges were picked from a Negro garden sorority in Miami. Prizes begged from merchants were awarded to the person in each block making the most improvement. The county health department moved in to kill rats. It gave advice on how to wipe out flies and cockroaches.

One of Mrs. Virrick's first battles in putting across rehabilitation was to line up Negro leaders to spread out among Negro homeowners and counteract the rumor (planted by landlords) that slum clearance really meant that somebody was going to take their property away. Negroes of Coconut Grove, being—most of them—both ignorant and superstitious, have been cheated again and again in commercial dealings with white men who outsmart them. They were ready to believe the worst because what was proposed was something new. Policeman B. J. Guilford and others went from door to door persuading Negro homeowners that abolishing pit privies was going to *help* them, not hurt them. "It took a lot of doing to set people straight," Guilford recalls. "Some of them were afraid to borrow money. Others were afraid the city would assess them too much when it put in sewer

mains. They were fighting an 'invasion' of their 'right' to be left alone in squalor. Of course, when water mains were put in, these people were the first to hook up to them."

Like many other Colored Town residents, Guilford was so impressed with the neighborhood improvement wrought by clean-up and sanitation drives that he added a wing to his house. Guilford lives in a six-room, one-story stucco house. It is pleasant, well built, scrupulously clean, and stands on one of the several streets in Colored Town which today is almost devoid of dilapidated shanties. He built it largely with his own hands. Mortgage lenders seldom lend money in slums. Guilford started in 1941 with the help of a few friends. He bought $200 worth of plumbing from Sears, Roebuck, about $240 worth of other materials and hired journeymen labor only for the plumbing and wiring. Guilford figures his whole house cost him only $900.

Some of the aging shacks on Colored Town's Florida Avenue were so completely rebuilt—new foundations, new walls, new roofs,—that not a stick was left of the old building. Often, such extensive rehabilitation was a subterfuge for demolition and new construction. It is illegal now to build multiple occupancy structures on a single lot, but those that are already standing may be repaired if they are not more than 50% deteriorated. The latter rule led to many a squabble between Negro homeowners and the city rehabilitation department run by Frank Kelly, a retired New Jersey cop (as will be seen later).

To the painstaking job of enforcing the law banning privies, the health department assigned Inspector Clarence P. Thayer. When persuasion failed, Thayer hauled property owners into court. In March, 1949, for instance, Coral Gables Attorney M. H. S. Kneale was convicted of failing to install sinks and flush toilets in 16 Negro houses he owned in the Grove. Municipal Judge Cecil Curry withheld sentence with the proviso that Kneale take immediate steps to install the plumbing. Like courts in many other cities, Miami courts have been loathe to impose stiff sentences against slumlords. It is a weak salient in the battle against blight.

Homeowners, as usual, caught the fix-up spirit. Take the case of Mrs. Alston Scott, who, with her mail-carrier husband, has lived since 1946 in the same house on Thomas Avenue in Colored Town. She works as a stock clerk at the candy department of Burdine's, a downtown department store. "When we bought this house," said Mrs. Scott, "it had two rooms and a tiny lean-to kitchen. No lights, no water, no bath, no inside walls." Her husband plastered the inside, rebuilt the porch, rebuilt the dining room, moved the kitchen

Typical view of Coconut Grove Colored Town shows how much sub-tropical foliage can do to hide the squalor of homes in bad to indifferent repair. Even though it is a low-income neighborhood, Colored Town boasts 27% home-ownership—unusually high for this part of the South. Many of its Negro families have lived in the same semi-shack for 50 or 60 years. The tiny lots bloom with a profusion of poinciana trees, palmettos, vine-covered fences and blossoming hibiscus.

and then added a wing in the rear with two new bedrooms and a bath. "Doing things for yourself you don't seem to mind all the work," said Mrs. Scott.

Up to mid-1955, the only important objector among Negro residents of the Grove to removing pit-and-can privies was Abe Stirrup, the neighborhood's largest Negro property owner. Stirrup argued he could not afford to install over 100 new bathrooms. Neither, retorted members of Mrs. Virrick's committee, would he sell any of the houses he owned to people who could afford the repairs.

One of the biggest eyesores in Colored Town was the Coconut Grove cemetery. All but one of the trustees had died and the small burial ground—perhaps 50 yards square—had become a neighborhood trash bin. When the clean-up drive began, old timers swear, it was several feet high with empty whiskey bottles, beer cans, dis-

carded boards, tires, tubes, wheels, fenders, old newspapers and miscellaneous debris. Mrs. Virrick persuaded ministers from nine of Colored Town's 13 Negro churches to tackle the results of 20 years of neglect. Rev. T. C. Kelly, Jr., pastor of St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church, called the other ministers together. "I told them the appearance of the cemetery reflected on us as community leaders," says Kelly. "We decided to assess ourselves so much per church and get it cleaned up." First they tried to hire clean-up men. Contractor P. J. Roberts, who does much repair work around Coconut Grove, bid $2,700. This was quite beyond the ministers' means. "We called in another group," says Kelly, "but they bid $500. That was too much also." Finally, Andy Meyers agreed to do the job with four men paid $10 a day. On that basis, at last, the ministers got the cemetery in fairly good shape for $233, lending a hand in the trash hauling themselves. Nearby residents have managed since to curb their habit of dumping there and Rev. Kelly has reformed the cemetery association into a non-profit group. But the clean-up was far from perfect. The ministers could not afford a caretaker, and the weeds grew high enough so many of the simple concrete slabs marking the resting places of departed residents of Colored Town barely peeked above them. There was still a little discarded lumber in a corner of the plot, surrounded by a few bottles and tin cans.

Garbage collection has improved. Mrs. Virrick demanded that the city pick up garbage pails in the backyards of Colored Town (as in the white section) instead of in the streets where passing cars could knock them over. The city objected that this would cost an extra $56,000 a year and that, moreover, their men would be snared on backyard clotheslines. Mrs. Virrick bore down with questions. How many more trucks would it really take? Finally, the city conceded backyard garbage pick-up would need only one more truck. She promised that offending backyards would be revamped to take clotheslines out of the walkways. And she fulfilled the final conditions imposed by the city—uniform, approved garbage pails—by buying 400 pails and reselling them to Colored Town at cost with a big campaign. It took the garbage-pail committee six weeks to sell the pails instead of the two weekends it had expected. But the city never brought up the problem of clotheslines again.

The Loan Fund:

The citizens' committee understood well that the expensive installation of indoor plumbing would be beyond the means of many Negro homeowners. Miami is only a few feet above sea level and beneath the foot or two of topsoil lies hard coral rock. Often, the rock has

to be dynamited for septic tanks. Indoor toilets and sinks are expensive. The average bill for the required improvements added up to some $400. Some homes required an addition. The committee faced the problem squarely. The Coconut Grove Bank agreed to lend money on mortgages to some owners. Repairmen found loans through commercial sources for others. For real hardship cases, the committee set up a $6,000 loan fund, borrowed from white residents. The loans carried a flat 2% handling charge, but no interest.[5] Moreover, borrowers set their own terms of repayment—usually a few dollars a month. The Grove Bank handled collections.

Loans ranged from more than $700 to less than $200. One borrower was a blind man over 70 years old. Another was in his 80's but still a breadwinner. In all, the fund loaned $6,200. By mid-1955, all but one loan had been fully repaid. Loan fund Treasurer Lynn Snyder says only one or two loans were paid on time—usually because of illness or some other plausible reason. And he adds: "We made almost no collection effort." As for the unpaid $75 loan, "We haven't bothered about it," said Snyder. The property involved was about to be sold that year, and he felt that the fund could easily collect its $75 lien from the sale proceeds.

A Broad Attack on Social Problems:

Now, the committee branched out and began to cut deeper into the needs of the troubled community. It made contact with welfare agencies helping the mothers of dependent children—often children deserted by their father (male desertion is a major problem among Miami Negroes). Welfare workers learned to refer problem cases to the committee when official agencies could not help the people involved. Devoted case workers like Gracie Allen Miller caught the spirit of the movement. Often, Mrs. Miller arranged to have Grove Negroes admitted to hospitals or herself distributed clothing or coped with problems involving juveniles.

In the fall of 1949, the committee started the St. Alban's Day Nursery, the first licensed nursery school in Colored Town. Christ Episcopal Church granted the nursery free use of an aged, two-story building on Douglas Road. The location was quite close to the main intersection of the Colored Town business district where, on Friday and Saturday nights, the crowds at the night clubs and saloons grew so thick they spilled out into the street to enjoy crap games, bottled joy juice and noisy revelry. The site was not ideal for tots. But at

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[5] Compared to a 5% handling charge, or discount, on FHA Title I repair loans.

the time, a survey showed over 300 children needed day care so their mothers, often unwed, could work.

"When we first started," says Mrs. Alice Halstead, president of the non-profit, non-sectarian nursery organization, "we discovered the Negroes were very suspicious of the organization. They were under the impression we were trying to make money." The doubters were wrong. The nursery, licensed by the state welfare board to care for 45 pre-school children five days a week, 52 weeks a year, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., charges only $3.50 per week per child. And if more than one child from the same family attends, children after the first pay only $2.50 a week. The nursery is staffed by three teachers and a full-time cook. Volunteer janitors take turns sweeping up.

Until 1953, says Mrs. Halstead, "the parents of the children in the nursery were largely unwed mothers." But as the nursery gained acceptance (it began with only four children) and, in the process, gained publicity, Mrs. Halstead noted a change in the economic status of parents who committed their children to its care. "Now, we have more of the professional people's children," says Mrs. Halstead. And the nursery has been able to get financial support from throughout Miami, including substantial contributions from the Kiwanis Club, Rotary, Exchange Club and Royal Twenties (a Negro women's group).

Mrs. Anna E. McKinney, one of the original teachers in the former school building where the nursery operated, left her $5,000 estate to the St. Alban's Nursery. With this, plus $7,000 from the Kiwanis and other contributions, the nursery put up a new building near the Carver School in 1955—a handsome, flat-roofed, $30,000 modern structure on land donated by the Southern Florida Diocese of the (Negro) Episcopal Church.

Mrs. Halstead had 100 children on a waiting list to get into the nursery. "Our trouble is in finding real workers," she said shortly before the nursery was to move into its new quarters. "People will contribute money, but not time. To keep a hard working board of directors is a tremendous job. But the main thing is to get more and more groups to understand what we're doing."

What Mrs. Halstead's nursery is doing, she feels, is to "raise a tremendous load from the minds of the parents by knowing their kids are cared for and have love and affection. That way the parents can pay more attention to the jobs they are doing." And teachers at Carver School say they can always tell which children have been in the nursery: they have a head start on their education.

The spirit of cooperation in community enterprise shown by the volunteer janitors found its parallel in the white community when Dr. Marie Padoor, a widow who is affiliated with the public health service, offered to see parents of nursery children free on Saturday mornings. She gives advice on how to bring up children better and keep them healthier.

What of the children themselves? Mrs. Halstead answers by example: "We took in a three-year-old whose mother had abandoned him. The father felt some responsibility for Willie and his brother. He took them to work with him in a bakery. But this didn't work out. When Willie got to the nursery for the first time, he felt he belonged somewhere. Then he graduated to public school. After school, there was no more nursery to belong to. So Willie wandered around the streets killing time—going from one house to another."

It is cases like these, fairly typical of St. Alban's neediest clients, that sometimes make Mrs. Halstead wonder if the effort to operate St. Alban's Nursery is only a drop in the bucket in a neighborhood so overwhelmed with problems. "I get the feeling it's touch and go," says Mrs. Halstead. "If something would happen to just a few members of my board, the whole thing would fold up and the kids would be running in the streets again. There's enough of that as it is."

Rezoning:

What Colored Town needed to make its fix-up stick, Mrs. Virrick and her committee felt, was rezoning. Although 83.8% of the land area was occupied by one-family homes, the area was zoned only for business and multiple housing. "It was evident to us," says Mrs. Virrick, "that unless the area of Negro shacks was rezoned, speculative builders would move in to erect multifamily apartments (as happened in central Miami) and create a more serious overcrowding problem than already existed. Our aim was to encourage home ownership."

Indeed, before the rezoning committee got results, two-story concrete-block-and-stucco apartments, modern enough but cramped and small, were already creeping into the Grove's Colored Town near the edges of its drab business center. Without zoning protection, no investor or would-be homeowner would be likely to put up a new one-family house. Neither was FHA likely to approve mortgage insurance in such an unprotected area.

The rezoning committee included such noted Miami planners and architects as Alfred B. Parker (chairman), Marion I. Manley (who later designed the new St. Alban's Nursery as a public-spirited contri-

bution to the neighborhood), Robert Law Weed and Robert Fitch Smith, former chairman of the Dade County planning board. Their report urged that business property be confined to certain main streets with any new multifamily housing bordering it. Beyond that, they recommended, duplexes should be permitted and then one-family homes in as much area as possible—especially next to streets occupied by whites, to minimize chances for racial friction.

When the plan came before the city planning board, the citizen's committee undertook its customary thorough telephone poll. Members got out the telephone book and called everybody listed with a Coconut Grove address to explain the idea and urge attendance at the public hearings.

The result was a turnout that packed the room with Coconut Grove residents of both races. But the rezoning plan ran into opposition. Most of it came from Lawyers Malcolm Wisehart and John Bouvier. They owned the last tract of open land in Colored Town—17½ acres. They wanted to fill it with multi-unit apartments instead of single-family houses as called for in the rezoning scheme. At the time, the tract was zoned for two-family structures.

Bouvier and Wisehart had bought the property for $25,000 in 1945 from the Protestant Episcopal (Negro) Church. They convinced the church to sell on the basis it would bring Colored Town's people better places to live. Father Gibson, anxious to see new housing alleviate Colored Town's crowding, had used his influence in getting the diocese to sell. He says he did so on the verbal understanding that only one-family homes would be built. But before the committee's rezoning plan could be presented to the city commissioners, Bouvier and Wisehart put up three duplexes, each unit with three outside doors (which, of course, would facilitate the renting of bedrooms to roomers or other families). Father Gibson was outraged, but helpless.

The rezoning plan was discussed in at least six hearings. In the end, the planning board recommended rezoning of the controversial St. Albans tract partly for two-family and partly for multifamily units.

The fight grew hotter. After Bouvier and Wisehart began their three duplexes, Mrs. Virrick and her cohorts had persuaded the city commission to impose a 90-day ban on construction in the Coconut Grove Negro district. Editorialized the Miami *News:* "Single-family zoning for half the tract (with the other half remaining duplex-zoned) . . . was a reasonable request. For there is as great a need for single-family dwellings for Negroes in Miami as there is for those multi-family structures which, because of high rents, will eventually become

tenements. The rents which must be charged to pay off construction costs of these multifamily buildings will be so high as to force their Negro occupants to take in roomers to defray the rent bill. Thus there will eventually be an intensification rather than an alleviation of the slum conditions which now exist in the Grove, as well as in other sections of Miami."

Bouvier and Wisehart went to court and won an order forcing the building department to issue permits for 102 duplexes. The judge called the construction freeze illegal. But he blistered Wisehart and and Bouvier with what the *Daily News* called "as severe a verbal trouncing as has been administered here in years." Said the judge: "There is the general feeling of the portion of the city affected that the degree of multifamily housing proposed is against the interests of the people and therefore detrimental, while the benefit, if any, consists in increased profit for the white developers."

Meanwhile, the Citizens' Committee tried to get the city commissioners to overrule the planning commission. Instead, the commission approved Bouvier's and Wisehart's plans. Reported the *Daily News:* "The voice vote was lost in a chorus of boos and catcalls from an angry delegation of more than 200 Coconut Grove residents—both whites and Negroes. They had come to the meeting expecting to see a compromise zoning ordinance passed which would be zoned in the south half of the tract for single family and the north for duplexes."

The Citizens' Committee decided to see what could be done. An attorney advised them to invoke the seldom used initiative petition. That meant obtaining signatures of 10% of Miami's 107,000 registered voters and having them verified by the city clerk. If the city commissioners declined to adopt the petition as a law within 30 days, they would be required to submit it to a referendum unless there was an election within six months.

The Citizens' Committee decided to try it. But, disappointingly, only about 60 people showed up for the general meeting where the decision to petition was taken. And only about 40 volunteered to do the work—more women than men, more grey-haired than young ones. The odds against them were heavy, but they began ringing doorbells, tramping strange streets, and arguing with uninterested strangers.

It took nearly four months to get the names. During the effort, something happened in Coconut Grove. Everyday citizens came to resent what they considered to be an injustice. Support mushroomed. At one meeting, 85 people, Negroes and whites, turned out and every one volunteered to work. Commenting on this struggle in the *Ladies Home Journal,* Public Affairs Editor Margaret Hickey wrote: "Some-

thing vigorous and electrical had leaped into life. It was felt by every person there—a reaction that individual workers were not being called upon to bear the whole burden, but only that part they could do best. It was one of those curiously exciting experiences which happen in a community when the force and purpose of the whole became greater than the mere sum of its parts—the irresistible, fused strength of democratic action."[6]

When the petitions for rezoning were finally signed at the end of May, 1949, they had 11,223 names. But because, as often happens with such petitions, 15% turned out not to be those of registered voters, the petitions fell 600 names short of the required total. In the ten legal days more, committee members got 1,319 additional names. The petition was certified to the city commission. Said Mrs. Virrick at the time: "Thousands of man and woman hours have been expended circulating these petitions. Certainly this time could have been spent on something far more productive if the city commission had listened to the overwhelming number of people. In other cities slum clearance has been accomplished through cooperation, not fighting."

Despite the petition, the commissioners still voted against rezoning. So the question went on a November ballot and was adopted by the people, 12,000 to 2,000.

Meanwhile, Wisehart and Bouvier built their duplexes. Each had a front door, a back door and a separate outside door to the extra bedroom so the Negro occupants who pay $18 a week rent (plus utilities) have no physical problem taking in boarders.

But the door was henceforth slammed on the kind of multifamily apartment building which many a thoughtful architect and planner thinks is converting central Miami's Negro ghetto from a dilapidated slum into a polished slum—at great profit to the developers.

And Coconut Grove has only a few apartments where, as school principal Mrs. Tucker says: "Every time Papa comes home drunk, the people next door know about it—an unwholesome entry into what should be private family business."

Help From The Schools:

One activity sparked another. Colored Town's Carver School soon began to play a role in the widening work of the Slum Clearance Committee. In 1950, Mrs. Virrick launched a recreation program in cooperation with the school to help give Colored Town's children

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[6] *Ladies Home Journal,* October, 1950.

something constructive to do during summer vacation. She and Mrs. Tucker, the principal, persuaded regular teachers to volunteer to teach classes in music, home making, handicrafts, dramatics, industrial arts, and—for tots—a class in story telling. Enrollment reached a peak of 700. City recreation workers started an athletic program on the city playground which adjoins Carver School's playfields. Mrs. Virrick persauded two Miami University physical education majors to spend one summer on the playground. "It gave me a lift I'll never forget," says the Negro playground supervisor. "The group of boys those fellows taught fundamentals to is still winning all the ball games."

During the regular school term, Carver School began night classes for adults. Subjects: sewing, reading, writing and arithmetic. Attendance proved best at reading and writing classes; in 1955 it was some 60 persons. Enrollment for sewing, said Mrs. Tucker, "isn't so good." The sewing class had to be scheduled for Wednesday night. That is choir practice night in the Grove's multitude of Negro churches. It is a serious conflict.

Mrs. Tucker, a gray-haired grandmother who had been principal of Carver School for 26 years in 1955, thinks there is a warming correlation between adult education (even on the basic level at which it operates in Coconut Grove) and better citizenship. She says: "Those who learn to read and write are more anxious for their own children to learn to read and write. People learning to read and write get more interested in home-ownership. And they begin to see the possibilities of an education."

Lack of interest by Negro parents in the schooling of their children is a constant trouble for Mrs. Tucker. "So many parents never come to school," she sighed. "Parents whose children have been at the St. Alban's Nursery seem to be the big exception. They come right away, and they get into P. T. A. work, too," she said.

To help keep teenage Negroes—boys especially—in school longer, Carver School made a practical compromise with educational ideals. It is called Diversified Cooperative Training. Under this program, when a boy or girl reaches the 11th grade and needs to go to work to help support the family, the school tries to find him a job that will let him attend classes half a day. The academic schedule is arranged so afternoons are free for work.

When rezoning—and later public housing—became a hot issue, Mrs. Tucker had her pupils take home slips addressed to their parents. These said: "Don't deprive yourself of a $1 million privilege that you get free. Register and vote."

Another city-wide project in which Elizabeth Virrick figured has also left its mark on Colored Town's students. This is an annual contest among school children for the Elizabeth Virrick Award. It began in 1952, when a philanthropically-minded Miami resident gave the National Conference of Christians and Jews a $100 prize for a high school contest. The conference asked Mrs. Virrick's committee to handle the project. It suggested an essay on brotherhood, or something of the kind. Mrs. Virrick demurred. Instead, she suggested that "we get down to a community investigation process whereby kids can learn about the problems they will have to cope with as citizens, and maybe we can stir them up a little bit to do something about them."

That is what happened. Carver School took second prize.

Battles With Gyp Operators:

Like home improvement campaigns in many another city, the Coconut Grove rehabilitation was beset by gyp contracting firms. In Coconut Grove, the gyps tended to concentrate on aged homeowners —those least likely to have enough education to defend themselves against high pressure sales tactics. Moreover, they focused on the few spots where city inspectors, thanks to demand generated by Mrs. Virrick's committee, were beginning to notify owners of deficiencies in their dwellings.

If an owner refused to buy the $3,800 new roof the salesman wanted to sell him, as often as not a city inspector would turn up shortly and condemn the house as unfit for habitation (chances were it contained enough defects to require extensive remodeling if not outright demolition). Next day, back would come the salesman—this time bringing a man he called his banker with him. The bewildered home owner, faced by a city threat to tear down his house if he didn't fix it and confronted bv one high- and one low-pressure salesman, often would sign up for a long list of repairs that were 1) over-priced, 2) more costly than he could afford, and 3) not essential to making his shack a fit place to live. Even worse, the repairs were often financed by a non-amortizing three-year mortgage at 10% or higher interest, raising a fair chance that the homeowner would lose his home in three years.

These machinations reached their peak in Coconut Grove in the summer of 1954, even as the United States Justice Department was announcing to the nation how firmly it was cracking down on such practices in the wake of the celebrated FHA investigations of that year.

Mrs. Virrick, enlisting the aid of Dade County Solicitor John D. Marsh, set a trap. Mrs. Casandra DeLancy had signed a contract for $900 of repairs on her house, then been persuaded to sign up for a bigger one for $1,200. Mrs. Virrick recalls that she and Father Gibson, vice-chairman of the Slum Clearance Committee, tracking down complaints about such practices, were in Mrs. DeLancy's home one June day when Mrs. DeLancy saw the repair salesman approaching. Mrs. Virrick hid in a closet and Father Gibson stayed out of sight on a couch behind a door while the salesman warned Mrs. DeLancy that the city was demanding she repair her house within 30 days. The woman's young grandson had the presence of mind to ask the salesman to come back the next day and talk to his uncle.

The following day, Father Gibson changed his clothes and assumed the role of "uncle." Mrs. Virrick, County Solicitor Marsh, a deputy and a stenographer hid in Mrs. DeLancy's bedroom and took notes.

The salesman launched into the following pitch:

"This is the city's findings that she (Mrs. DeLancy) got in the mail," he told "Uncle Charlie." "Under the provisions of ordinances 3963 and 4602, city of Miami. You are hereby notified that a—the city uses a basis of 100%—that means completely gone, 10% means 10% good. Practically your whole house has to have a new foundation and it all has to be inspected."

Father Gibson: "You have some way of knowing about the city?"

Salesman: "When you have the house fixed, it will be worth $10,000. It's only worth about $7,000 now. I was down to the city office yesterday and last week about this work. Mr. Devlin (Joseph Devlin, owner of All-State Construction Company) works with the city all the time. You know, the city can be very tough or they can be easy on you. The Browns[7] up the street are going to be evicted any day now. Their house is about in the same condition as yours, and it's going to cost them about the same to fix it as it will cost you to have yours. But their credit isn't any good. I can't get the money for them so the city will throw them out of their house.

"We deal with the best loan companies. They are approved by the Chamber of Commerce and the city.

"You had your notice from the city, didn't you? Now, our agreement is out. And we have to do a lot more to the house—all the city told you in your letter. It will cost you $3,900. I'm writing up the contract, and I'll put in it that the work will be in accordance with

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[7] Mrs. Virrick notes: "There were no Browns on that street."

your notice from the city. It's out of your hands and out of my hands, now. The city says you have to fix it.

"I'll try to get them to give you five years to pay, but don't worry about it. If they work it out on a three-year basis, they will probably refinance it at the end of the three years for the balance. You have to do this the way the city says. You know that man on Florida. He put up a new house and it wasn't right and now the city is going to make him tear it down. We stick to the letter and we treat you right. We do a good job—not like that other man who fixed your roof wrong and now it has to be done all over again because it's going to all fall in if you don't have it fixed. We believe in being honest and fair with people. We work in the colored area and we're not like that other company. We have a reputation to uphold.

"The first deal is out because it's in the hands of the city. We have to do ten times more plumbing and wiring. And your house is a fire hazard. We have to put fire traps all around your house. It's for your own health and protection.

"You can't delay now. The city is coming through here pretty soon and go through every house in the whole area. You'll just be ahead and be all through so they won't bother you. Fifty or sixty people will get a letter from the city at the same time. They're going to go right through the area like they did in downtown Miami and Liberty City. Ask any of your friends downtown what they did there. The city has already notified you. You had to sign for it. They sent you a registered letter. They make you sign for it because they want to be sure you fix it."

Father Gibson: "How much is the mortgage now?"

Salesman: "Well, first she had $2,000 but she was getting something back. We were only going to get $900."

So it went. A few days later, the story broke in the Miami *Daily News*. "Home Repairs Racket in Negro Area Bared," cried a four-column headline on page 1. Said the story: "Authority of the Miami Slum Rehabilitation Department has been used by salesmen for a construction company to browbeat Negro home owners into making extensive repairs." Solicitor Marsh charged All-State owner Devlin with operating a corporation without a charter from the Florida Secretary of State. As for collusion with the city department, Devlin said he had never heard of Frank Kelly, head of the city rehabilitation department. Kelly said he had in his files a letter from Devlin asking him to inspect Mrs. DeLancy's home. He said he was informed Mrs. DeLancy wanted the inspection, too.

In the end, All-State was acquitted, but the firm has since given Coconut Grove a wide berth. Mrs. DeLancy had her home fixed by a Negro contractor for about $2,000. The local bank loaned her the money. A grandson in the Army sends her an allotment which makes it possible for her to keep up the $67 a month payments. She says she is happy about the outcome.

The City Rehabilitation Department:

The Miami department of slum rehabilitation and prevention, which became a center of controversy in l'affaire DeLancy, had been formed in 1952. It grew out of the dissatisfaction of Mrs. Virrick and others with the job performed by the city building department at inspecting existing housing to make sure it was kept fit.

In the national picture, few building inspectors have proved themselves able to cope with slums. Chronically understaffed and with low-paid help, most building departments have all they can do to keep abreast of new construction. Rapidly expanding Miami was no exception to this rule. In fact, Mrs. Virrick has charged that the building department sometimes went so far as to add zeros to the figures in its reports on blighted buildings to make its progress look better.

Amid the Coconut Grove rehabilitation work, Mrs. Virrick found the dramatic example she needed to convince the city commissioners they must set up a new and separate department to get the job done. It was an old two-story apartment, a building so dilapidated and overcrowded that Coconut Grove people had long called it The Rabbit Warren. It had sanitary facilities—of a sort—for three families. But it housed six families, some of them families including three generations. The roof leaked. Stairways, front and back, sagged. Daylight shone through cracks where floors and walls did not meet. Some windows were broken; some would not open; some would not close; some were missing. The owners put on a fresh coat of green paint with white trim on the sides that faced a street corner. They removed the two-story front porch and pushed the old steps up to the front of the house, fixed the windows and some loose boarding. The building department, despite the serious deficiencies, approved the rehabilitation—subject to fixing a leak on the remaining second-story porch and adding hand railings to the stairways.

Mrs. Virrick's committee was so incensed it persuaded four of the five city commissioners to inspect the property in person. Mrs. Virrick and Dr. Ross Beiler, a professor at the University of Miami who was then vice chairman of the Miami Slum Clearance Committee (since

abolished), also surveyed the central Miami Negro district and presented the city commission with a detailed report of what Mrs. Virrick calls "25 flagrant cases of improper repairs by landlords—cases where inspectors working with contractors managed to panic homeowners into selling for a fraction of the value, where agents of slum landlords followed on the heels of inspectors and were able to buy sites for multifamily apartments cheaply." One house, leaning at a crazy angle with a 1½ year old "condemned" sign on it, could not be found in the building department's files. "We were told it had been demolished," says Mrs. Virrick, "so we called it 'the house that isn't there.' "

The upshot was the rehabilitation department.

It was voted into being over the opposition of builders and realtors. But it was given broad authority. In designated "slum clearance" areas no building permit for repairs or new construction could be issued by any other city agency. The new department would have sole and complete authority in Miami's fight against blight.

To run it, the city picked Frank Kelly, 46, who had retired three years earlier after twenty-three years as a New Jersey state policeman. Kelly, who had been superintendent of the Jersey police radio division, actually moved to Miami a year before he retired in 1948. He served briefly as a Dade County deputy sheriff and during the Korean War was chief enforcement investigator for the Office of Price Stabilization in the twenty-two counties of southern Florida.

With an annual budget of $22,044 and three inspectors, ex-cop Kelly set to work. One of his first moves was to ask the city to designate several areas as slums and to designate streets adjoining the slums as "fringe areas." Mrs. Virrick tried to persuade him to leave fringe areas alone for the time being on the theory that property owners would misinterpret his good intentions—to protect their sections from the spread of blight. But Kelly disagreed and won.

Mrs. Virrick took another tack. She persuaded the city commission to establish an advisory council of citizens for Kelly's department. Opponents of the idea persuaded the city commissioners to limit its functions to "an advisory capacity only." What emerged was a 26-member council with Mrs. Virrick as chairman. Members included realtors, home builders, mortgage bankers, architects, insurance men, Chamber of Commerce officers, YWCA and YMCA aides, an engineer, an educator, a League of Women Voters official, two other members of Mrs. Virrick's Coconut Grove Slum committee and two last minute additions—Mrs. Elizabeth Bettner of Coconut Grove and Luther Brooks.

In some quarters, the presence of Mrs. Bettner and Mr. Brooks on the advisory council was viewed with trepidation. Mrs. Bettner had stirred up a fuss when she learned that her pleasant, well-kept stucco house two blocks from the Negro area was included in a rehabilitation department "fringe area." She had fumed—incorrectly—that this meant Negroes would be moved into her street or the area would be seized as a site for public housing. Neither of these prospects delighted her. Luther Brooks, an affable Georgian, was head of Miami's Bonded Collection Agency, which managed perhaps 90% of the rental property—both new and aged—in the city's Negro areas. Mrs. Virrick decided her first mission was to teach the advisory council members what fighting slums meant. "I took armloads of literature to each meeting and offered to lend any of it to any of them. Almost no one borrowed any."

Next, Mrs. Virrick persuaded the home builders association to lend the advisory council 50 or more trucks to haul away rubbish in a clean-up campaign. But City Manager E. A. Evans vetoed the scheme on the ground that the advisory council must not become an action group. Instead, the city—prodded by Negro leaders who wanted their area cleaned up because a convention of Negro Baptist ministers was about to meet in Miami—held its own clean-up campaign with hired trucks.

The advisory council proved unable to accomplish much. Its members began bickering. This had the unfortunate side effect of creating hostility by real estate interests toward Mrs. Virrick's Coconut Grove slum clearance committee, even though realtors elsewhere are ardent backers of just the kind of rehabilitation Mrs. Virrick was promoting.

Real estate interests (and Brooks) had opposed public housing, but Mrs. Virrick had been among Miami's loudest champions of it when the issue was fought out locally a year earlier. In March, 1950, the city commission voted 3-2 against applying for 1,500 units of federally aided public housing (1,000 for Negroes and 500 for whites). But pro-public housers forced the issue to a city-wide vote by an initiative petition. Within two months, Miami voters overruled the commission by a 7 to 5 margin.

When the Advisory Council was formed later, partisans of both camps from the public housing fight were named to it. Echoes of the old rift reappeared. Finally, the council became so split that it was dissolved.

Frank Kelly was left to carry on alone. He did so—colorfully. For instance, he had the fire department burn 38 units of "dangerous"

duplexes in the downtown Negro section—duplexes bought by the school board to make room for a school. Kelly stood on the sidelines and took movies.

By the time the National Association of Home Builders awarded him a plaque in recognition of the work of the nation's first city department for slum rehabilitation, Kelly said 800 units had been demolished and 2,000 rehabilitated without turning a single family into the streets.[8] Whether Miami handled this activity humanely is a controversial point. But at least there was no major public outcry.

How Miami Handled Relocation:

Wiping out slums without generating relocation problems for families whose decrepit quarters must be demolished is a rarity in US cities. Miami got by chiefly because of Luther Brooks.

Brooks, a one time guard at the Florida state insane asylum who has made himself a wealthy man collecting rents for the leading citizens who own much of Miami's Negro ghetto, found it profitable for his clients to tear down clusters of aged one-story wooden shacks and replace them with 2- or 3-story concrete-block-and-stucco apartments. The old shotgun houses, as Brooks likes to call them, brought $10 to $12 a week rent. (Rents in Negro areas of Miami are collected by the week because landlords find it makes for easier collection from people who are not famous for provident management of their money.) The new apartments cost $3,000 per unit to build on a two-story basis and $2,950 per unit on a three-story basis (plus land) But they are smaller and rents are higher than in the dilapidated dwellings they replace—$11 to $13.50 a week for unfurnished efficiency apartments, $13 to $15 or $18 a week for one-bedroom units, $17 to $20 for two-bedroom units and $22 to $25 a week for three-bedroom units. There are very few three-bedroom apartments. "Investment-wise, people can't afford to build them," explains Brooks. What they do build, says Brooks, is so profitable that his owner-clients expect their money back in "seven or eight years." This is the more remarkable because 50′ x 100′ lots in the downtown Negro area sold in 1955 for about $2,500 and Brooks figured that, where he was buying any land, he was paying about $1,000 a unit for land under his multifamily apartments. Brooks said the 400 owners for whom he managed property (8,000 units including 686 in Coconut Grove) considered a 10% to 12% profit as good. But he added that 20% profit is "quite possible." Other sources say some landlords were netting up to 30%.

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[8] "This is untrue," says Mrs. Virrick. "We have talked with many who were put out with no place to go, many who had trouble finding a place, and many who had to double and treble up in order to go into Luther Brooks' apartments."

An example of modern Negro housing in central Miami, with densities far above those in Coconut Grove's Colored Town. This group contains 262 frame units occupied by Negro families crowded onto a single block 300 by 600 feet. The units have modern plumbing, including inside tubs, but no front, side or back yards. Rents: $8 to $10 a week.

Replacement of wooden shanties with concrete-block-and-stucco apartments became a major Miami trend after 1951. In four years, Brooks estimated some 4,500 units of this type had gone up throughout the Negro areas of the city. A few went up in Coconut Grove Colored Town despite the opposition of Coconut Grove Negro leaders and Mrs. Virrick's committee. Most of them are downtown.

Wherever they stand, the new apartments, though solidly built and full of modern plumbing, have also served to increase the density of land use in areas already overcrowded—by Miami standards. For this reason, they have been much denounced as "slums of the future." Around his new CBS apartments, Brooks spread asphalt pavement or concrete. There is no grass anywhere—no flowers—in fact, no visible soil. Brooks figures paving is "cleaner than grass" and adds: "We couldn't keep grass up, anyway." On the latter point, he is probably right. If his hordes of tenants walked on the grass, they could wear it out in a week.

In more than one case, these apartments have been built, under variance permits, in contravention of the Miami zoning code. In one case exposed by the Miami *Herald,* the owner built a 40-unit building in the downtown Negro district flush with the sidewalk line instead of set back 15 feet. Moreover, he did not provide the off-street parking space required by law.

So Miami's new Negro ghetto is woefully short of play space, parks and even of living space inside the buildings. Some families, who are now paying $15 a week for modern but no more spacious quarters than used to cost them $8 or less, show their resentment by defacing the buildings and tearing down walls and screens. A typical family in a one-bedroom apartment has two children. It saddens the better-educated Negroes among the inhabitants of the new apartments to see few parents making an effort to teach their children good behavior. Mrs. Gracie Miller, a welfare department case worker who lives downtown but has spent much time in Coconut Grove Colored Town, recalls one summer day in 1955 when a youngster drew ugly black figures on the outside walls of the apartment facing her own across a narrow courtyard. A group of adult Negroes sat and watched the juvenile artist but made no effort to stop him.

This overcrowding, as the Miami *Herald* editorialized toward the end of 1955, "is the cardinal fault of Miami's so-called slum clearance program." Said the paper: "The antidote is strict control of the number of families which can be housed on a given tract of land . . . Lack of such rules is laying the foundation for new slums."

The Results:

Have the ten years of unremitting effort to improve the lot of Coconut Grove Colored Town residents succeeded in more than a small way?

For the preponderance of Miamians, both inside and outside Coconut Grove, the attitude of a white postman who has been delivering mail along Hibiscus Street for many years is probably typical. "I can't notice much," he said. "Neighborhood looks just the same as always to me."

The mailman waved at the Fields Apartments, the flimsy two-story barracks that stand at the dividing line between white and Colored Town and have long been a collecting point for troublesome transients. "They (apparently meaning the city) get no credit from me for slum clearance," the mailman said. "My sympathies are all for the colored people. Why, some of those shacks during the war were holding three families paying $10 a week. I never realized what a racket it was to own them."

It is true that most of Coconut Grove Colored Town, by middle class white standards, is still blighted. A few blocks of Colored Town might pass as standard housing in a low-income white neighborhood, but these are the exception.

But Colored Town is a much improved place. Moving the plumbing indoors, the biggest single improvement, means there is much less dysentery among school children than there used to be. There is less sickness of many kinds. There are fewer rats. Old timers say there is less trash tossed carelessly around the streets, although to the outside eye the profusion of watermelon rinds rotting in what would be the gutters (if Coconut Grove streets had any gutters) suggests a continuing ignorance of good manners and middle class standards, which is, perhaps, the most basic chasm between the average Southern Negro and the rest of the U. S. population.

The nursery school is full and has a waiting list. The crime rate, at least for a while, seems to have declined. The city, prodded by Negro leaders organized by Mrs. Virrick's committee, is giving Colored Town better trash and garbage pick-up service.

All these are physical symptoms. And some of these plusses are offset by minuses. One which rankles long-time Coconut Grove residents is that improved conditions (and controversial new apartments) in the Grove have helped entice a recent upsurge in Negro in-migrants from Georgia and South Carolina. Long time Colored Town residents describe the newcomers scornfully as "people who live in hutches." Policeman B. J. Guilford thinks the influx of southern Negroes from farther north created an entirely "new problem" in policing Colored Town. And the difficulty is that since jobs in Miami pay better than jobs in Charleston, the influx promises to continue—just as it will in Chicago—and for the same reasons.

"We thought the Liberty City public housing project would take the load off the Grove," Guilford related as he sat on the breezeway of his pleasant homemade house one hot July Sunday afternoon. "But it was no sooner opened than there was a big new influx of people."[9]

What of rehabilitation's effect on the attitudes and aspirations of the people whose lives it touched?

It is here that the evidence provides the most hope that rehabilitation of blighted neighborhoods—if thoughtfully, systematically, sympathetically and broadly applied—can uplift not only the structures but the people that live in them.

It appears that only the top fringe of the Grove's Negro life has been, to any large degree, affected. The great bulk of its residents are

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[9] One of the saddest features of the U. S. race problem, indeed, is that the more any single city does to solve it, the more problem it gets to cope with.

too far sunk in ignorance, stupidity, poverty and lack of education to be helped at such an adult level.

But Colored Town's ministers are cooperating with each other instead of fighting each other. Although many Negroes still act as if they had no stake in rehabilitation, get easily discouraged and fail to follow through on basic projects they promised to help, others have learned how to make their protests against bad municipal services effective. All by itself, this is an invaluable lesson in citizenship. Broadly, as Mrs. Virrick herself says, the effect of the rehabilitation movement has been "to give people some self-respect they didn't have."

Members of the Coconut Grove slum clearance committee's executive board took time out in the summer of 1955 to take stock of what they had accomplished in their eight years of struggle against dirt and disease, poverty and inert officialdom. The talk around the long bare table in the parish hall of Father Gibson's Christ Church went something like this:

"The morale of the people is up considerably," said Policeman B. J. Guilford. "It shows on the police blotter. There are fewer drunks. There are fewer assault and battery cases, fewer fight victims who have to be patched up in the hospital. Yes, there's even less profane language on the streets."

The discussion turned to the committee's efforts to: (1) stop Colored Town residents from throwing so much trash on the streets and (2) get the city to pick it up more often.

Mrs. Tucker, the high school principal, said school children often ask their teachers now: "Mamma wants to know when the trash is going to be picked up."

P. J. Roberts, a Negro member of the board who works as a yardman, called the improvement in the Grove's appearance "great—in the last year."

Guilford and other board members agreed that five years earlier the city took a different attitude toward trash and garbage collection in Colored Town. "They picked it up when they had time," said Guilford. Now, garbage is picked up Wednesdays and Fridays.

Mrs. Alice Halstead, the head of St. Alban's Nursery remarked: "Now, every time somebody mentions Coconut Grove, the commissioners' ears prick up. That is the most changed attitude of all."

Added Guilford: "I think they had the idea they could pay no attention to the Grove."

The new spirit of community cooperation is infectious. Mrs. Halstead recalled that when her nursery had no money for a playground fence, Knox Eldridge, of the Miami welfare division, offered to put a six-foot fence around it.

Mrs. Tucker spoke of increasing attendance at Americanization classes for adults—largely by Bahamian Negroes. By becoming naturalized citizens, she pointed out, Bahamians make themselves eligible for social security benefits. "That's the real impetus, I guess."

Fewer juveniles are visiting the saloons in the Grove now, asserted Melvin Jackson. One reason, he felt, is that the city is keeping a better watch on the bars.

Discussion turned to city plans for a parking lot at Plaza and Oak Streets as a buffer between Negro and white residential sections in the Grove. Somebody asked who induced the city to buy the land for $60,000. Consensus: Mrs. Bettner, who lives nearby. The board seemed unhappy that anybody would think a buffer necessary, but Melvin Jackson allowed: "I'd rather have a parking lot there than apartments." To Jackson, Miami's new apartments and the people who lived in them were so "disgusting that I get sick."

Added B. J. Guilford: "We hate apartments here worse than we do snakes."

Elizabeth Virrick asked whether the city had a right to spend taxpayer's money to buy land to set up a buffer between white and Negro areas. She wondered if a taxpayer's suit might well test the question. The board seemed disinclined for such a fight. And Mrs. Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, whose father was for many years editor of the Miami *Herald,* pointed out that nowadays when the city wants to take such a controversial step, "they have to do it on the quiet."

Said Mrs. Tucker: "I feel the people who fixed up their homes or built new ones have a grateful attitude of 'I have religion and I want you to get it, too.' You'd be surprised at the number of people who want to buy in this area now. They can't find enough property. They feel that in the Grove they are sort of protected." Fifteen years ago, Mrs. Tucker pointed out, she paid $450 for her lot. Recently, a lot across the street from her house sold for $2,200.

Said Melvin Jackson: "The children here seem happier and cleaner. I think there is less discontent among the families."

Guilford: "The people are back to home life more. There are more social groups."

"Years ago," said Mrs. Tucker, "our first grade children didn't know what a bathroom or a dining room was. When teachers asked where do people eat, the children always answered: 'in the kitchen.' "

When the slum clearance committee board first began meeting in Father Gibson's church, Policeman Guilford noted, "There were eight old shacks across the street, and we had to lock up our cars to prevent pilferage." Nobody bothered to lock his car outside the church during the July, 1955, meeting.

Mrs. Halstead, never afraid to be a dissenter, complained she could find "little increase in civic pride" in Colored Town. Three garden groups had been trying to start a garden in front of the new St. Alban's nursery building—then nearly completed. "Six loads of dirt were promised," said Mrs. Halstead, "but only one showed up."

Replied Guilford: "It's slow, but it's coming."

On that note, the board meeting ended and its members, chatting sociably, moved out to their parked autos.

Away from the collective enthusiasm generated by such a joint review of accomplishments, some of the members of Mrs. Virrick's slum clearance committee have more reservations about their accomplishment. Many are deeply concerned over what they call "a definite pattern of male irresponsibility" among Negroes. County relief rolls bulge with cases of deserting fathers. Many of the more responsible Negro leaders are indignant that welfare officials make so little effort to track them down and compel them to support their offspring—legitimate and illegitimate.

Mrs. Virrick herself says she can think of only one instance where a Negro husband took over responsibility for rearing his children when his wife ran out on him. "And the children are going to the dogs," she adds.

"From my viewpoint," says Mrs. Pamela Johnson, socialite housewife who has worked closely with the slum clearance committee since 1953 and whose mother was chairman of the original cleanup drive, "it would take 50 years to see any over-all change in attitudes and way of life." Mrs. Johnson feels the Colored Town efforts attempted "to do an over-all job," but that it is "only in individual cases where we seem to be able to accomplish much."

Until she got into the work of Mrs. Virrick's slum committee, says Pam Johnson, "I hadn't realized how much crime and overcrowding were linked together. I hadn't realized that the problems were as serious as they are. And that it all has so much bearing on all kinds

of different city problems. I used to think of the Negro section of the Grove as a kind of a quaint place with a lot of people sitting around under the trees."

Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, the author, feels that the "well-intentioned" Miami city leaders see the problems of Negroes and slums as "hopeless." She adds: "The others don't give a damn." In general, she thinks, "White people partly don't care and partly they are scared to find out about the Negro problem because if they do, then they realize that they don't know what to do about it."

Not only has the rehabilitation effort brought no change to the lower levels of Negro life in Coconut Grove, but a sizeable fraction of Colored Town's residents do not even seem aware of the slum committee's efforts in behalf of their neighborhood. But among those who are aware, even vaguely, of the fix-up, appreciation is almost universal.

"Campaigns mean a lot," one homeowner remarked. "When people are pressed to do something they make even more improvements than they have to."

Said another: "The people here like Elizabeth Virrick. Now they want to be somebody. They're tired of being behind all the time."

Mrs. Myrtle Bethel, a teacher at St. Alban's Nursery School, feels "the Grove looks like a well-planned city compared to what it was. Most of the people who lived in the shacks didn't appreciate what rehabilitation did for them. They squawked and hollered. It was quite a fight to help them." Now that rehabilitation has been enforced, says Mrs. Bethel, people in the Grove have been much more diligent about keeping their homes painted. Many have bought new furniture. "Before, lawns were almost unheard of. And we had trash everywhere 10 feet high. Now, it's only two feet high," she said. "If it weren't for slum clearance, people would never have gone to Richmond Heights and Opalocka." Mrs. Bethel herself has moved out to the new subdivision in Richmond Heights. She sold her 50 x 115 lot on Charles Street (it cost her $325 years ago) for $1,500, in 1951. She thinks it would bring $2,400 today.

The Coconut Grove rehabilitation has also left a deep impression on most of the Miami officials who came in contact with it.

Take the case of Clarence P. Thayer, the health inspector who surveyed the Negro slums and enforced the installation of indoor toilets. "I have arrested hundreds of people," says Thayer, "but when they thank you for it later, it's really something."

Thayer likes to recall the case of a Colored Town resident who told him: "I never had a bath in a tub before. Now, every time I'm in it, I'm thinking I'm soaking off 55 years of dirt."

Mrs. Walker Bentley, a public health nurse, who worked in the Grove from 1943 to 1953, says: "My mothers are becoming health conscious. They're bringing their children to the clinic more."

The attitudes of Miamians outside the slum committee machinery focus more on the overriding southern problem of what to do about Negroes than on what rehabilitation of their decrepit neighborhoods may accomplish.

The range is extreme. At one end, there must be many a Miamian who agrees with the occupant of Mrs. Virrick's apartment house half-a-block from the edge of the Grove's Colored Town. He said: "You can fix up a place for niggers. In two years it's just as bad as ever. They're lazy." And there is the woman real estate broker who snapped: "The next move is they will get all the Negroes to vote."

The latter view contrasts interestingly with that of Mayor (in 1955) Abe Aronovitz: "If the colored people want to help themselves, they should register and vote and live in better houses."

More and more Coconut Grove Negroes *are* voting, and according to Mrs. Tucker, the high school principal, "more and more are trying to get instruction on how to vote."

B. J. Guilford, the policeman, and Mrs. Virrick were reflecting aloud on the changes they have helped bring about in the Grove one afternoon on Guilford's front porch. "In the old days," said the police officer, "we didn't know how to protest against things we didn't like, like the bars and saloons. A lot of people didn't care, anyway. But the city gives us better service now than in downtown Miami. But we still haven't got nerve enough to demand what we should demand.

"We're more politically conscious than we used to be. Of course we haven't got to the point where we've put up any candidates for public office."

On balance, the uplift promised by Coconut Grove's long struggle is, as Policeman Guilford told the slum clearance board, "slow, but it's coming."

Remaining Problems:

If the Negro is historically the most exploited element of southern society, he is now its most subsidized element. This fact leads many

a white resident to complain that the Negro wants to have his freedom and still enjoy the irresponsibility of slavery.

Whatever the merits of this argument, it is certainly plain that the Coconut Grove Negro is still greatly dependent on the great white father role of the surrounding Grove white community, even though, as Mrs. Virrick points out, "This is what we have tried to avoid." Yet there has been progress. "One of the basic principles of our committee," says Elizabeth Virrick, "has been to help the Negroes to help themselves. Possibly we haven't made as much progress in that direction as we wish we had, but several times when I have been out of town they have carried on, following almost slavishly the methods we have always used. Once they successfully fought an application for a zoning variance. The most recent was finishing a drive to get as near 100% (voting) registration as possible, and, on election day, to get out the vote. They did a good job."

It is particularly noteworthy that civic participation and the urge toward higher living standards comes far more from Negro home owners than tenants. This strongly suggessts that home ownership, even when overhung with big mortgages, has more promise of promoting better citizenship than any amount of fix-up campaigning.

Permanent progress may also require a drastic overhaul in county and state welfare policies which—so many a leading Negro contends—now place a featherbed under irresponsible fecundity. Indeed, county relief policies recall these words of the late Harvard anthropologist, Earnest A. Hooton: "Stupid, shiftless and improvident human beings breed the most rapidly because they feel little responsibility to their offspring and recognize no responsibility to society, but only their right to be supported by it . . . If we must feed and foster the incompetent, we should at the same time prevent their reproducing their kind or . . . democracy is lost."

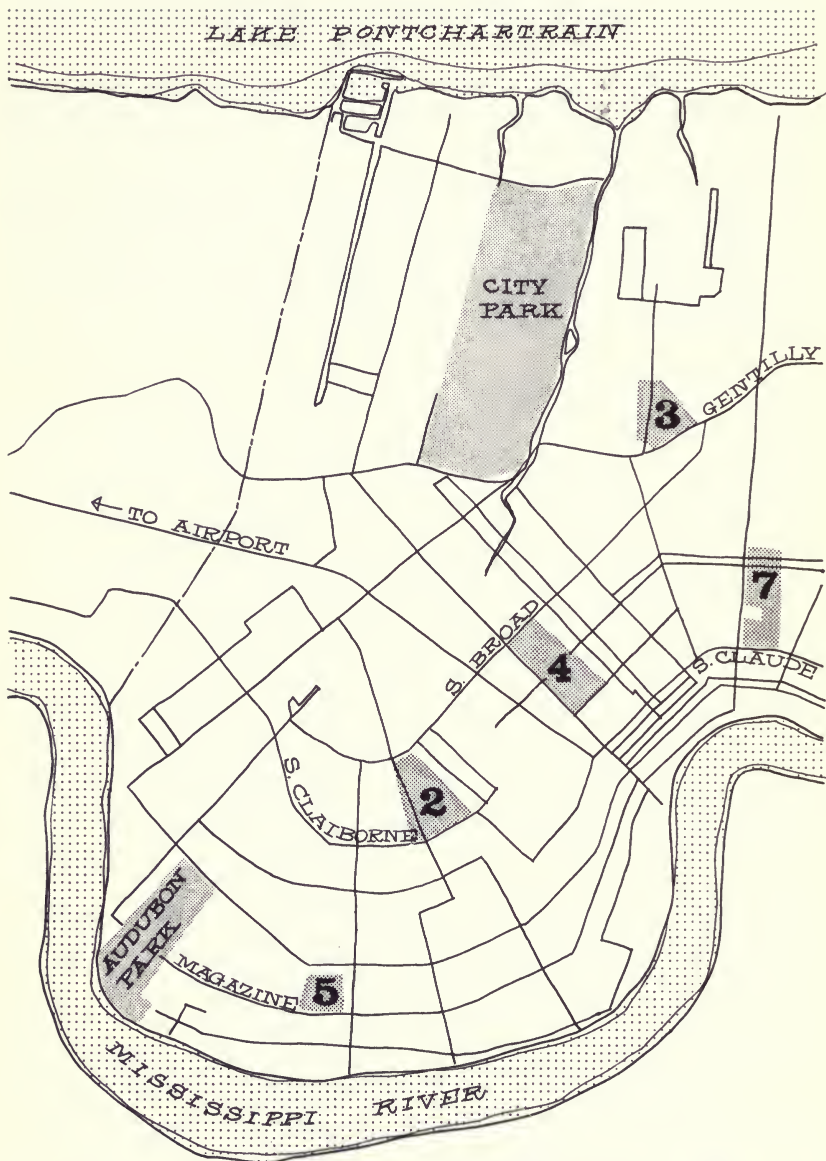
Elizabeth Virrick, as she herself says, has created a biracial organization which in its day was unique for the South. But the committee is very greatly dependent on her personal drive and tenacity to get anything accomplished. This dependency on a single person, of course, is the customary weakest link in any civic-spirited undertaking. Neighborhood organizations to uplift slums are no exception.

To accomplish what she did in Coconut Grove, Mrs. Virrick figures she worked 16 hours a day for the first three years—talking on the phone, going to see people, buttonholing officials, pricking Miami's civic conscience, giving interviews to newspapermen, pushing, driving, needling.

As the effort to solve one problem uncovered more problems, the slum clearance committee widened the scope of its activities and then widened it more, uncovering social problems of almost every stripe. In the end, the slum clearance committee was hip-deep in nearly every phase of community life. And as Miami Newsman Bert Collier observes: "Each phase drew more people into the problem."

"We bumbled along," Mrs. Virrick says. "We made a lot of mistakes. But, behold—in the end it turned out to be the right thing to do."

Almost as much as it hinges on the leadership of Elizabeth Virrick (or some other dedicated worker not yet visible in the Coconut Grove movement), further progress in rehabilitating Colored Town and its people depends on a big lift in the general educational level. This will take time.



Central New Orleans, showing the rehabilitation areas (shaded). No. 5 is the Cadiz Area, and No. 4 the Conti Street section, both of which are described in detail in this chapter.

NEW ORLEANS:
Conti Street and the Cadiz Area

In one of the nation's oldest cities, long pock-marked by islands of slums, a city-wide rehabilitation campaign brought a considerable renovation to some rundown Negro neighborhoods. But the total effort, in its first two years, fell far short of coping with the staggering task not only of fixing property but of transforming the culture of a Negro population bred and reared to dependency.

Among the efforts to put a new face on aging American cities, few started with a better blueprint than New Orleans.

New Orleans is one of the nation's oldest cities (established 1718). But it offered lively prospects for rehabilitation. The city, built on a flat marsh, is hemmed in by the looping Mississippi River, Lake Pontchartrain, and the marshy "trembling prairie"—boggy land too soft for building. New Orleans grew up in checkerboard fashion. In the older residential quarters close by downtown, this constriction, coupled with the social segregation of the deep South, has resulted in scattered pockets of Negro occupancy (and almost all of New Orleans' slums are Negro-occupied) rather than a single teeming Negro ghetto like Harlem or Chicago's South Side.

Only to the West is there room for New Orleans to grow unimpeded by natural obstacles. Moreover, because the city lies below the level of the Mississippi, all sewage must be expensively pumped over the levee into the river.

Some of New Orleans' finest homes are only a block from slums. Land values remain high—even in blighted areas—making complete redevelopment excessively costly. The few vacant lots remaining bring stiff prices—$28,000 for a 75 x 100 foot lot two blocks from a slum is typical. So is $15,000 for a smaller lot within a block of a blighted neighborhood.

New Orleans' old cypress frame houses are generally well built, though many wear a deliberate poverty exterior to help keep tax assessments down. Still, the 1950 census showed 17% of the city's 170,000 dwellings were dilapidated or lacked running water, and a full 25% were either dilapidated or minus running water or toilets. In May, 1953, Mayor deLesseps S. Morrison threw his support to rehabilitation after a broadly representative committee of civic leaders began studying its mechanics. The mayor ordered the city's housing authority to drop its $100 million slum clearance plan based on public housing. Said he: "In plain words, 80% of our trouble can be remedied without the necessity of expropriating private property, but through private owners correcting substandard conditions of their own property." Morrison announced: "The city will immediately concentrate on the 80% and hope that through initiative and revitalized public pride the remaining 20% might eliminate itself."

After that, developments came quickly. The citizens' committee handed Chep Morrison a blueprint for rehabilitation, and in less than a month, the mayor pushed it through a cooperative city council. Included were a new minimum housing standards ordinance and a new Division of Slum Prevention and Housing Improvement with wide powers to enforce anti-slum laws, including exclusive control over building and remodeling permits in rehabilitation areas.

New Orleans had wisely consulted with experts at every stage of the planning. Three times, the Chamber of Commerce brought Yates Cook to New Orleans. Cook, then chief of Baltimore's Housing Bureau, explained the Baltimore Plan to meetings of business leaders and city officials. The Chamber of Commerce persuaded Pan Am Southern Corporation, an oil firm, to lend the study committee a plane to fly 13 members and city officials to Charlotte, N. C., to study what Charlotte had accomplished with rehabilitation. Clifford F. Favrot, then president of the Asbestone Corporation (roofing and siding) and a tireless civic worker at many projects, spent three days in Baltimore and two in Charlotte looking over their programs before he accepted chairmanship of the citizens' committee, which remained in office to guide and help the new slum prevention division.

Only the new division's budget, $10,141 for the last five months of 1953, was skimpy. But the following year, the city boosted the budget to $106,000.

By August, 1953, the city found itself ready to begin rehabilitating, But it lacked experts in rehabilitation to run the new division. Stepping into the breach, the National Association of Home Builders loaned Yates Cook, who by then was head of NAHB's newly formed

rehabilitation department, through which the home builders hoped to spark a wave of fix-up work throughout the nation.[10]

By September, 1953, workmen began tearing down rickety fences and shoveling away rubble as a one-block pilot rehabilitation job started to show New Orleans and the nation what could be done. The effort had the strong backing of FHA Commissioner Guy Hollyday, a Baltimorean whose interest in rehabilitation had been roused by his participation in Baltimore's program and who now hoped that New Orleans would become a "guinea pig" to demonstrate dramatically how rehabilitation could revive blighted neighborhoods.

Thus the New Orleans effort, instead of springing up from neighborhood grass roots, got its start at the top levels of city government with technical assistance from outside experts and the blessing of the Eisenhower administration. Uniquely, New Orleans began rehabilitation with major backing instead of mere lip service from officialdom. Unfortunately, the program (at least up to mid-1955) developed no corresponding enthusiasm in the affected neighborhoods. No strong neighborhood group arose to back up the city's efforts with action at the level where action is required.

To help train a cadre of rehabilitation experts for New Orleans and other cities, Cook borrowed a leaf from military techniques: he held a training school for leaders and called it the Cities Organized Reconstruction Institute. Fifty students from San Antonio, Memphis, Fort Worth, Birmingham and Santa Fe who met in mid-September in New Orleans received a detailed "how-to-do-it" course in organizing for rehabilitation. The main points were: 1) get the mayor to name a citizens' study committee of about eighteen persons so that a real cross section of the community can be included; 2) recommend a definite program (in about 120 days) after studying available data on the physical quality of housing, causes of slums and blight, and methods of financing renovation (the committee should finance its studies with contributions—New Orleans raised $3,500 for this); 3) obtain passage of needed local laws (including a housing code if lacking); 4) set up a rehabilitation department as a separate entity in city government. New Orleans Health Commissioner Thomas Brahney, well briefed by Yates Cook on his trouble getting cooperation from other city departments in Baltimore, hammered on the point that without a single agency he had found it

[10] A little over three years later, NAHB quietly closed its rehabilitation department. Cook had long since left to become an urban renewal consultant. A spokesman for the builders' association said, somewhat sadly, that its efforts to spur rehabilitation and renewal of blighted neighborhoods had produced little action among NAHB members.

"unwieldy and difficult" to get inspectors from all the city departments concerned to work in concert in a slum area.

Conti Street Project:

The pilot area Cook picked for his first demonstration consisted of five one-story, two-family wooden houses in the 2100 block of Conti Street, between North Galvais and North Johnson. It was neither the worst nor the best of New Orleans' thousands of acres of rotting slums. It was, typically, a Negro neighborhood. The aged houses were separated by dirt alleys only 4 feet wide. The alleys themselves were divided by dilapidated wooden fences. City inspectors found more than 20 violations of city ordinances in the ten dwelling units. Backyards were piled high with trash. Backyard woodsheds were unpainted and sagging. The houses were without inside running water or toilets. An outside faucet provided cold water. Toilets and a small washbasin were housed in ancient and rickety backyard sheds. The inspectors found boards buckling out from the sides of some structures. Loose brick in chimneys created fire hazards. Loose and rotten screens let flies and other insects fly in and out. Garbage containers were inadequate. Bare electric wires strung on nails violated the electrical code. Almost nothing had been painted for years.

On September 18, 1953, city laborers with a squad of trucks began removing the outhouses, rubble and decrepit wooden fences. In the next two months, the five structures got new plumbing, new wiring, new kitchen equipment, roof repairs, new drainage facilities, ratproofing, fresh paint. Wire fences replaced the wooden ones. The city repaved the street.

One reason Cook picked the 2100 block of Conti Street was that four of the five identical buildings were owned by one landlord, the fifth by the Negro occupant. Even so, the owners footed only part of the repair bill. They put up $1,000 per structure. The repairs averaged $2,500. Cook, as acting director of the Slum Prevention Division, persuaded New Orleans home builders and materials dealers to donate goods and services for the difference.

Verdun Daste, then assistant director of the division, explained to newsmen covering the demonstration: "We're begging and borrowing to get this job done as quickly as possible. What we are doing here will in no way set the pattern for defraying the costs of the slum rehabilitation program."

Even though the owners of the Conti Street houses got a free ride on the cost of repairing them, rents went up to reflect the full value

of the fixed-up property. How this affected the occupants has become a controversial point in New Orleans.

Rehabilitation officials said only one family could not afford to pay the increase. But public housing officials insisted only one of the families could afford the steep tab and that four families moved to some form of public housing.

Elizabeth Virrick, the Miami slum fighter who later interviewed occupants of all the Conti Street pilot units, found that rent had gone up from about $18 to $42.50 a month in most instances. But some tenants were paying as much as $60 a month. Her findings:

• At 2118 Conti Street, a family of mother, father and five children experienced a rent increase from $16 to $42.50 a month. The family managed to meet it because a grandmother living with them paid half the rent.

• At 2116 Conti Street lived a family of husband and wife, one niece with her two children, one son and his wife and their child and two nephews. Having moved in during January, 1954, they were not one of the original Conti Street families. The rent: $50 a month plus utilities.

• At 2108 Conti Street, rent went up from $18 to $42.50 for a husband, wife and three children.

• At 2102 Conti Street, the family told Mrs. Virrick they planned to move because rent had risen to $60 a month.

Even on a tour escorted by a staffer of the slum prevention department, Conti Street pilot project residents told much the same story:

An old Negro who was buying the house at 2106 Conti said rent was $60 a month on each side of the dwelling at 2100-02 Conti, but only $42 a month, as far as he knew, from 2108 through 2118 Conti Street.

The neighborhood, the old man added, was "fine—people keep it clean now." He was particularly happy that there were "no bugs—those cockroaches used to be as big as birds."

In the next block, rehabilitated shortly after the pilot project, a Negro woman at 2014 Conti Street complained that she paid $50 a month rent before rehabilitation, then $60 and later $70. Across the street, at 2013 Conti, a housewife, whose rent went up from $14 to $50 a month, said she "figures on moving," because she still had only a kerosene stove which she considered a fire hazard in the winter.

The tidy backyards that replaced the jumble of sheds and weeds behind the pilot block houses cured one other Conti Street problem.

One day one of the pilot block housewives mysteriously mentioned to Verdun Daste: "Those men still come in the back yards at night." Daste, a thin man with a thin mustache, is also a former night manager for United Press in New Orleans. No newsman could resist digging into a mystery like that. Daste soon discovered that toward 1 a.m. on occasional dark nights, first one man and then another would slip over the back fences to meet in the yards behind the pilot block houses. No words were exchanged, but the men looked under the back steps and beneath an occasional flower pot. It developed that they had been using the back yards as a drop for marijuana cigarettes. Police rapidly put a stop to that. Observed Daste: "You can't hide crime in a rehabilitated back yard."

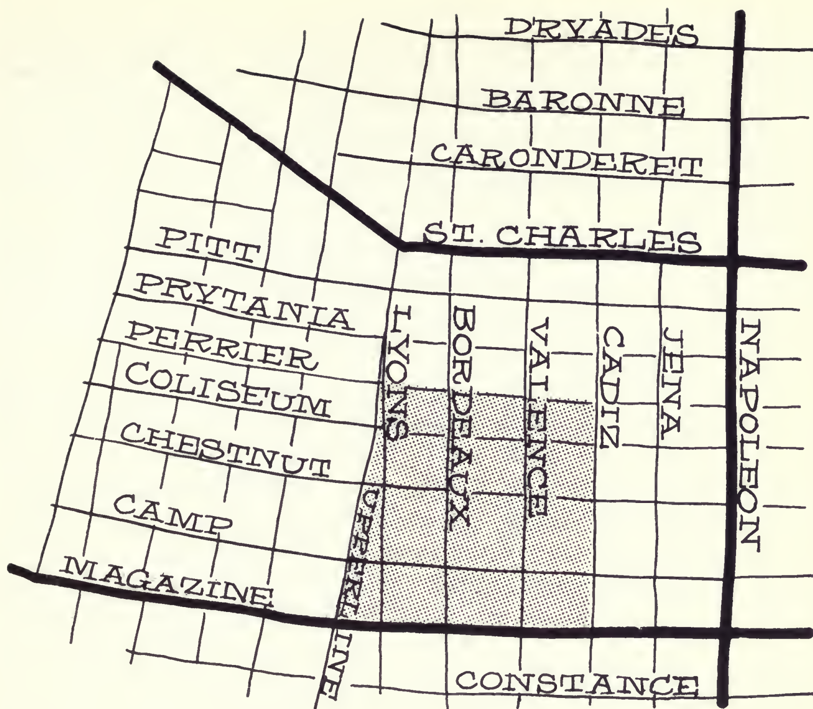
New Orleans was proud of its pilot block.

On December 18, 1953, it celebrated completion of the experiment. A bunting-draped speakers' platform was built in front of 2100 Conti Street and a score of city dignitaries turned out to tell each other what a fine example had been set.

A few weeks later, when Sherman Adams, then Assistant to the President, came to town to talk to the American Municipal Association, Mayor Morrison took him out to see the 2100 block. Adams told the nation's mayors it was "a wonderful project." He continued: "It indicates not only the progressiveness of the city but a real determination to get something done with only the resources of the community—that's refreshing . . . Here is a laboratory for many a community in America which is confronted with like conditions. I know that with private initiative and public cooperation, there are possibly thousands of such programs which can be both sound and successful with much the same approach."

The Cadiz Area:

After the pilot demonstration on Conti Street had reaped its harvest of publicity, the slum prevention department turned its principal attention to other areas of the city. Colonel Shelton P. Hubbard, 59-year-old former head of the New Orleans Sanitation Department, who was just back from two years as commander of the Army port in Pusan, Korea, was named permanent head of the Slum Prevention Department. Yates Cook returned to Washington. The department staff expanded rapidly to 17 inspectors. On an average day, they managed to inspect 40 dwelling units—20 parcels of property. A hearing board, set up in the department to listen to the landlords' and homeowners' side of the story before Hubbard issued orders compelling repairs, was grinding out some 20 hearings a day.



The Cadiz Area of New Orleans, in close-up, where the rehabilitation program came closest to the people in its early years.

But as the effort spread across the city, Conti Street became neglected. Two years later, some of the decrepit hovels across the street from the pilot homes still stood in their original state of advanced deterioration. Even Verdun Daste conceded the Conti Street area was "dragging its feet." The slum division was about ready to file affidavits in more than 100 cases, first legal step in prosecuting owners who had not made repairs ordered by the city.

By mid-1955, the New Orleans neighborhood most touched by rehabilitation was the Cadiz area. This is a 14-square-block enclave bounded by Coliseum, Magazine and Cadiz Streets. It consisted for the most part of one-story wooden duplexes with a few two-story buildings sprinkled in. The neighborhood lies only half a mile from the Mississippi River, quite close to the mile-long stretch of 19th century mansions that line tree-shaded St. Charles Street, once the finest address in New Orleans but later a neighborhood in transition to rooming houses and apartment hotels.

The Cadiz area was neither the best nor the worst Negro district in the city. It was a blue-collar neighborhood—truck drivers, steve-

dores, maids and charwomen with a sprinkling of civil service employees. The slum department's initial survey showed that of the 611 dwelling units in the 14 blocks, 45% had no baths, 35.25% had no running water, and 65.16% were overcrowded. In March, 1954, the city began intensive rehabilitation efforts by holding its customary public meeting with property owners to explain the program.

Fifteen months later, half of the substandard homes had been brought up to minimum standards, and enough enthusiasm had been generated so the rehabilitation movement was spreading at least two blocks east of the area and five blocks west.

One thing that helped get rehabilitation carried out in a high percentage of homes was that the Cadiz area, as Daste puts it, "was small enough so we could get to know the people." In the Cadiz area, for the only time in the city up to mid-1955, a neighborhood organization started to try to stabilize the gains from the big fix-up effort. Daste, in charge of the slum division's education and public relations work, gave it the initial nudge by arranging for the first two meetings to be held in the basement of the neighborhood Negro school. These were enough for the group to organize as the Thirteenth Ward Civic and Improvement Association, draw up by-laws and elect officers. President was Felton Earls, a Railway Express employee. "There was never anything like this before around here," said Earls. The association's by-laws set forth that its purpose is to "promote the civic advancement, interest and general welfare . . . and work toward municipal improvements." The association barred itself from entering local politics or contributing to campaign funds for candidates for office. It set dues at $1.50 per member per year. It was organized, like the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference in Chicago, on the basis of block captains. In the Thirteenth Ward they were known as area captains but they still were in charge of just one block.

The next thing that happened was that the school board of Orleans parish threw up a roadblock. It demanded a rental of $8.50 for the McDonough School basement for the third meeting of the association, on the ground that it was now a private civic group instead of a city activity.

After this, officials of the slum division were convinced, the association gradually went out of existence. Actually, it did not. Officials just lost touch with it. Earls remained on the job as president; the association had $65 in its treasury, and although attendance had dwindled from the encouraging 100 people at the first meeting to a core of 25 persons, it was still holding meetings to organize neighbors to go talk other neighbors into conforming with the fix-up program.

"Almost every house in the area has taken on a new appearance," Earls enthused. He mentioned new screen doors, new paint, electricity and plumbing renovation, and he mentioned that much of the work was unfinished—as was evident from the extensive remodeling still underway on several houses across Lyons Street from his own neat but modest home. During the clean-up, trash was moved out daily for a month by city trucks, Earls recalled. Now, the residents seem to throw less trash around the streets, he said, and there was certainly less trouble with cockroaches and rats. "We're going to try and keep the neighborhood the way it is as long as we can," he promised. "It sort of changed our outlook on life. We really appreciate the improved conditions. Most of the people never lived under these conditions before." Why? "A rundown condition was sort of . . . part of the people."

One reason why rehabilitation succeeded in the Cadiz area faster than elsewhere in New Orleans was the proportion of home ownership. Earls estimated 90% of the people in the area were homeowners. Then he looked up his list of dwelling structures and counted. Results: 201 structures with 44 owners living elsewhere and 157 owners living on the premises.[11] But even 79% of the dwelling structures owned by residents of the neighborhood is a very high figure for such an area.[12]

Now that the Negro homeowners in the Cadiz area had been forced to make improvements, Earls was looking forward to getting better streets and drainage—which the city had promised but not delivered (to the annoyance of Clifford Favrot), better lighting and more playgrounds.[13]

"Twenty-five minutes rain and you need a flatboat" to leave your house, said one Negro resident of the block. His house had been repaired, and his rent boosted from $20 to $45 a month. Viewing the muddy curb area, the messy saloon on the corner a few doors from his house and a thriving auto repair business conducted on the street, the resident observed: "The neighborhood just hasn't changed at all."

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[11] These resident-collected figures compare with a 1950 census finding of 25.78% owner-occupancy.

[12] The census figures on owner occupancy are less revealing, in gauging the receptivity of blighted areas to rehabilitation, than figures on owner-occupancy by structure. In New Orleans and many other cities, many owners live in half or ⅓ of their property and rent the other half or ⅔. But their interest in maintaining the property is obviously more personal than that of the truly absentee landlord.

[13] In January, 1955, Favrot publicly warned the city council that New Orleans' rehabilitation efforts were being jeopardized by "lack of city improvements to keep up with the improvements being made by homeowners"—specifically, streets, sidewalk and drainage repair. It was more than three years later before the city earmarked $200,000 for paving rehabilitation areas. Then, it put up 60% of the cost, assessed property owners for 40%.

Poor street repairs were criticized as jeopardizing New Orleans' rehabilitation efforts early in 1955 by Clifford F. Favrot, chairman of the citizens' committee in charge of the program. Lack of curbs in the 1100 block of Bordeaux Street (above) left the edges of the street a watery eye-sore, even though houses in the right background were painted and repaired soon after this picture was taken. Favrot condemned "lack of city improvements to keep up with the improvements being made by homeowners."

Earls was trying to work up nerve to suggest to the city that the only play area in his neighborhood—then reserved for white children—could be shared with the Negro majority. Said he: "Maybe we can get it for sometimes. There's hardly a vacant lot in this area."

As elsewhere in New Orleans, rent increases were a sore subject in the Cadiz neighborhood. Earls figured that family income in his area ranged from $50 to $75 a week, with many families netting about $70. He felt rent increases "work a hardship on some people." The house across the street from his own used to rent for $40 a month. After the fix-up, the rent jumped to $65. Next door, the rent jumped from $40 to $60 a month for a paint job and what Earls described as "a little improvement in the wiring and plumbing—not enough to justify that increase." Said Earls: "Rent should increase some, but 50% to 75% is too severe."

One householder, daughter of a Negro dentist, observed: "A lot of undesirable people moved out of this neighborhood since it was fixed up." Where did they go? "To get into trouble somewhere else," she supposed. Like many another Negro resident in Cadiz, she complained about the bad streets. "My children have to wear boots to school because the water is up to here," she said, pointing at her calf.

But the Cadiz rehabilitation effort was teaching some of the lessons of civic participation. For instance, Earls, in July, 1955, was figuring out how he was going to get 60% of the property owners to sign up for street paving, a requirement under the city ordinance. He wondered aloud if he might kill two birds with one stone by drafting some troublesome neighborhood rumormongers to work on this project. "I'm going to find something for the gossip spreaders to do," he vowed.

Cooperation from Landlords:

Many a New Orleans slum landlord embraced the New Orleans rehabilitation program happily. It let them double their rental income for a fix-up investment of a few thousand dollars. As the New Orleans *States* editorialized: "It is clear that the city would do the tenement owner a good turn by compelling him to modernize his property. It would be putting money in his pocket. The owner would have no call to cry confiscation or disregard of his right."

One of the most enthusiastic rehabilitators was Attorney Label Katz, one of the city's largest rental property owners. Katz is the son of a realty operator who was wiped out in the 1929 crash but who, in 1934 and 1935, started buying slum properties all over the city. When he died in 1951, the elder Katz left his son and two daughters some 3,000 units of slum dwellings. Katz said he figures he grossed 15% to 18% on his properties with a 10% net. "You can't get a return on your money fast," Katz said. By this, he explained, he meant an average of six to seven-and-a-half years before his investment in a slum dwelling was returned.

Some typical Katz remodeling jobs:

• At 1904-06 St. Louis Street, Katz spent $6,300 to remodel a decrepit one-story wood frame house almost identical with the pilot block units on Conti Street. He raised rents from $25 to $50 a month per unit.

• At 2421-25 Terpsichore Street, Katz spent $6,500 on the three units. He installed complete bathrooms, kitchens, gas outlets in each

room, removed broken-down fireplaces and chimneys, replaced steps and windows. The property once brought him only $60 a month rent. After renovation, the rent was $135 a month.

• A tenement property on Burgundy Street, condemned by the city and which had produced $147 a month rent while in wretched physical repair, was renovated for less than $12,000. After fix-up, it had five apartments with baths and kitchens, produced $215 a month rent.

• At 2010-12 and 2014-16 Conti Street, a block from the pilot project, Katz bought the tumbledown properties for between $3,000 and $4,500 apiece. He installed inside bathrooms, new wiring, new sheet rock, interior walls, new sills, new weatherboards and gutters on the roof, shored up sagging foundation piers and painted. Rents went up from $25 a month to $60 a month for each three-room (plus bath and kitchen) unit. And then Katz sold the buildings to a friend for $17,000, netting himself $2,000 profit.

After fix-up, said Katz, tenants took fine care of the property—those who remained. "They're much more cooperative. Very few kick about rent increases."

Outfoxing Gyp Contractors:

The slum division moved forthrightly to try to prevent gyp repairmen from exploiting its program. Said Daste: "For every area, when we sent out about 500 notices, half-a-dozen to a dozen contractors lined up for the jobs. They heckled and terrorized the Negro owners into buying unnecessary roofing and siding. Some of them actually swindled their customers." Many sold work that was not necessary. The upshot was that the slum division set up approved lists of contractors to do remodeling work so homeowners required to rehabilitate could be steered to reputable firms. Said Daste: "If we catch a violator once, we drop him from the list. If we catch a contractor collecting for a job he didn't do, the district attorney takes it." To keep track of who was doing the work, the slum division ordered its neighborhood inspectors to check weekly on fix-up progress on each house under their jurisdiction.

To get on the approved list, each contractor had first to sign a pledge that he would 1) make required repairs before he did any other fix-up work for each home owner, 2) complete all jobs satisfactorily with materials of "sufficient quality and quantity to produce a workmanlike job," 3) sign a written contract for all repair jobs specifying a completion date, 4) refrain from soliciting payments in excess of labor and materials already installed, 5) undertake no work

he is unable to do or have done, and 6) dispose of construction waste after each job.

To settle disputes between property owners and contractors, the slum division also set up a mediation board—the first of its kind in the nation.

New Housing for Negroes:

There was no shortage of new housing for Negroes in New Orleans.

But this must be qualified by noting that because most of the city lies below sea level and site preparation requires costly drainage, grading; fill, and often piling, the cheapest 50′ x 125′ inproved lot in a good area cost $2,000. So builders found it impossible to create good new housing at low prices. At Pontchartrain Park, developed by big prefabricator Hamilton Crawford, Keller Construction Company and Edgar B. Stern, new homes cost from $9,725 to $30,000. Average price: $12,838. Pontchartrain Park was generally accredited as the finest Negro subdivision in New Orleans (and perhaps in the whole nation) in postwar years. Its 210 acres were probably the best undeveloped home sites left inside the city. Moreover, the tract encircled an 185-acre city park which included an 18-hole golf course, swimming pool, playground.

Yet even with an unprecedented barrage of sales promotion, sales moved slowly. When Gentilly Woods, a similar subdivision built for white occupancy by Crawford on adjacent land, opened two years earlier, 700 houses were sold in 30 days. At Pontchartrain Park, the record was only 150 sales the first five months. Observed Executive Vice President Morgan J. Earnest: "We would have it three-quarters sold with the same effort we have been making if it were a white subdivision." Earnest concluded that Pontchartrain Park sales problems "proved to me there is no strong Negro middle class." As usual in selling in the Negro market, Pontchartrain Park found it had to "sell" two or three houses to get one actual buyer moved in. The others flunked their credit check. Most early buyers of Pontchartrain Park homes were non-professional people. Many worked on the river front. Some owned small businesses. Some were machine operators in factories. The bulk of the buyers either held two jobs or were families where the wife also worked. Vernon Winslow, Negro sales manager in Pontchartrain Park, was a case in point. He had three jobs: sales manager for the subdivision in the daytime, disc jockey on radio station WWEZ at night and salesman for burial plots in Keystone Life Memorial Park in odd hours. Holding several jobs, Winslow explained, is "the Negro's answer to his desire to get ahead."

Another retarding influence on sales, Winslow noted, was that the Negro market is "very suspicious." This suspicion, of course, was born of generations through which the Negro had been gyped again and again. Moreover, as Pontchartrain Park's developers found when they opened a downtown sales office on Canal Street, Negroes were almost unbelievably ignorant about matters which are well known to white people considering buying a house. Many didn't know what closing costs mean. Some veterans thought the government should give them the house just because they were veterans.

Pontchartrain Park also fell victim to a whispering campaign. It came on the market shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregated schools unconstitutional. The story circulated that Negroes buying into Pontchartrain Park would be promoting segregation, because it was not an open occupancy subdivision. "This racial business has really hurt us," one Pontchartrain Park sales official said. Officials of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People confirmed that a whispering campaign developed, but insisted they tried to argue it down. "I believe the project has merit," said NAACP attorney A. P. Tureaud. "It opens an area that would have been closed to Negroes."

Actually, Pontchartrain Park's developers said they were perfectly willing to sell a home to a white buyer. Said Morgan Earnest: "I wish we could. We get lots of viewers. You can't buy a better house in a better location in New Orleans. We're not trying to integrate the races, but if a white buyer comes along, we're going to sell him a house."

Another sales depressant was the fact, as Earnest noted, that "the Negro has always been able to buy a good home in New Orleans because of islands of good non-white neighborhoods."

Some new housing was going up even in the Negro slums. But most of it earned the scornful label from slum prevention officials: "lizards." A New Orleans lizard is typically a five-unit, cinder-block-and-stucco, one-story structure on a slab floor with a flat roof. They cost only about $10,000, yield about $3,000 gross rental a year at $50 a month per unit. The city permitted them only on land zoned for industry. The net effect: as in Miami, what new building there was in New Orleans slums was the type that seemed to guarantee the perpetuity of slums, even though it offered better plumbing and kitchens.

The Results:

In mid-1955, rehabilitation was only two years old in New Orleans. On balance, there was little evidence to suggest that it had, up to

then, done much more than scratch the surface of the city's problem. The effort had touched the lives of many Negro families, but for most, their appreciation of the better living standards enforced was offset by resentment of soaring rents. For only a handful, like Felton Earls, had the rehabilitation effort meant participation in a way that had opened their eyes to the bigger horizons of life. The bulk of New Orleans Negroes seemed to need another generation of basic schooling before they could be imbued with middle class standards. Too many New Orleans Negroes are still scrabbling for a decent living, still spending their small incomes foolishly on quick status symbols.

The composition of attendance at the mid-July meeting of the citizens' committee backing up the slum division is indicative of how little the Negro was participating. Of 20 persons present, only one was a Negro. He was J. Westbrook McPherson, the executive secretary of the New Orleans Urban League. (The committee had two other Negro members.)

Gloomily, McPherson summed up the status of the Negro in New Orleans: "The greatest lack of community spirit I ever saw—in the average person." But he added: "Any civic participation you find (in rehabilitation areas) will be due to the rehabilitation effort."

McPherson seemed gloomier than any other member of the slum division advisory committee. At the other extreme was Col. Shelton Hubbard, head of the division. Hubbard said New Orleans' Negroes were "their own worst enemy," but he felt his division had "made progress with the colored people" and that they "feel the city division is working to get improved conditions for their race" (which it was).

"Our biggest problems," Hubbard said, "are with large absentee property owners." And he found "more opposition from our whites" than from Negroes.

Hubbard was probably right in asserting "we have cut crime," but police statistics were not precise enough so that anyone connected with the rehabilitation effort put much stock in them. "I've been told we have cut down truancy in schools," said Hubbard, "and I know we've cut fire hazards." There was no visible dispute about fire hazards, but the Urban League's McPherson pointed out that Negro schools in many parts of New Orleans had fewer desks than pupils, so they did not try very hard to enforce attendance.

Still needed to make the program work better, Hubbard conceded in mid-1955, were: 1) a Fight-Blight Fund like Baltimore's, to give help to hardship cases; 2) stiffer fines or sentences from the courts for housing code violators; and 3) a state law permitting use of eminent

Eyesore relics like the one at the right on Magazine Street still stood beside freshly painted frame house months after rehabilitation began in the Cadiz fix-up area. "That dump!" said a woman occupant of a house two doors down the street. "The people that lived in it was worse than the house. The people that owned it lived next door. They're supposed to tear it down." Uplifting the tone of a rundown neighborhood demands restoration of an overwhelming majority of such shacks. Few of New Orleans' rehabilitation areas had scored any such success.

domain for slum clearance where the property is to be resold for private use.[14]

To Col. Hubbard, the biggest thing his rehabilitation program was doing was to "change the way they spend their money." He elaborated: "They spend more time at home and more money at home. We go into a rehabilitated house and we'll find a new breakfast set, a TV, new furniture. It's bound to have an improvement effect on the family itself."

[14] Up to the end of 1958, efforts to persuade the Louisiana Legislature to pass such a law were unsuccessful, even though such power is considered vital to successful slum clearance in almost every state. This, and protests against the idea by property owners, led New Orleans' city council in April, 1956, to shelve plans for the city's first urban renewal project, a 57-square-block section of Negro slums, after the slum division had spent many weeks and thousands of dollars (including $43,000 from the Federal government) surveying the area and making plans. Opposing abandoning this St. Monica project, Councilman Fred J. Cassibry said: "We have stopped progressing in slum clearance when we pass this motion."

On the other hand, a reporter-photographer team for a national magazine looked over the Conti Street pilot block in June, 1954, and promptly dubbed it a Potemkin Village. So quickly and sloppily had the interior of one house been painted that paint was peeling off onto the floor. "Ah picks up a dustpanful every mornin'," the housewife said. Next door, the prized indoor toilet worked only when extra water was poured into it. With backyard storage sheds demolished, much of the clutter that used to sit outside was now stuffed into corners, boxed under beds, in kitchen cabinets.

Col. Hubbard conceded that "the colored people have been terribly abused—and still are." But, with his mediation board and "honest-contractor" list, he had developed much new machinery to prevent more of it.

In the broader view, Favrot may well have been right when he predicted that New Orleans faces "fifty years more of segregation." Integration, Favrot felt, could come only "little by little." The big problem, of course, was that it was "very difficult to take people who have been raised as a lower class for 75 years, who have been and thought of themselves as subordinates, as the people who do all the menial jobs and raise them suddenly." Economic acceptance, the citizens' committee chairman believed, must precede social acceptance. (This may have been starting in New Orleans, but, as witness the sales experience at Pontchartrain Park, the Negro was still bottom man on the city's economic ladder.) "Now," said Favrot, "the Negro has to be told when to get up and when to go to bed. But it's a problem we're going to lick."

Questionable Claims of Profit to the City:

One claim of success from New Orleans' rehabilitation efforts was that they netted the city more tax and fee revenue than the operation of the slum division cost. But testimony of city tax assessors disputed this strongly.

True or false, the assertion of net profit gained wide publicity in housing circles, and it is primarily for this reason that the facts are dissected here. It is a disservice to a worthy cause to contend that rehabilitation accomplishes more than it does. When the truth catches up with the falsehood, as it ultimately must, all the good results of such programs become suspect.

Officials of the slum division estimated that during 1954, the city took in $143,825 extra revenue as a result of rehabilitation efforts that cost only $100,440 (the division's budget). They figured it this way: 2,000 units rehabilitated at an average cost of $2,500 meant $5 million of repair work. Therefore building permit fees averaging $3.50 per

unit yielded the city $14,000; electrical inspection and permit fees averaging $5 per unit yielded the city another $10,000; plumbing inspection fees averaging $5 per unit yielded still another $10,000, and the 1 per cent city sales tax on the building materials produced $25,000. Total: $59,000 in direct revenue. Additionally, tax assessors (so said the slum division) raised assessments $3 million in two affected rehabilitation districts, yielding the city another $84,825 in property taxes.

The trouble was that New Orleans tax assessors denied that assessments were increased at all, except in a handful of cases where remodeled homes were resold at enhanced prices. No assessor, said they, boosted the assessment on structures retained by the owner. (To do so would have discouraged fix-up.)

With a good part of the $84,825 knocked out, the supposition that rehabilitation netted New Orleans a profit simply will not hold water.

It is plausible, however, that when the slum division reaches its goal of rehabilitating 5,000 units a year, the operation will cover the city's costs. On the basis of the division's figures on permits and remodeling outlays, even 4,000 units a year would turn the profit corner.

So, even though the much-advertised profitability of the city's rehabilitation program apparently was based on a false premise, it is still likely that it can be a revenue raiser, in time.

The Effect on Attitudes:

Just as the rehabilitation program itself had barely scratched the surface of New Orleans' problem, so had the visible effect on attitudes been minuscule. Negroes in fixed-up neighborhoods were better, it was generally agreed, about flinging trash around the streets and vacant lots. A few educated Negroes were assuming more responsibility as citizens. Twenty years ago, as Cliff Favrot pointed out, it would have been unthinkable even to have Negroes serving on a citizens' committee like the one he headed.

But the Negro level of education and training was still deplorable. One New Orleans businessman, for instance, tried to find a Negro stenographer because he was doing business with Negroes. "I interviewed girl after girl who had graduated from Negro business schools," he said. "None of them were qualified technically. But lots of maids in some of our best homes are studying grand opera."

On the minus side, illegitimacy and desertion—as in Miami—were a problem among New Orleans Negroes. And one social worker

observed that while the prevailing attitude among New Orleans whites was that among their own folk unwed motherhood is deplorable, the prevailing Negro attitude was that illegitimacy "doesn't matter."

Many white residents of New Orleans apparently shared the feeling voiced by several members of the slum division advisory committee that most Negroes "want the benefit of both white and colored existence without paying for either." Said Mrs. Gordon Atwater, a member of the citizen's Advisory Committee: "We have to get Negroes to learn for themselves . . . that you can't have benefits without responsibility. I've been told that you can't get them to learn for themselves. I am determined it can be done. But it's going to take years."

Among New Orleanians not connected with the rehabilitation effort, attitudes varied widely.

Few Negroes outside the affected neighborhoods seemed even aware of the program. But a preponderance of whites were—or seemed to be.

One attitude was summed up by Publicist William Smolkin, a former assistant director of public relations for the city: "I don't think anyone seriously expected the slum division to solve the whole problem. You get a 30% return per year on slum property by letting it sit until it falls down, and meanwhile jamming a lot of people into it. As an investment, slum property is considered the finest. There is no risk. The acquisition cost is low. Many a fortune has been built on slums. As a citizen, I think the rehabilitation program is the healthiest thing that has come along in a long time. I hope it puts the fear of God into the landlords."

Indeed, dislike of landlords who profiteer on slums was widespread. It cropped up in conversations with taxi drivers. "It's the poor man who is going to get hurt," said one taxi driver as he headed for the slum division office in downtown New Orleans. "In this town that's the colored people. The landlords put in more 'terlets' and raise the rent $5 a month."

At the other extreme was another taximan who offered the opinion: "I believe we've got the dirtiest niggers in the country here. How *can* you help them?" Or the leading businessman who complained: "Most of our Negroes have no morals, and no morale."

The balance lay somewhere in between. And it was clear that New Orleans had begun to take its long neglected No. 1 problem seriously—and, at a gait unprecedented for the Deep South, to do something about it.

Conclusions:

What does it all add up to? On balance, like this:

1. The city made some progress, but it was only a beginning.

2. Rents in rehabilitated neighborhoods, in many instances, went up more than was reasonable, considering the landlords' investment. But the traffic could bear the price and New Orleans was not under rent control. High rents may be the inevitable price of doing rehabilitation, under a free enterprise economy, for an ethnic group which does not have access to the entire supply of housing.

3. There was almost no social organization of neighborhoods where rehabilitation was being attempted—and thus too little effort being made to teach Negroes how to help themselves, to spend their money more wisely, to make their numerical influence felt in city government.

4. Integration was proceeding only at a slow pace—in schools or otherwise—because such a high proportion of the Negro population was still so unready—for lack of education and training—to live by middle class standards of the ruling white community.

5. The city had not done its part by repairing streets and gutters in rehabilitated areas, although belatedly it revised its ordinances to improve this situation.

6. By whispering campaigns such as the one directed at Pontchartrain Park homes, Negroes fighting for equality may have discouraged builders from serving their need for new housing, thus further complicating the problems of their race.

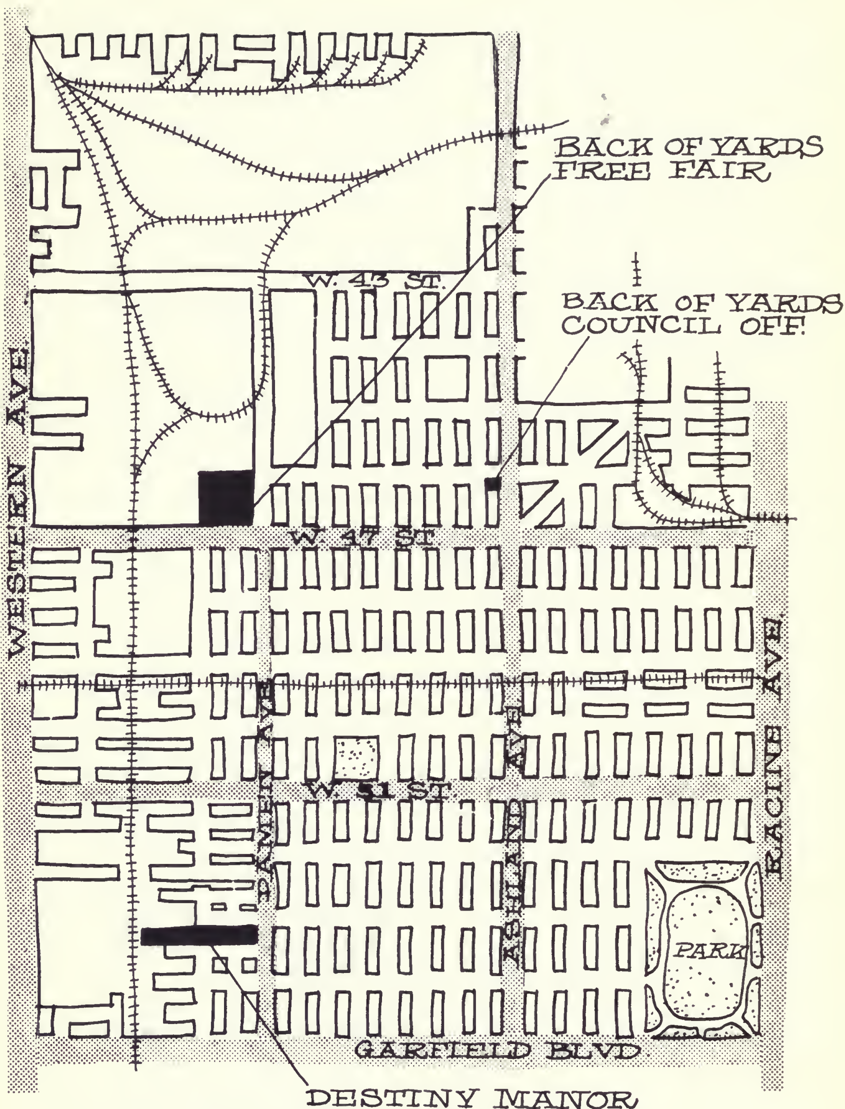
7. Only the faintest beginnings of a new attitude toward citizenship and the intellectual-cultural goals of adult education were in evidence —and only among a handful of Negroes. Moreover, this change was not even as well rooted as it was in Miami.

In sum: the New Orleans effort showed promise, but not much result. In time, given the kind of dedicated effort slum division officials were making, and the continued backing of influential civic leaders, it might produce the gains that leaders of the effort saw and sought. But this looked a long way off.

In the summer of 1958, Favrot retired from the citizens' committee, after five years in the leadership of a rehabilitation movement without urban renewal and the power of eminent domain. He summed up the New Orleans experience thus: "New Orleans is recognized as having one of the best purely rehabilitation programs in the U.S., but you can't lick slums solely with rehabilitation."

CHAPTER IV

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION PAYS OFF



The Back of the Yards neighborhood, where Alinsky, Meegan & Co. pioneered in organization techniques and pulled rehabilitation out of the hat. (The stockyards are to the northeast). For map of Chicago, showing location of Back of the Yards, see Page 90.

CHICAGO: Back of the Yards

Once a notorious, boss-ruled slum, the Back of the Yards has lifted itself to pride and better living standards by community organization for a broad self-help program, in which remodeling of decrepit homes is the most conspicuous and recent achievement.

Thursday, July 28, 1955, was a sweltering day in the middle of a heat wave in Chicago. Shortly after 11 a.m. a chauffeur-driven, air-conditioned black Cadillac sedan pulled to a halt before the converted store at 4600 South Ashland Avenue which serves as office for the Back of the Yards Council. From the rear seat, Chicago's rotund Mayor Richard E. Daley beckoned to the council's executive secretary, Joseph B. Meegan, a lanky, kinetic man who, inside his office and now outside on the sidewalk, had been anxiously awaiting the mayor for half an hour.

Mayor Daley is not one to overlook the graces of politics. In the limousine with him were Donald O'Brien, the Illinois state senator whose district includes the Back of the Yards neighborhood, and James Downs, then Chicago's housing and redevelopment coordinator. Meegan and an acquaintance climbed onto the jump seats behind the sliding glass partition and the auto moved off on a Meegan-guided tour of his domain—an area that once rated as a notorious slum but which that day was celebrating its comeback to respectability, decency and stature in the eyes of the rest of the city.

The mayoral party drove down South Marshfield Avenue from 48th to 54th Streets. Meegan pointed proudly to house after house. Only a few years before, most of these aging brick and wooden structures had presented a classic picture of blight—broken fences, ill-kept yards, littered gutters and sidewalks, sagging porches. On this day, not just a preponderance, but close to 100 per cent of the homes gleamed with new paint, new trim, new siding, or all three. There was many a new front porch, new awnings, tidy new gardens.

"You've really fixed them up," Mayor Daley told Meegan. "Nice lawns, too."

"We think that beauty can spread as well as blight," Meegan said. "The best way to prevent slums is not to let them happen."

"That's right," chimed in the mayor. "I've pointed that out to people."

The limousine wound through several more blocks of one-, two- and three-story detached houses that bore the same marks of recent renovation. It drew up at 53d Street and Damen Avenue. There a crowd of perhaps 250 had gathered in honor of the mayor's well-advertised ceremonial visit to the central gem of the Back of the Yards' rejuvenation: a new subdivision of 35 homes on long-vacant land that had been bought and developed by the community council itself.

As the mayor, a score of city and state dignitaries, newsmen and cameramen walked through the development, it became clear that the residents of Destiny Manor (the name derives from the Back of the Yards' Council's slogan: "We the people will work out our own destiny") were uniquely proud of their stolid brick homes.

Frank and Antoinette Lhotak, of 2131 West 43d Place, typify the reasons why Destiny Manor, though limited to customers with 1) children and 2) a background in Back of the Yards, became a quick sellout. Mrs. Lhotak was born and raised in Back of the Yards. She and her husband, a machine operator, had moved to southwest Chicago, an area of new suburban growth and young families. There Mrs. Lhotak found no parks, overcrowded schools, Catholic churches few and scattered. In Back of the Yards, she has her choice of St. Michael's, St. Basil's, St. Joseph's, and St. Cyril's—all handy. In the southwest, it was costing her $5 a month carfare to send her children to school; from Destiny Manor, schools are within walking distance. On top of that, she said, "You can't buy a house like this for that kind of money out there."

The Lhotaks' duplex cost them $26,900. The monthly payments are $148, but they rent the upstairs 5½-room flat to Frank's uncle.

General contractor George V. Jerutis, who built the Lhotak's house and others in Destiny Manor, watched the crowds admiring his work. Two and a half years earlier, Jerutis had begun what then were the first new dwellings to go up in the Back of the Yards since the Depression. "Other contractors called me crazy," he recalled. But Jerutis had no trouble selling his first two flats, at 36th and Hoyne Streets, for $24,500. So he had gone right on building on many of the vacant lots in the four square miles that comprise the Back of the Yards neighborhood.

A new subdivision of $15,250 to $17,900 single-family and $26,900 duplex homes crowned self-help efforts to revitalize Back of the Yards. A crowd of some 250 persons turned out on a sweltering July day to watch Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago tour "Destiny Manor," hear him praise it as a "wonderful demonstration of what citizen participation can accomplish." Editorialized the Chicago Daily News: *"A deteriorating home . . . is a source of infection . . . A neat and attractive atmosphere is also contagious, as the Council is proving."*

Destiny Manor's single-family homes range in price from $15,250 to $17,900. All have at least three bedrooms. The two-flat buildings were sold for $26,900—the amount Lhotaks paid. Jerutis noted that about a third of the houses he had sold in the area lately were bought by people who paid more than half in cash. Only a few were resorting to FHA or VA loans with their extra-liberal terms.

"The older people hated to see the younger ones leave the neighborhood," observed another homebuilder in the crowd. "But until recently there was nothing modern to keep 'em here."

Jerutis, who was born on the edge of Back of the Yards, has lived all his life in the vicinity. "I've never seen enthusiasm like this," he said.

Mayor Daley grew so interested he went more than an hour past schedule while visiting from door-to-door in the hot sun. Eventually,

the tour ended, and the dignitaries and at least half the neighborhood spectators adjourned to Margo's Colonial Inn on South Ashland Avenue for lunch. Opening the inevitable speeches, Miss Frances Mazurk, head of the local real estate board and leader of the Back of the Yards rehabilitation drive, reported that in just two years, 2,412 buildings in that once-rundown area had been repaired or remodeled. It was, she said, "a great realization of our dreams."

Mayor Daley, who lives himself not far from Back of the Yards, declared: "You have revitalized and restored your home district. The project is a wonderful demonstration of what citizen participation can accomplish. One thing that impresses me tremendously is the warmth of friendship and the sentimental devotion to families and friends, neighborhood and the people, which is a great characteristic of your life here and probably the reason for what we saw today.

"We accomplish very little in government unless we have what you have in Back of the Yards—active citizen participation, a binding together of the forces of the community to do good."

Meegan was toastmaster. Among other things, he handed the mayor a $200 check from the council for a policeman, father of 12 children—then lying between life and death in a hospital as a result of an auto accident. This was a gesture typical of the Back of the Yards Council. It is a kind of interdenominational Great White Father to its people.

A History of Conflict:

Such evidences of pride, prosperity and progress and such kudos from the head of the city government are a relatively recent addition to life in Back of the Yards. For the area, socially speaking, has been on the wrong side of the tracks since Irish and German immigrants built the first shacks there to live near their low-paid, bloody jobs butchering hogs and cattle in the adjacent stockyards.

The four square miles that constitute the Back of the Yards lie west and chiefly south of Chicago's Union Stockyards, bounded by 33d and 55th Streets and by Racine and Western Avenues. (See map.) Population: about 125,000. The location is away from the cooling breezes of Lake Michigan, hence "back" of the stockyards' evil-smelling processing plants—plants that still, on some days, cast a pungent stench over much of the neighborhood.

Back of the Yards is an old neighborhood. For most of its life it has been an area of dun-colored one- and two-story wooden houses, interlaced with brick flats that rise as high as three and occasionally four floors. From eye level, the visitor saw gray streets and gray,

dilapidated houses. If he looked up, he saw a sky crisscrossed with church steeples and smoke stacks. Until lately, the dwellings harbored many a violation of sanitary codes. Many had only cold water, no bath, no sink, inadequate toilets—some of them in the back yards. Coal stoves left many homes cold and damp. Like all blighted neighborhoods, Back of the Yards was a spawning ground for crime, disease, delinquency, drunkenness and dependency. It was the locale of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle,* of James Farrell's *Studs Lonigan.*

Even in its rehabilitated state of grace, the Back of the Yards could be regarded by modern critics of architecture and aesthetics as a drab community. But it has the offsetting charm of abundant playgrounds, tree-lined sidewalks, convenient stores, plenty of schools and churches. And once again, like the best competitors in the baseball tradition, it has plenty of "heart."

The plethora of churches—many of them impressive structures of stone and marble with cathedral-like dimensions—arises from the history of the neighborhood. Back of the Yards is 95 per cent Catholic, and peopled by families of eastern European extraction, now in their second and third generation away from immigrant status.

Irish and German immigrants, who built the first shacks in what was then a suburb far from the edge of Chicago, came shortly after the stockyards opened in 1865. Starting in the 1880's came successive migrations of Poles (who still outnumber other ethnic groups), Lithuanians, Czechoslovaks, Bohemians, Ukranians and, lastly, Mexicans. Often, new nationality groups were imported by packers because they would work for less than earlier immigrants. As each nationality group learned American ways and began to demand more pay, sometimes organizing into unions, agents for the packers brought in fresh cheap labor—often from a country that in Europe had been an enemy of the troublemakers. Thus Poles battled Germans and, in turn, were fought by Lithuanians. At the turn of the century, all hated the Irish, who were still top dogs. When Negroes were brought in to break the big strike of 1919, everybody fought them bloodily.

Residentially, each nationality group clustered around its Catholic church. National rivalry demanded that if one ethnic group had a magnificent house of worship, others must build a structure no less massive. Building and maintaining them was a big burden to a people whose insecure jobs in the stockyards—up until 1939—netted (at a basic rate of 39¢ an hour) about $12 a week for unskilled labor and twice that for skilled workers.

Priests of the nationality churches shared the animosities of their congregations. "I have seen," says the editor of the community's

weekly newspaper, Back of the Yards *Journal,* "a Polish Catholic priest walk over to the opposite side of the street rather than come face to face with a Lithuanian Catholic clergyman."

The area included five of Chicago's notorious machine wards.

Gangs of youths ran wild. When there was a dance, the sponsors knew it stood a good chance of ending in a fight that could wreck the hall. Shoplifting was a plague. Young hoodlums armed with bats sometimes beat Negroes who were reckless enough to venture into the area at night.

The Depression compounded and worsened the neighborhood's social problems. Unemployment mounted. Neighborhood banks failed, taking with them the savings of many a poor family. Foreclosures cost many Back of the Yards families their homes.

A New Breed Of Reformer:

Into this maelstrom of decay and social disorder there came, in 1938, Saul D. Alinsky, a young Jewish criminologist and University of Chicago graduate. An anthropologist by early training, Alinsky had switched to the study of crime. For a time, he hung around with members of the Capone gang to fulfill a fellowship. He became criminologist at Joliet State Penitentiary and began writing on crime, its causes and its prevention. It was partly crime prevention that turned his interest toward Back of the Yards, Alinsky says. And partly his passionate sympathy for making democracy work by giving the underdog a break.

"The study of crime," Alinsky has explained, "opened up before me a whole vista of social disorganization. Unemployment, malnutrition, disease, bad physical environment are all mixed together in the etiology of crime. They are not isolated but interdependent phenomena. The typical council of social agencies makes the mistake of attacking them separately, notably the problem of juvenile delinquency. Such councils, moreover, do not attack the basic forces in the community and in the nation that create the slums and their evil by-products. They come to the people of the slums not to help them rebel and fight their way out of the muck. Most social work does not even reach the submerged masses. Social work is largely middle-class activity and limited by a middle-class psychology. In the rare instances where it reaches the slum dwellers it seeks to get them adjusted to the environment so they will live in hell and like it. A higher form of social treason would be difficult to conceive. Because it cannot and will not get down to the roots of our economic and social evils,

the conventional community council retreats into a sphere of superficial amelioration and a static, segmental kind of thinking. Is it any wonder that the slum dweller despises this attitude . . . ?"[1]

So Alinsky set out, feeling as he did, to create a people's organization with objectives so broad that they have been described as amounting to "no less than a revitalization of democracy." "What a community organization must have to succeed is a rainbow of interests which involve all the people in the community," says Alinsky. "Many organizations make the mistake of adopting too limited objectives. This automatically limits the support they can rally."

The initial problems of the Back of the Yards were 1) juvenile delinquency, 2) housing, 3) health, 4) economic insecurity.

Among Alinsky's earliest supporters were men of similar convictions about the need for more citizen participation to make government work—Bishop Bernard J. Sheil, senior auxiliary bishop of the Chicago archdiocese and founder of the Catholic Youth Organization; G. Howland Shaw, formerly of the State Department, whom Alinsky had met in his prison work; and Joseph B. Meegan, a native of the neighborhood who was then recreation director in Davis Square Park. Meegan, young son of an Irish immigrant who had worked 14 hours a day in a slaughterhouse for $1, was eager to help.

Together, Meegan and Alinsky interested nearly a score of priests, labor leaders, merchants and young men representing nationalities and clubs in forming a neighborhood council. The major hurdle was getting both priests and labor leaders firmly into the organization. For success, they needed both. Back of the Yards, as we have noted, is about 95% Catholic. It was also a workingmen's community and many belonged to unions, notably the CIO packinghouse workers. But in 1939, the CIO was anathema to many clergymen. Moreover, Herb March, president of the packinghouse workers' local, was an avowed Communist. Bishop Sheil, who helped promote the joint effort, has explained his position in these words: "When the CIO came in, the Catholics could not be in opposition to something that was so obviously for the benefit of all the people." Still, it took a deal of expert cajolery, flattery and playing-upon-the-ego of some key local priests to get them to speak at the same meeting with Communist Herb March. One priest started to storm out. Following him into the hall, one of the Council's organizers taxed the clergyman with being afraid of Union Leader March, already sitting in a front

[1] Quoted by Agnes E. Meyer in *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1945.

seat. "Afraid?" said the priest. "I'm not afraid of anybody." And back he came.

Some merchants, long disdainful of community councils, came because they thought they saw a chance to woo customers; and competitors joined up so other merchants couldn't get ahead of them. As furniture dealer Pete Barskis, a life-long resident of the area, once explained it: "Doing a job for ourselves was what hooked us first. Then we saw the profit in the idea. As a Lithuanian, I had only Lithuanian customers; when the other nationalities became friendly and began to patronize the store, business improved. The others began to see the advantages. None of them could afford to stay out." Alinsky calls such stratagems "organizational tactics." Once rivals were working together on community projects, animosities melted into friendships.

Back of the Yards Council came into being at a time of community crisis. It started life crusading. As Saul Alinsky has written: "A people's organization is a conflict group. This must be openly and fully recognized. Its sole reason for coming into being is to wage war against all evils which cause suffering and unhappiness."[2]

On July 14, 1939, the first community congress was held. Bishop Sheil, the Communist Herb March, Meegan, Alinsky and about 300 others attended. The antagonistic groups found they had much in common. Delegates from other neighborhoods were able to agree that they did have a program embracing the fields of labor, housing, health, youth and recreation. But the meeting's boldest move was to back demands of the CIO packinghouse workers, scheduled to strike two days later.

On Sunday, July 16th, Bishop Sheil, ignoring telephoned threats on his life and bullets fired into a restaurant while he ate, appeared (along with John L. Lewis, then the Grand Poobah of the CIO) on the platform of the union's mass meeting at the Coliseum—held to decide whether to strike. This signaled the start of a church-labor tie-up in Chicago which has made history. Confronted not only with labor but also with solid opposition from the church and the community, the packers negotiated. Next day, wages went up from 39¢ to 55¢ an hour in the stockyards. "It was," Bishop Sheil said later, "the beginning of a new solidarity in community life." It was also the beginning of an economic emancipation, soon accelerated and extended by World War II, that has provided a solid financial underpinning for the comeback of the once-blighted community.

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[2] In *Reveille For Radicals,* The University Of Chicago Press, 1946.

A Comprehensive Attack:

The council's program developed gradually. (Indeed, the organization was 14 years old—and solidly entrenched politically, financially and in the hearts of its people—before it began promoting physical rehabilitation of the drab housing of the community.)

First came help for children. Infant mortality was 10%. Depression-pinched diets had left their stamp on the health of school-age boys and girls. A dental survey—still carried on by the council—found 92% had bad teeth or mouth ailments. And nearly as many had tendencies toward tuberculosis—largely as a result of malnutrition.

The council's first major accomplishment was establishing an infant welfare station at Davis Park Square. The infant death rate started down. The council held a carnival and raised money. It helped relieve sky-high unemployment among Back of the Yards families by securing WPA and NYA jobs. It lobbied successfully in Springfield and Washington to pioneer the hot lunch and milk program for public and parochial schools.

Still, gangs of juvenile hoodlums ranged the neighborhood, smashing store-fronts, fighting and roistering. Meegan pretended to assume the gangs were what they pretended to be: "social and athletic clubs." The council gave each of them $50 a year to help fix up empty stores as headquarters. The kids were flattered at being trusted. And the headquarters moved them off the streets. Soon they formed a baseball league.

The council established a floodlit softball field at 47th and Damen Streets, on land leased from railroads for a token $1 a year. The council invested a sizable amount of money in the floodlights, grandstands and goal posts. Some months later, a council delegation was defending its budget before the budget committee of Chicago's Community Fund. "Why don't you have anything for a night watchman?" asked a committeeman. "Public parks with much less equipment in them have to hire a night watchman."

Replied one of the council's delegation: "Yeah, but those parks belong to the public. This is ours. We're not going to steal our own stuff."

As a result of such psychology of self interest, as well as the council's efforts, gang fighting in the Back of the Yards soon gave way to cooperative spirits.

Today, the gangs have long since ceased to be a problem. Instead, in the last 10 years, the parishes have been forming Boy Scout troops.

Teaching People To Manage Their Money:

One of the council's most subtle jobs was its Credit Union. One of the most pressing problems, says Alinsky, was to persuade the people in Back of the Yards to budget their spending with better sense. Too many were in hock to credit sharks. Too many were buying late model autos while their homes were in wretched condition, the family had no refrigerator, and its breadwinner no life insurance. But, as Alinsky has written: "You can talk over with your people life insurance, health problems, housing or any number of social and personal problems, (but) there are certain subjects that are taboo. One of these is personal finances or how a person should spend his own money. Not even a person's labor steward or his priest or minister can even begin to give him unsolicited advice. How a person should spend his money is regarded by that person as his inalienable American right and nobody else's business. To venture into a discussion on this subject with a local person is to insure that you will be told to 'mind your own damn business.' . . . What we had to do was to build a bridge that would go over this valley of 'private affairs' so we could get through to Joe Doakes and so we could give him some education on finances."[3]

The result was the Credit Union. It kept its interest charges at a low 1% to lure borrowers away from loan sharks. Says Alinsky: "When a man wants to borrow money, he realizes that it is perfectly reasonable for the lender to inquire into his financial affairs." The subterfuge has worked well to instill financial education in the minds of people who need it, say council officials.

Battles With The Political Machine:

As the Back of the Yards Council grew in scope and influence, it naturally bumped up against the Kelly-Nash political machine that so long had dominated the Packingtown area. Says Alinsky: "In the world today—the world of the fix and the angle—everybody assumes he can't do anything without influence. But the truth is that 98 per cent of all the things people want done you can do without any special pull at all. Every time an individual citizen gets a service done for him by someone else, he becomes indebted to the man who has helped him. That is how political machines are built."

One custom of the machine was to distribute baskets at Christmas time to remind voters where their obligations lay. Alinsky recalls: "Instead of holding out truth and justice to the people, we delivered

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[3] *Reveille for Radicals, op. cit.*

baskets of our own." Except that where the machine gave a chicken and a pint of whiskey and couple of doodads, the Back of the Yards Council gave the same families a big turkey, a quart of whiskey and bigger doodads. How did the council get the machine's list of names? Nobody will say—to this day. But there was peace after that skirmish—for a while.

In 1944, warfare with the politicians reached a climax.

Recreation Director Meegan had established the infant welfare shelter at Davis Square Park, where his job kept him. Council headquarters was there, too. The park commissioners (who were closely tied to the Kelly-Nash machine) eyed the setup with disfavor. The council was growing too strong to suit them. Finally, after some jockeying, the conservative president of the Chicago Park District, Robert J. Dunham, transferred Meegan to another job. Instead, Meegan resigned. The council hired him as its full-time executive secretary and set up its own office in a vacant store at 4600 S. Ashland.

These maneuvers were carried out amid much bickering in the newspapers—bickering by which Alinsky focused public attention on the council at a time when attention was needed. Alinsky did not hesitate to fight rough. His best trick was to needle Dunham, in statements to the newspapers, until Dunham got angry enough to say things he shouldn't say. It worked. Once, for instance, Dunham slipped and admitted to a reporter that his real objective in ordering Meegan's transfer was not to "improve park service," but to break up the Back of the Yards Council. Another time, Dunham was all set to go to Arizona for a vacation, which would have ended the controversy by removing one of the principals from the scene. Reporters met Dunham at the railroad station and asked him: "Is it true, like Alinsky says, that you're running away from this row?" Alinsky says Dunham got so mad he ordered his bags off the train.

At another point, Alinsky planted assorted "drunks" in bars in the Back of the Yards to mumble about misapplication of funds in the Back of the Yard Council, Florida vacations for officers, loose living, etc. The "drunks" always wandered away before anybody could find their name, but, just as Alinsky figured, rumors rapidly got back to the Kelly-Nash machine. Mayor Kelly shortly issued a statement that the Back of the Yards Council was corrupt. This was just what Alinsky was waiting for. He replied that seven of the eleven officers of the council were Catholic priests and added: "I, as an American of Jewish faith, am prepared to defend the integrity of the church against Mayor Kelly."

Another time, Alinsky persuaded one of his co-workers, a woman, to rush out of his office mumbling: "I'm getting out of here. Mr. Alinsky is too ruthless." This was particularly effective because there was a big crowd of newspapermen waiting outside of Alinsky's door. This fake incident also made page 1 as the "first dissension" inside of the Back of the Yards Council.

As Alinsky told a reporter at the time: "We were growing stronger and stronger in four of the machine's six best wards. And we were a constant threat to exposure of machine monkey business."

Mayor Kelly, who was both a political and personal friend of Dunham, finally had to tell Dunham to keep his mouth shut.

Reporting the incidents in *McCall's* magazine, John Bartlow Martin wrote: "He (Alinsky) made it appear that the machine was chasing hungry waifs out of a city park, while permitting yacht clubs to use other parks. Children in Catholic churches in Back of the Yards prayed for the defeat of the Kelly machine. The machine was placed in the position of fighting the church (the biggest Catholic archdiocese in the world). The council forced four ward committeemen and the CIO to break with the machine. It was an election year. The machine capitulated. Ever since, politicians have cooperated with the council."

Alinsky did not neglect programs to develop leadership inside his adopted neighborhood (Alinsky has never lived there; his home now is in nearby Kenwood).

In a middle-class community, Alinsky theorizes: "Adult education works—somewhat." Back of the Yards was no middle-class community in its hand-to-mouth days of 1939 to 1940. Moreover, as Alinsky pointed out at the time to a meeting of religious leaders, businessmen and labor leaders, even the community leaders in each group tended to be afraid to meet with leaders of other groups, "because you don't want people to find out how stupid you are."

Among the Catholic priests—the bulk of available community leaders—most, so Alinsky contends, hadn't read a book since they got out of the seminary. "Yet it was a cardinal sin for them to admit it. The psychology of bluff had become a big roadblock to their education," Alinsky recalls. His solution was to get priests, businessmen and labor leaders together—separately.

Pushing this policy of segregated education, Alinsky invited ten priests for dinner, fed them prime ribs of beef and then taxed them with failing their inherent responsibility of trying to improve life in their neighborhood. "I was," he recalls, "remarkably blunt about it.

I made the point that they ought to have the courage to admit it when they didn't know something." He quickly won general consent that in their discussions they would forswear bluff and stick to what they did know. "Fine," said Alinsky, "now let's also not get involved in any theological arguments here. For instance, we can't have any discussions about the arguments between Thomas Aquinas and Hohisnuff." The group of clergymen nodded solemnly.

Alinsky paused and then quietly pointed out that he doubted very much that any of them knew anything about the arguments between Thomas Aquinas and Hohisnuff because he had just made up the latter's name himself.

Out of this grew a series of seminars for Back of the Yards clergymen, with Alinsky as teacher. "By the second session, they had jumped from comic books to heavy economics, philosophy, and discussions of the meaning of freedom," Alinsky recalls. In time, the meetings grew so popular that his problem became not how to induce attendance, but how to pacify junior priests whose religious duties forced them to miss meetings. One time, the whole group took a weekend to motor to Tennessee, to improve their social and economic information by making a first-hand inspection of the TVA.

Support For A Strike:

The council seldom started a fight, but once embroiled, it never hesitated to use ruthless weapons.

In the early forties, one of the largest department stores in Chicago underwent a strike of warehouse workers. Behind it lay a history of growing neighborhood animosity toward the store. Council leaders, for example, say the store was relying on a cut-price policy, rather than cooperating with the neighborhood by such gestures as contributions for dance programs for youth clubs or for building a recreation hall in a parish—or for the Back of the Yards' Christmas collection. When ministers and priests suggested from the pulpit that the store be boycotted, the store price-cut each boycott into failure.

When some 250 local neighborhood boys who had joined the warehouse union began picketing the store, council leaders grew worried. Says Alinsky: "On top of the other hostilities toward the store, the strike was dangerous because the kids with the picket signs were so well known by the people who lived here."

The Back of the Yards Council set up a soup kitchen for the strikers. Ministers and priests active in the council backed the strikers' cause from their pulpits. But as plans grew for a community-wide

boycott, another labor union moved into the picture. This confronted the striking warehouse youths with a major difficulty: the store was labeling the walkout as a jurisdictional dispute.

Finally, passions reached such a boiling point that the Back of the Yards Council set up a "people's court" and tried to stage a public hearing on the issues in the strike. The store, as council leaders expected, indignantly refused to accept the invitation, likening the "people's court" to something from Russia. The "court," hearing only one side, naturally found in favor of the striking union. It issued a brief statement to the store asking if its management saw any reason, in view of the verdict, why the council should not take steps to "enforce" its decision. Soon the store's attorney was on the telephone to insist on a meeting with the council's leaders. They were prepared to refuse. Then Alinsky noticed it was snowing heavily. What a chance, he thought, to demonstrate the store's arrogance in asking 15 council leaders—priests, ministers, businessmen and union representatives—to come downtown in a snowstorm to meet a lone corporation lawyer in his sumptuous office.

As a peace conference, the meeting was a failure. As a tactical skirmish, it succeeded wonderfully.

The council leaders charged collusion between the store and the competing union. The lawyer arose and roared: "Are you people casting insinuations against the integrity of our clients?" Council leaders replied that they were not insinuating at all; they were saying so. The lawyer looked grim and demanded the name and organization of each member of the delegation. The delegation hesitated, then complied and left.

The next morning, says Alinsky, a group professing to represent the competing union began threatening the members of the delegation (who had given their names to the department store lawyer) with bodily injury if they did not withdraw from the case. Where did the unionists get the names? "You know damn well where we got them," they said.

Council leaders called the lawyer, and, they say, wrung an admission from him that he turned over the names to the union. They told the lawyer what had happened. The attorney replied he was not responsible for the union's actions. Council spokesmen retorted: "If you start an automobile, put it in gear and jump out, you are responsible for what happens. You turned in our names to a bunch of criminals. What happens is your responsibility from now on." Then they hung up.

That was Saturday. The next day, the council arranged for word to get back to the department store about the council's next move. At 10 a.m. Tuesday, says Alinsky, the council was prepared to go into court and request an injunction restraining the department store from murdering Protestant ministers and Catholic priests. Alinsky concedes he would not have been granted an injunction, but the publicity would have been devastating. On Monday night, the department store capitulated.

Today, the same store's branch manager is a leader in the Back of the Yards Council, and the store is as well-liked as it once was hated.

In 1946, some 20,000 Chicago packing house workers struck for higher wages, complaining they could not afford to buy the meat they butchered. The council spent $7,500 to feed pickets and policemen alike, give food, clothing and medical care to strikers' families. One reason, says Joe Meegan, is that the Communist Party had made gestures toward setting up a soup kitchen. The council did not want to let the Party outdo it at helping people in its own neighborhood.

Before the strike was over, the council president, Father Ambrose Ondrak, (now an abbot of the Benedictine order) walked on the picket line with the strikers.

The union lost this strike—its first major defeat—when President Truman ordered the government to seize the plants. At the same time, criticism of Local 1's left-wing leader, Herb March, began to rise. March was eventually displaced as president of the stockyards local, but moved over to the Armour division and went on the payroll as an organizer.

In the days of close teamwork between the packinghouse workers and the Back of the Yards Council, the union offices were located at 48th and Marshfield—four blocks from Davis Square Park. But shortly after the war, an affiliated organization of the Communist Party ran into financial difficulties and needed to sell a hall it owned on Wabash Avenue, four miles away. The packinghouse local had the money. So it took over the building, which stood in the heart of Chicago's near-Southside Negro ghetto. "As a result," says Alinsky, "it discouraged white people from going to the union hall."

This is not to say that the chance location of a union hall is chiefly responsible for the fact that Negroes have taken over the dirty jobs in the stockyards. The war was the chief cause of that. The demand for labor in wartime, which drew Negroes into Chicago out of the rural South, also provided cleaner and better jobs for the workingmen who lived in the Back of the Yards.

Until 1939, perhaps 80% of the families in the Back of the Yards depended directly or indirectly on the packinghouse industry for their economic base.[4] Today, only a few old-timers remain. As Alinsky says: "You can't get the younger fellows to take those jobs at all." Most of them have better paying jobs in new factories that have sprung up west of the neighborhood where they live.

How The Council Works:

If Bishop Sheil has been the council's spiritual leader and Saul Alinsky its temporal guide and strategic genius, bustling Joe Meegan has been the spark plug. A 6 ft., 2 in. man of boundless energy, Meegan has grown to take over more and more of the council's direction, too. In recent years, Alinsky's work with his Industrial Areas Foundation[5] (set up in 1940 by several wealthy or influential persons to help create similar neighborhood councils elsewhere) has taken him off to New York and California for long periods. Bishop Sheil has virtually withdrawn from participation in his once lengthy list of community activities. But the council, now as always, has for its president a Roman Catholic priest. The 1955 incumbent, Father Roman J. Berendt, 43, assistant pastor of Sacred Heart Church, had been in the Back of the Yards neighborhood since 1939 and had been president of the council for the last seven years. For seven years before that, Father Berendt headed the Credit Union sponsored by the council.

But it is Joe Meegan, its executive secretary, who personifies the council to the community and the rest of the city. Into his office, a partitioned-off cubbyhole in the plainly furnished council headquarters, flows a stream of people who need advice or help—a woman whose husband won't support the three children, an adolescent whose parents cannot control him any more, a man who needs a job. Before, after and during face-to-face talks, Meegan is on the telephone arranging anything from the loan of 100 chairs for a funeral to a flight to Washington, D. C. in behalf of a Back of the Yards family whose son, a priest, is interned behind the Bamboo Curtain.

Today, Meegan has a staff of ten. There is a man who works with juvenile problems. There is a woman who handles welfare cases.

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[4] Today, the figure is probably not over 25%—and decreasing, Alinsky believes.

[5] The foundation grew out of Alinsky's work in Back of the Yards. "I got flooded with letters and phone calls from people all over the country who asked if we couldn't do some of the same things for them that we were doing in Back of the Yards," Alinsky recalls. Since 1940, Alinsky's full-time occupation has been as national director of the foundation, which has grown from an organization consisting of only Alinsky and no office to a staff of 11, scattered from California to New York.

One woman is in charge of housing rehabilitation. One man follows through at City Hall with specific housing violations uncovered by the council.

But Meegan is coach, quarterback, line plunger and pass catcher—so busy in his own neighborhood, in fact, that when this was written he and Julian Levi had never met, although Levi was running a similar fight against slums in Hyde Park only a mile or two east of Meegan's office.

The council was leaning more and more for leadership on its executive secretary. But it nonetheless was remaining *the* medium for the neighborhood's drive for more participation in its own future.

A Genius For Money-Raising:

Some city officials, who have watched other Chicago neighborhoods struggle to keep community organizations functioning on threadbare budgets, think the Back of the Yards Council's success is greatly due to its genius for raising money.[6] The council does not raise its money in orthodox fashion by soliciting contributions from merchants and wealthy residents. As Meegan puts it: "We don't accept that kind of contribution because the people who contribute may be responsible for our problems." The council has turned down offers of big donations from Goldblatt's, the Chicago chain whose branch at 47th and Ashland Avenues is the biggest store in the Back of the Yards. The council has refused money from its richest supporter, William Wood Prince, president of the Union Stockyard and Transit Company. But the council *has* helped persuade Prince to take many a step to reduce smoke and foul odors from the yards.

The council raises most of its funds from a 27-day carnival, called the Chicago Free Fair. Meegan says the Fair nets the council $60,000 a year. The Fair, held on a big vacant lot in the middle of the Back of the Yards, lets the people of the neighborhood finance the council painlessly but liberally through the nickels, dimes and quarters they spend on carnival concessions and bingo games. The proceedings, in 1955 at least, were also enlivened by such attractions as drawings for seven free Fords and one Cadillac, nightly contests for children (from greased pig catching to sack races), and a mass visit by the Chicago White Sox baseball team, then in hot contention for the lead in the American League pennant race. Perspiring young priests, sometimes stripped down to a T-shirt and black clerical trousers, toted the pounds

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[6] Many rehabilitation experts feel enough money to hire at least one full-time staff man and a secretary is essential. Whether more lavish financing is vital seems debatable and probably varies in different neighborhoods.

Painless financing for the Council's ten-member staff and many activities is provided by a three week "Free Fair" each summer. It usually raises about $60,000 (from concessions), part of which goes into a "social action" fund which can undertake activities that would not do for a group (like the Council itself) which is partly supported by the Community Chest. For instance, the "social action" fund bought the land for "Destiny Manor."

and pounds of small change across 47th Street to a vacant store, pushed it through mechanical counting and sorting machines, bundled it up in bags to go to a bank.

The council accepts only one contribution—$18,000 a year from Chicago's Community Fund (i.e., the Community Chest). It bulldozed this handout from the Chest in Back of the Yards style: by threatening to have members of the packinghouse union withhold their own personal contributions to the Community Fund.

The money goes into two pockets. First is the Back of the Yards Council itself, a non-profit, tax-exempt foundation. The other is the Social Action Committee, which handles activities that would not be proper for a group supported by the Community Chest—such as backing strikes, lobbying for free milk for school lunches, supporting continuation of rent control or promoting the subdivision, Destiny Manor. In 1954, Meegan says the council itself operated on a $50,000 budget and Social Action on $28,000. Social Action gets all its funds

from the Free Fair, is run by a six-member executive group. For Destiny Manor, Social Action plunked down $40,000 for the land, $42,000 more for streets, curbs and sidewalks, and $10,000 ($200 per lot) for sewer and water mains.

Social action money, indeed, is one of the council's strongest weapons. In 1955, Illinois Governor Stratton vetoed a bill to continue state aid for the school lunch program which the council originally lobbied out of the Illinois state legislature in 1943. Back of the Yards sent a delegation to Springfield, turned on enough heat to persuade the legislature to override the veto. Social Action funds also sent Meegan to Washington to testify against an appropriation cut in the Federal school lunch program. Result: Congress appropriated another $50,000,000, so that public school children—at least in Back of the Yards—can have all the milk they can drink for 3¢ or less. The low price is made possible by Federal subsidy of 3¢ per child per day, plus an Illinois subsidy of 1¢ per child per day toward the cost of surplus milk. Additionally, Illinois provides a subsidy of 2¢ per child per day for a hot lunch.

Meegan sums up council finances and philosophy this way: "If this is a people's program, it has got to be supported by the people. That's why we have the Fair. The secret of any organization is participation."

Meegan can point to an impressive list of activities in which the council's people take part. Most dramatic are the council's monthly meetings, held on Thursday nights in the council's office. Whether it is hot, cold, raining or snowing, the room is almost always packed to capacity with about 90 persons—from teenagers to octogenarians. In the friendly atmosphere of this private town hall, people who would quail at the thought of presenting a complaint to city authorities feel enough at home to get up and speak their piece about what needs fixing in the neighborhood.

More than half a dozen active committees push other council programs. Items:

• A recreation committee spent $3,000 sponsoring a summer school program that included a free movie once a week, nine Halloween parties (which have almost eliminated Halloween vandalism in the years they have been held), Easter egg hunts, track meets, swimming meets, tennis matches and a baseball game between members of the City Council and the Back of the Yards Council.

• A safety committee, continuing a campaign to wipe out traffic hazards, persuaded a Boy Scout troop from St. Joseph's Church to

stencil signs on 313 street corners reading "green light, look both ways." It nudged city aldermen and the traffic section of the street department into putting speed-limit signs on Loomis Street. It asked and got more women school crossing guards. Efforts to improve street lighting resulted in the city allocating funds for mercury vapor lamps to be installed on Ashland Avenue, the main street.

• The council hired a woman staffer to run a free employment service, and some 107 industries in the area agreed to try to fill jobs through the council's good offices.

One of the council's most important continuing jobs is close liaison with the police, particularly to sidetrack incipient juvenile trouble-makers before they wind up in reform school, to be case-hardened into a life of crime. Policeman Jim Shaffer, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve, checks daily at the council office on complaints. As usual with neighborhood groups, the council gets a lot of complaints from residents of the area who are unwilling to take their problems directly to the police. At one point, Alinsky persuaded police to turn juveniles committing minor offenses over to the council instead of booking them. "Ninety per cent of the arrests were minor offenses," he says, "so why write up criminal records on the boys?"

The council maintains a close relationship with all the authoritarian agencies who deal with people in trouble with the law. If a Back of the Yards family is hauled into family court, Staffer Joe Vlosek usually goes with them to the hearing. When a delinquent is shipped off to the Illinois State Training School for Boys, Vlosek works with parole officers to make plans for him on his return to the community. Juveniles whose misdeeds do not quite warrant locking them up are often put under Vlosek's supervision by police or the juvenile court. Vlosek has such young men come down to the council office to talk to him at least once a week. He explains: "I go to a boy after he is in trouble and offer to help. You have to have a personal relationship. If you have an authoritarian stigma, you start from 40 yards back." Vlosek has had much success in lining up jobs in industry for delinquents 16 years old or more. Often, it develops, they have stolen to ease the parents' burden of supporting them.

For ten years, Mrs. Evelyn Ostrowski, a professionally-trained social worker, has helped people in Back of the Yards cope with official welfare agencies. She does some casework. But mostly her job consists of telling aged widows where to apply for social security benefits or advising bereft mothers how to secure aid for dependent children. Many of the elder generation in Back of the Yards still speak little or no English. So much of Mrs. Ostrowski's work is interpreting. She

speaks Polish. Another staffer speaks Lithuanian. When a Mexican family creates a need for a Spanish interpreter, Mrs. Ostrowski calls on a priest at the Mexican parish.

As a social agency, say members of Joe Meegan's staff, the council is so unorthodox that Chicago social workers have been known to call the council a thorn in their sides. It is a back-handed compliment. As Evelyn Ostrowski put it: "Most agencies like ours employ only one aspect of social work—delinquency or conservation, or something else. Community groups that stay in one channel kill themselves because they are not representing the needs of the people of their community."

Flair For Headlines:

Ever since the days when Alinsky and Meegan used the newspapers to outbox Park Commissioner Dunham, the Back of the Yards Council has known the value of publicity—and how to get it. One knowledgable city official contends the council often claims more than it has really accomplished. But he admits: "Part of the overstating has a desirable effect. It gets people believing things. And they begin doing things they wouldn't otherwise do."

The council uses a weekly neighborhood newspaper as its chief means of communicating with its 125,000 people. The Back of the Yards *Journal* is not, as detractors of the council's work have whispered, secretly owned or controlled by Meegan and Alinsky. Its publishers, John Haffner and Aron Hurwitz, give the council 100% cooperation in their news columns because they think it is good business. Many weeks, the result is that most of the *Journal's* first page is devoted to unblushingly effusive accounts of the council's pet projects. The *Journal's* office lies directly across Ashland Avenue from the Back of the Yards Council, which at least makes it easy for the paper's one-woman editorial staff to cover council doings.

Publisher Haffner says 30 per cent of the *Journal's* 31,155 circulation is now paid. The paper, which runs from 14 to 16 full-sized newspaper pages a week, is distributed over a gerrymander-shaped area that stretches from Archer Avenue and 39th Street on the northeast to 67th and Loomis Streets. Its distribution area is irregular, says Haffner, because "we have tried to eliminate the colored bump at the south end."

Meegan sees to it that worthy projects, when undertaken by his council, get their due share of attention in the big Chicago metropolitan papers, too. In 1955, he was cozy with Marshall Field's *Sun-Times,* whose circulation had been gaining the last few years in the

neighborhood. Even in the middle of the annual Free Fair, Meegan managed to stay in the headlines with a project to put pressure on the State Department to do more toward freeing Father Harold W. Rigney, a former Back of the Yards priest then imprisoned in Red China. Meegan says his campaign produced 62,000 letters to the White House and State Department—such a flood that Washington officials were begging him to turn off the switch. Within a few days, Meegan, Father Rigney's mother (and a *Sun-Times* reporter who was allowed to have the story exclusively) bundled themselves aboard a plane and flew to Washington and an interview with an American negotiator about to head for the Geneva talks that resulted in the release of Americans by the Chinese Communists.

Another 1955 council project was issuance of a 64-page "How You Do It" directory telling the 20,000 packingtown families how to cope with problems ranging from accidents to zoning. It was a practical stroke toward carrying out Alinsky's dictum that citizens don't need and should avoid using intermediaries in dealing with their government. Among other things, the book told: who to call if you find a dead cat in the street (dead animal department of the bureau of sanitation), where to find free shower baths, where to get a building permit, how to report neglected children, where to look for a job, the news and advertising deadlines for the Back of the Yards *Journal,* how to register a letter, who will remove rubbish, where the neighborhood's 20 savings and loan associations were, where to report a flooded sewer, a falling tree, a water leak.

This bright idea was not long hidden from the rest of Chicago. The *Sun-Times* gave the council an editorial pat on the back for coming up with "another good idea" and suggested: "Such a guide would be a good project for other neighborhoods."

The Physical Rehabilitation:

For its first 16 years, the council did only a little toward fighting housing and zoning violations. In 1953, this became the major aspect of its work.

There were several reasons for the shift of emphasis.

Alinsky says that a survey discovered too many absentee landlords to suit him. (Owner occupancy in March, 1954, was estimated at 34.6% in the census tracts which most closely correspond to Back of the Yards' somewhat variable boundaries.)[7]

[7] Official Back of the Yards' statements on its area have varied from a mile square to five and a quarter square miles. At various times, the council and its top spokesmen have put the population anywhere from 125,000 down to 85,000. Some city officials are critical of this flexibility, which they attribute to the council's desire to take credit for progress but disown backsliding on the borders of its bailiwick.

Another powerful influence was the fact that the prosperity that World War II brought to packingtowns' labor force had, by that time, driven the average annual family income in the area up to $3,400. Yet these newly richer folk lived in the neighborhood where an overwhelming 85% of the dwelling units had been built before 1919, and were thus more than 35 years old.

Moreover, eastern Europeans, comprising a big majority of Back of the Yards residents, are thrift-minded. Throughout Chicago, you can trace where Slavic peoples settled by mapping savings and loan associations. In Back of the Yards, there is only one bank, but there are 21 savings and loans. There is a saying in the community: "If you see a Bohemian walking down the street, he is either going for mushrooms or to his savings and loan."

For these reasons, some of Joe Meegan's own aides think Back of the Yards faced a much easier rehabilitation job than other neighborhoods. Said one council staffer: "People here are basically thrifty, clean and orderly. The trouble was they didn't have any money. Now, jobs are better. People don't need too much encouragement." Another big help was that Back of the Yards' inhabitants—blue collar labor almost to the man—are used to working with their hands. An unusual proportion of repairs and remodeling was "do it yourself" work—even by small landlords. Many families on relief managed to remodel their quarters.

Most savings and loan associations had written off Back of the Yards as too blighted to make mortgage loans safe investments during the depression. But after the war, they had begun cautiously to make property loans in the neighborhood where their depositors came from. Still, almost all of them continued to shy away from mortgages in the aged heart of Back of the Yards (north of 47th Street and east of Western Avenue) which needed renovation most. Some of them still do. But in areas where they have refused mortgage loans with their 4½% or 5% interest and long term amortization, they *have* been willing to make FHA Title I repair loans, which run for only three years and yield 9.6% interest.

The Back of the Yards Council launched its big push against physical blight on July 2, 1953. It called a meeting of community leaders at the Stock Yards Inn. Community leaders came in force—from banks, churches, city government, savings and loans, industry, labor unions, meat packers, retail merchants, real estate agencies. They agreed it was time to stop discussing blight and time to start wiping it out. A five-point program was laid out:

1. People would be urged to remodel and rehabilitate their homes.

2. Property owners would be encouraged to convert vacant stores, no longer needed as such, into apartments. (Like most of Chicago and other U.S. cities, Back of the Yards was overzoned for commercial use.)

3. Title and tax searches would be made on the 922 vacant lots in the neighborhood.

4. Builders and contractors would be urged to build new homes.

5. The council would build fires under Chicago's then bumbling and ineffective building department, insist that laws be enforced to prevent illegal conversions, particularly of vacant store buildings and old homes cut up into rooming houses.

Three lenders were named to a building and finance committee to make sure loans would be forthcoming for the needed remodeling. They were: Joseph Mozeris, president of the Illinois Savings & Loan League and of District Savings & Loan Assn.; Vice President Richard H. Hart, of Drovers Trust & Savings Bank; and Vice President William H. Gleason, of Talman Federal Savings & Loan Assn. Talman, a $140 million institution, is the third largest savings and loan in Chicago and Illinois, 12th largest in the nation, and although its office lies several blocks west of the Back of the Yards, the biggest mortgage lender in Back of the Yards.

Talman's Gleason reports: "Our first problem was to detail the extent to which the savings associations and other lending institutions in the neighborhood would cooperate. Thirty-nine questionnaires were distributed. Of the 35 returned, the 29 from savings and loan associations indicated that they all would make loans on existing properties; 26 would make new construction loans, either on conventional, FHA or GI plans; 24 would make unsecured property and repair loans, either on their own or the FHA Title I plan; 27 would provide open-end mortgages for present borrowers. With this reassuring data in hand, the Back of the Yards Council was ready to begin its drive."[8]

New exterior siding, usually asphalt shingles or imitation brick or stone, and occasionally fireproof clapboarding began to brighten rows of drab, look-alike dwellings. Wrought-iron railings and cement steps replaced what once were rickety wooden approaches to front doors. Fresh paint brightened windows and door frames. Venetian blinds replaced unsightly shades. Occasionally, a large picture window made modernization of a home especially striking. New foundations and basements were built. New kitchens and bathrooms replaced ancient

[8] Article by Gleason in U.S. Savings & Loan League *News*.

The rehabilitation drive was started by the Back of the Yards Council after it was 14 years old and had a notable record of success at community betterment. It expected big things. What it achieved is dramatic. Most home improvement drives will gladly settle for two or three remodeling jobs out of every ten houses that need them. The Back of the Yards Council got almost nine out of ten.

A typical job (shown here in before and after photos) involved covering the original siding with composition board or (occasionally) masonry. Metal awnings are installed over windows. Stairs, outside and inside, are repaired or replaced. Electric wiring is improved to handle modern loads. Up-to-date kitchen equipment and bathroom fixtures are installed.

fixtures and even more ancient layouts. Within eight months, according to the council's records, one-eighth of Back of the Yards' families had undertaken some kind of fix-up job. Within sixteen months, the council counted more than 2,400 remodeled and repaired homes out of 7,400 structures—some 32%.

The council, with Realtor Frances Mazurk heading the committee-in-charge, contributed both staff and know-how. A staff survey turned up 750 building violations. Staffer Chester Kraus made sure city officials didn't conveniently forget about them. Because building violations are quasi-criminal complaints, they are served in Chicago by the police department. Summonses tend to disappear in the hands of police, says Kraus. "If you don't watch every step, your case disappears." Kraus did watch, and a re-survey by Miss Kathleen Dunn, the council's housing-rehabilitation staffer, indicated that 68% of the building violations had been abated two years later.

The Back of the Yards *Journal* printed detailed lists of people who had repaired their homes, giving names, addresses and a description of repairs. Considering that the *Journal* is *the* organ of opinion in the area, this detailed reporting (contributed to the *Journal* by the energetic Miss Dunn) may well have been the most crucial part of the rehabilitation drive. People who cooperated were, in effect, publicly applauded. It became painfully obvious to everybody which neighbors were not keeping step with the community's rising standards.

Sometimes the council staff would not hear about a repair job. That only stimulated the community more. Publisher Haffner of the Back of the Yards *Journal* recalls: "When we started to run those lists, the telephone began ringing with people calling up to demand corrections. If we left out the repairs on their front steps they were mad." The *Journal* dutifully ran long lists of corrections.

To occupants of the first 1,500 modernized homes, the council awarded, in May of 1954, a certificate with a lithographed background of gold ink. It much resembled a stock certificate. "By repairing and remodeling your home during the past year," Joe Meegan wrote each of the 1,500 winners, "you have won the admiration and respect of the residents of our community. You have set a good example for others to follow . . . It is our sincere wish you will have this award enclosed in a picture frame so that all who come to your home, especially your children, in the years to come will see this emblem of honor awarded to you from your fellow neighbors." The certificate was signed not only by Father Berendt as president of the council, and the chairman of an honor role committee on home moderniza-

tion, but also by Alderman Frank Micek, in whose 15th ward much of the Back of the Yards lies.

And the council made tax and title searches on every parcel of vacant land, urged the people living next to the vacant lots to buy them up. If neighbors did not want the land, the council offered it to home builders and even before Destiny Manor, the area began to see a revival of new construction on scattered sites.

The council collaborated with the Commonwealth Edison Company in a unique scheme to get the heavier wiring required by today's load of electricity installed in the old houses—houses built before even the experts realized how much electric current today's appliances would need.

The council arranged with Edison to make a free inspection of the electrical service in the fuse box of any Back of the Yards house whose occupant asked for it. Five hundred sixty-five residents filled out cards requesting the inspection. The company gave its report on which homes were underwired only to the council and the homeowner, so no one was forced to make repairs. But nearly 350 of the families made repairs voluntarily.

The council hammered on keeping alleys clean. Volunteers tacked thousands of placards on alley telephone poles reminding residents to put trash into garbage cans. Today, the alleys in Back of the Yards are as clean as any in the city.

For years, one of the worst eyesores of the neighborhood was a dead-end canal, tributary of the Chicago River, called Bubbly Creek. It drained so slowly that in summer it became a stinkhole of stagnant water topped by a thick layer of fats, greases and other animal residue dumped into it by nearby meat packing plants. Alinsky says the surface scum used to be so thick "you could throw a brick on it and it would be an hour before it sank." One of Meegan's staffers recalls: "My uncle fell into Bubbly Creek one night and grandma wouldn't let him in the house 'til the next day." Bubbly Creek lay along Ashland Avenue between 39th and 41st Streets, at the northern edge of Back of the Yards. By this time, the council's prestige was so great that when Meegan sent a friendly emissary to talk to Continental Can Company about filling in this open sump, the company not only agreed, but let the council use the resulting field as a recreation center. In 1955, the council began holding baseball and softball games there, in a largely industrial subneighborhood which has far fewer parks than the rest of Back of the Yards.

Keeping Gyp Repairmen Out:

In many areas where civic-minded citizens boost widespread fix-up and rundown housing, shyster repairmen boom through the neighborhood selling gullible residents unnecessary repairs at gyp prices. Worse, the racketeers often do not deliver even the little work they promise to do. Indeed, it was almost precisely at the moment when Back of the Yards' rehabilitation crusade was at its zenith that, across the nation, the activities of gyp home repairmen reached such a peak they helped touch off the celebrated FHA scandals of 1954.

But Back of the Yards experienced almost no trouble with this brand of con-man. Three main reasons:

1. Most savings and loan associations, before they would make a home repair loan, insisted on knowing who was going to do the work.[9]

2. Much of the actual work was done by owners themselves.

3. Where householders hired contractors, it was usually somebody who lived in the neighborhood.

Indeed, the whole sordid story of suede shoe operators in the home repair business centers around fly-by-night firms that sweep into an area unheralded, move through at blitzkrieg speed and are gone before the suckers realize what has happened, often as not reselling the repair contract to somebody else who may or may not be able to do the job.

Council leaders never hesitated to use get-tough methods to eject undesirable real estate operators from the neighborhood. No violence, however. Not necessarily even a threat of it. A stern warning to get out has always been enough. One realty operator with a reputation for letting good property deteriorate into slum tenements built an office half a block down Ashland Avenue from council headquarters. But he never opened it. Meegan and others walked in and told the broker to his face that the neighborhood didn't like his type of operation—and so would he please get out.

Another slumlord began making some conversions on the edge of Back of the Yards. Meegan gave him a pointed warning. The operator replied: "Christ, I didn't realize I was in your area."

The Southwest Real Estate Board, headed by Frances Mazurk, has warned other realty agents what kind of rental operations the community will not tolerate.

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[9] By mid-summer of 1955, savings and loan officials estimated they had written $4 million in home improvement loans for more than 1,100 families. That was less than half of the 2,400 houses the council counts as remodeled.

When the council found truck terminal operators were beginning to make a noisy industrial belt of streets the council thought should remain residential or commercial, they carried the battle before the city council and persuaded officials to deny the necessary zoning exceptions and crack down on operatives who tried to sneak in without them. As usual, the council pulled no punches. For instance, a staff aide took a picture of a truck operation at the northeast corner of 45th and Ashland, which it wanted to close up. Council leaders circulated it among city councilmen and building officials with this caption: "Even though there is no loading dock, this is a trucking terminal because trucks back up and unload from one to another. This is a violation of zoning and also of the prohibition against backing trucks on a lot adjacent to a gas station. Recently the owner applied for use as a parking lot for automobiles to relieve congestion in this business district. This is a subterfuge. The trucks have broken the curbs along the sidewalk and crossed the walk where there is no driveway. In February, 1953, the owner informed the council that he was going to erect a car wash."

Today, says Alderman Frank Micek, "there are no trucking terminals in our ward." Micek, a strong supporter of the Back of the Yards Council, has even voted to deny personal friends zoning exceptions for such businesses.

The rehabilitation drive did not overlook the dowdy stores on the side streets. A survey revealed 145 vacant stores. The council turned the names and addresses over to contractors. They began encouraging the owners to convert them into apartments. At the same time the council gathered facts and needled the building department into doing its duty of cracking down on illegal conversion of store fronts into living quarters without proper remodeling and, often, without a building permit.

One of the transformed stores of which the council is proud is at 4800 South Winchester. The owner, Tony Lattyak, had been unable to rent the ground floor store with its dilapidated front for a year, although the upstairs apartment was rented. "I realized it was foolish to try and get anyone to rent it at anywhere near a fair price since it was located on a side street," he says. But he knew he would have no trouble renting it as living quarters. He made a sketch of what he wanted, called in contractors to lay out two flats of four rooms each and put in electricity and plumbing. Tony and his brother, William, did the interior remodeling themselves.

Perhaps the most spectacular modernization is that of a 60-year-old, two-story, yellow brick building with 40 apartments, known locally

as "outhouse row"—from the wood-enclosed flush toilets, one to every eight families, which decorated the back yard. The building, owned by an absentee landlord, had been an eyesore for years. But until the council got after it, complacent city officials ignored its myriad violations of housing, health and sanitation laws. The council took out after outhouse row (3519-59 South Honore) early in 1953, by including pictures of the building in a brochure laid before Mayor Martin Kennelly. This time, building inspectors followed through. The upshot: Dr. Ethel M. Davis, the owner, was fined $510 in building court—$200 for defective toilets, $200 for not providing waste and vent pipes for sinks in 38 apartments and $100 for not removing debris from the back yard. Dr. Davis, in charge of the pediatric allergy clinic at Cook County Hospital, had inherited the building from her father four years earlier. In those four years. she told the judge, she had spent more money to improve the building than she had received in rents. Two of the forty apartments rented for $18.20 a month, the others for $15.60 a month.

Two months after the $510 fine, Dr. Davis sold the building at a price (judging from revenue stamps) of about $35,000 to Benjamin Mancou, president of Alpha Corporation. Mancou borrowed $90,000 from Supreme Savings & Loan Association "to make a decent and pleasant habitation out of a community disgrace." Toilets were moved inside; a rabbit warren of back yard shacks was razed; the yellow brick was repainted red. Rents went up from $15 a month to $40 or $45.

How were the results? "It's nice around here—quiet neighborhood," said a housewife, cooling herself on the front steps of a house across from the renovated outhouse row one hot Saturday evening in July. One reason, residents of the block agreed, is that the remodeling brought a big turnover in the inhabitants of the outhouse row apartments. In the old days, said the neighborhood tavern keeper, the place was inhabited by "people who sat around and drank and didn't want to work. They all moved out. Some didn't want to pay the higher rents and some couldn't."

Along with the rehabilitation drive, the council waged a campaign to keep people from moving away from Back of the Yards. A billboard at 40th and Ashland Avenue proclaimed:

"WHY MOVE AWAY? You'll be sorry! Where else are there 20 churches paid for • 20 schools • Nearby jobs • 23 places to play • Children wanted • 2 shopping centers • Paved streets • Clean alleys • Friendly neighbors • Places to save • Low rents and taxes • Good transportation"

The most spectacular modernization in Back of the Yards involved this 60-year-old, two-story yellow brick apartment (40 units) known locally as "out-house row" from its wood-enclosed flush toilets, one per eight families, in the back yard. Until the Council got after them, complacent city officials for years had ignored its myriad violations of health and housing laws. After a court fined the owner $510, she sold the structure to a man who borrowed $90,000 to repair it. Rents rose from $15 a month to $40 and $45, but a community disgrace was converted into decent habitation.

And a clincher in fat block letters: "BACK OF THE YARDS. WHERE EVERYBODY CLAIMS TO HAVE LIVED."

Back Of The Yards And The Negro:

The position of the Back of the Yards Council on the crucial national issue of anti-Negro prejudice seems ambiguous. The council, in its earlier days, fought for racial brotherhood and thus helped to make Back of the Yards a safe place for Negroes to shop (although few do). But there were practically no Negroes living in the Back of the Yards when this was written, despite the fact that the neighborhood lies directly in a natural line of Negro expansion west and south from Chicago's near-southside ghetto.

Joe Meegan has explained the anomaly this way: "Negroes don't have anything in common with the people who live here." And he adds: "We don't have time for race hatreds."

This, in itself, is considerable progress. In years past, Back of the Yards has been the scene of anti-Negro rioting. Some observers point to this tradition of violence as one explanation for the otherwise curious fact that almost no Negroes live in Back of the Yards, although 75 to 85% of the labor force in the meat packing plants there is now Negro.

This school of thought should probably be accorded some weight. But other reasons figure in the picture:

1. In this auto age, there is less and less need for people to live close to their jobs—at least up to a several-mile commuting limit. As an example, Alinsky cites the case of West Kenwood, which lies just east of the stockyards. It was 95% Negro occupied when he surveyed it in 1953, he says, but "a very small number of the Negro residents there worked in the yards. They worked all over Chicago."

2. The religious focus of the community around its nationality churches provides an extraordinary incentive to maintain the ethnic status quo. Some of this incentive is sentimental, some financial. Notes Alinsky: "When a community changes from white to Negro, the Catholic church is in a different position from the Protestant and Jewish churches. It has a bigger real estate investment. Thus it is in double jeopardy: 1) its facilities are so extensive it cannot sell them to Negroes as easily as other sects can, and 2) after a neighborhood changes and the nationality congregation moves, the church must rebuild all the ministries, rectories, schools and convents."

Thus, as some observers see it, Back of the Yards' nationality churches are facing a struggle for their very existence. It's only

natural, therefore, that the No. 1 motivation of the churches is to keep the neighborhood together.

So there is a case to be made that Back of the Yards is not so much anti-Negro as it is pro-nationality church. Whatever the inner truth, the practical effect is the same: Negroes are unwelcome as residents.

Meegan and Alinsky agree that if Negroes do move into Back of the Yards, the Council will leave them alone. "The philosophy, program and very character of the Council has been and must always be opposed to discrimination against any people because of creed or color."

But many a savings and loan officer, many a businessman, many a householder in Back of the Yards will tell you privately that the neighborhood is "determined to keep Negroes out." The areas where savings and loans shy away from making loans are (in part) on the border of the neighborhood where it touches Chicago's burgeoning Negro ghetto.

One highly placed city official says that in Back of the Yards the outlawed real estate restrictive covenant, to bar Negroes from white neighborhoods, has been replaced by an unwritten "covenant of violence."

The feelings of many Back of the Yards folk—as of 1955—were probably well summed up by a policeman who came to serve Jack Ross, manager of Goldblatt's branch store at 47th and Ashland Avenue, with a summons for a building violation. "I used to shop down at 63d and Halsted Streets," the officer said (it is the second biggest shop center in Chicago). "But it's all colored now. So I don't go down. I ain't going to be pushed around by colored. This neighborhood ain't bad. No colored around here."

In July of 1955, the policeman was substantially right. Negro population was pouring into Hyde Park and Kenwood instead of into Back of the Yards. But there is a good chance, Chicago city planning experts feel, that areas of Negro occupancy will spread below the south end of Back of the Yards and gradually encircle it. A countervailing hope is expressed by the vice president of one Back of the Yards lending institution. "One of these days," he said, "Negroes will spread out so far that pressure for them to find a place to live, even at high prices, will be removed." In other words, there is still hope that some other neighborhood will absorb Chicago's exploding Negro population and let Back of the Yards live on with its present ethnic composition.

Says Alinsky: "A lot of Back of the Yards people think conservation will keep Negroes out. It won't."

Whether it will or won't is a real worry to many Back of the Yards people. One Saturday afternoon, white-haired Ed Golk, owner of South West Electric Corp., dropped in at the modest frame home of Alderman Frank Micek, across the street from Destiny Manor. Golk was complaining about a zoning violation near his store. They got to talking about the neighborhood and its big rehabilitation.

"I'm fearful for the neighborhood in the future," Micek confessed, in spite of the uplift so far.

"You mean the blacks," Golk cut in. "Why don't you say so?"

Micek's answer was curiously pointed, though tactfully indirect. In the rehabilitation and conservation program, he reminded Golk, "our ulterior motive is to keep people from moving away."

The Results:

The more a visitor talks with Back of the Yards people about their community, the more striking becomes the near-unanimity of opinion: men and women who have grown up in the neighborhood and watched it change are still a little awed by the new spirit of friendly cooperation that has replaced antagonisms and bickering. But they are delighted. The neighborhood is worth living in now, they feel. So they are making plans to stay put, although bigger incomes from better jobs would let many of them move out to the suburbs if they chose. Different people see different evidence, but the impact is the same. Witness:

• Ben Bohac, then president of Talman Federal Savings & Loan, who has lived close to Back of the Yards for all but six of his 60-odd years, speaks of how the community's "spirit" has "shot up" in recent years. "Five or six times a year they have to fight zoning variances," he says. "It's making people cognizant of their rights—and the dangers of overcrowding." At one hearing before the Chicago city council, at least 70 Back of the Yards citizens turned up to protest a businessman's petition to put a "garage" on a lot zoned for business. They persuaded the councilmen that the "garage" would really amount to a truck terminal. Result: zoning variance denied.

• Says Z. J. Kosmalski, president of Hemlock Savings & Loan Assn.: "People are not drinking so much. Tavern keepers used to make a fortune. Now they barely make a living. Television has helped people stay home." (Another theory is that television has merely shifted the locale, not diminished the quantity of beer downed.)

• Young Charles Comiskey of the White Sox baseball family says: "It was an area that didn't have any pride—personal pride." Today, he feels, Back of the Yards has made major strides. He speaks of "general cleanliness, lawns, alley clean-up," but adds: "The biggest progress of all is family living. Everybody in the family does things as a unit now. It's bringing back family sports, family entertainment, family thinking. It's what should be done all over the country."

• Emil Millas, who has lived in Back of the Yards 18 years, works at the Ford assembly plant and moved into Destiny Manor in March, 1955, says: "The younger generation gets along better. There used to be a lot of trouble over lot lines. If you went out to plant a hedge or a tree, your neighbor would look at you with a cold, beady eye and probably pretty soon he'd be out with a tape measure to make sure you didn't infringe on an inch of his property." In Destiny Manor, Millas pointed out as he watched his young son romp around the back yard, he and his two next door neighbors had been helping each other clean up the construction trash in their yards and were thinking of enclosing all three yards with a single fence so their kids would have a bigger place to play. "Everything," smiled Millas, "has happened in the last five years."

Physical evidence bears out the testimony of higher neighborhood morale.

Land and property values are up about 10%. Some of this is attributable to the rising economy which has driven realty prices up almost everywhere. But Back of the Yards realtors say they are beginning to experience much more demand for houses, both to buy and rent, than they have listings. "For every property I put up for sale, I have 15 buyers," said one.

Small shops along the side streets are going out of business, leaving many a vacant store beneath upstairs living quarters. But this is no more than the local manifestation of what Banker Frank Hart calls the "revolution in retailing" that is sweeping the nation because people now want to shop where they can park their autos. As Hart points out, the loss of small shops is offset by new jobs in shopping centers and the hundreds of new industrial plants outside of, but within easy commuting distance of, Back of the Yards. There are 30 or 40 new truck terminals, for instance, within 3 or 4 miles of the area. Business at the area's biggest retail store, Goldblatt's, has remained constant. In 1952, the store says, dollar sales were up 2% from 1951. The next year they fell a little, but in 1954 went up 3% again.

Lenders in the area find repayment records on mortgage and home improvement loans splendid. Says Savings & Loan Executive Kosmalski: "Here in my Polish neighborhood, people eat soup if necessary, but they pay for their homes." Officials at Talman Savings & Loan, the area's largest by far, checked the repayment record of mortgage borrowers in Back of the Yards. On mortgages with an average theoretical life of 17 years, Talman experienced an average payoff in 5.7 years. Then they broke the loans down into three groups. In the first two, where homes were sold or refinanced for other reasons, a quick payoff would be natural. But even where borrowers paid off mortgage loans with their own funds, Talman found, the average life of a mortgage was just over six years. Explains Talman President Bohac: "People around here aren't the 'keeping-up-with-the-Joneses' type. They live within their income."

Health has been improved for so long in Back of the Yards that it can scarcely be called part of the housing conservation campaign. Infant mortality, once sky-high from ignorance, lack of immunizing shots and bad care, has fallen. The days when tuberculosis was a real plague are gone. So are the piles of litter in the alleys that used to breed rats and disease. It usually takes years—or even a generation—to change the health and sanitary habits of 125,000 people. But Back of the Yards has revolutionized them in 16 years.

Some Back of the Yards leaders claim there has been a big reduction in juvenile delinquency (though not that the council is chiefly responsible). But what records the city has still rank the area as a major offender for crime of almost all sorts. Ex-criminologist Alinsky's feeling is that the area is improved. "There's no way you can be sure why delinquency rates rise or fall," he says. "Statistics on juvenile delinquency are like Mark Twain's drunk—using a lamp post for support, not light. And that includes any neighborhood statistics—if they go up or down."

As Police Juvenile Officer Ray Bedarnowicz sees it, the main juvenile crime problems in Back of the Yards today are auto thefts ("quite a few"), sex ("mostly girls starting too young or running away from home") and shoplifting ("often children from other neighborhoods"). But Bedarnowicz notes a drop in sex cases, especially compared to 10 years ago when incest was not uncommon. Why are things better? Educational standards have gone up. And Bedarnowicz thinks "more and more parents are less addicted to alcohol."

The Back of the Yards Council is still fighting to help the young men and women from its community who get into trouble. Joe Vlosek, the council staff man for juvenile guidance, says upwards of

85% of the 35 delinquents who are under orders to see him regularly come from homes where there has been no physical fix-up. They also —most of them—come from homes which lack either a mother or father, or where mother and father are "so inadequate as to be pitiful." Even his wayward charges seem to sense the change that has overcome Back of the Yards, Vlosek says. A lot of them keep telling him: "This used to be a lousy looking place. Now it's better." Vlosek is sure the youngsters have no notion how much work went into improving it.

Even the smell of the neighborhood is better. With the big packing companies dispersing much of their butchering and slaughtering to Omaha, Kansas City and elsewhere, the volume of meat moving through the Chicago stockyards is dropping. By 1955, Darling & Co., a rendering works on Ashland Avenue, was regarded as the lone remaining stench-maker in the area. Library use is on the rise. Mrs. Marie O. Berndt, librarian at the new Ashland Avenue branch which replaced scattered sub-branches in the parks, says: "The interesting part is that so many new readers are adults. The big demand is for books on how to do it."

Small music stores, selling instruments and lessons together, have experienced an upturn in business, too.

Making The Government Work For Them:

By far the most important result of Back of the Yards Council's work—and here rehabilitation must merely be added to all that went before it—is the magnificent lesson in self-government it has given its own community. Where the neighborhood was once manipulated by the Kelly-Nash machine, now Chicago's Democratic administration listens respectfully when Back of the Yards asks for something.

This adult education for democracy has been conducted without the formal trappings of pedagogy. Instead of seminars, Back of the Yards people met for strategy sessions. They grappled with real problems. They learned real answers.

Let the council's president, Father Roman Berendt, tell it in his own words:

"It's taken years and years to develop the kind of community spirit we have today. They're finding out officials are elected for a purpose. They are learning the mechanics of government . . . living civics rather than learning the theory. If you ask them the theory, they wouldn't know beans about it."

The rehabilitation and conservation campaign, thinks Father Berendt, has taught Back of the Yards people a lot about housing loans. It has hammered home the relation between good street lighting, covered garbage cans and other simple items, and the prevention of slums.

"If the young people will come back," thinks Father Berendt, "the future looks good." Are many of them returning? "No, but some."

Before the conservation drive, adds Alderman Micek, "people didn't seem to take an interest in zoning matters. Now, they really ride herd on anybody who tries to get a zoning variance. When they have an interest like this, I think they're going to remain in the area."

The Parochial Outlook:

Despite its broadening community and political horizons, Back of the Yards is still focused on its own problems. Most of its leaders give no time or energy to the broader problems of Chicago as a whole. Meegan, indeed, has irritated some city officials by asking Back of the Yards volunteers to withdraw from welfare work in other neighborhoods. Replies Meegan: "We can't be in the community and outside of it, too. We have no time for this stuff."

A news reporter who lives in Back of the Yards agrees: "As far as looking out of the community to the rest of the city, I don't think there's much of that. The majority come home, open a can of beer, sit on the front porch or look at TV. People stay home. The boys play baseball. The people attend neighborhood parties—except the younger ones who are dating. They go to the nicest places in town. But their parents stick close to the neighborhood."

The wider interests of Back of the Yards' businessmen cannot offset the parochialism of its workingman majority. Most businessmen still do not live in the yards, anyway.

Conclusions:

What can Back of the Yards experience teach other neighborhoods struggling against blight? The answer is: a whole lot of things.

"People," says Tom Jenkins, a young Negro who has helped form a community council in a Negro neighborhood not far from Back of the Yards, "get schooling by working in organizations for community objectives. Some get interested in politics. Some get interested in a hearing before a board on some particular item.

"In cities, people tend to live an anonymous, isolated life. Working together for community objectives creates a feeling of community

spirit. I've seen it. I've seen it bring people together on simple, common problems like baby sitting or tot lots. The mothers have to see to schedules, for instance. Or fathers have to meet to decide who will keep the accounts, who will work to clear up debris on Saturdays, or buy trash baskets."

Jenkins was talking about a neighborhood inhabited by people even less sophisticated than the presently reigning generation of Back of the Yards. But the point is the same, and it is lesson No. 1 of the Back of the Yards:

Neighborhood cleanup and remodeling — rehabilitation — was uniquely successful there largely because a respected, well-financed and well-staffed community organization was already in being. This gave focus to the neighborhood effort and has undoubtedly squeezed more esprit de corps, more uplift in morale, more brightening of its residents' outlook on life, out of the physical repair work to houses than some other neighborhoods get out of far more physical improvement. (Indeed, some city officials in Chicago insist the actual degree of housing rehabilitation in Back of the Yards is only a little more than in adjacent areas where there has been no such organization.)

"The real contribution of Back of the Yards," according to D. E. Mackelmann, the former deputy housing and redevelopment coordinator, "is in community organization. None of these programs succeed unless you have a city willing to do something and also a community organization that is willing to take advantage of what there is available."

That able and affable man, Joe Meegan, who has got the job done in Back of the Yards, thinks a big reason for rehabilitation's success is "the fact we had done lots of other things successfully over the years." This, says Meegan, "gave people hope" rehabilitation would succeed, too.

It is an important lesson, and little understood. To state it another way: to get anything like the entire blocks of all-renovated homes one sees in Back of the Yards—without drawn-out legal enforcement —residents of the neighborhood must have confidence that their own investment in remodeling will not be wasted in surroundings that remain essentially blighted. The Back of the Yards Council had won this kind of confidence by 14 years of accomplishment, before it undertook rehabilitation. It may be possible to achieve successful neighborhood rehabilitation programs with brand new community organizations spearheading the effort. It is certainly being tried. But lesson No. 2 in Back of the Yards is that rehabilitation will probably

succeed more certainly, and certainly it will succeed faster, if there is a going group to lead the way.

What does it take to form an organization like Back of the Yards Council and make it succeed?

Saul Alinsky, who has dedicated over 15 years of his life to the council's success, answers this way: "It must be self-financed. It must not be led by an outside do-gooder.[10] It must have wide objectives. Many organizations make the mistake of adopting too limited objectives. This automatically limits the support they can rally. What you need is a rainbow of interests that involves all the people in a community."

Too many neighborhood groups, as we have noted earlier, are devoted to opposing two things: taxes and Negroes. If a community organization is going to fight effectively against anything as basic as slums, it must have help from bankers, savings and loan executives, politicians and businessmen. As some experts have noted, social welfare people sometimes cry the organization is "selling out" if it embraces such recruits. The probable answer is that both elements must give way a little to find common ground. Both are needed.

The third problem of community organization is financing. A community organization will not run itself. And it is a full-time job. Men capable of doing it at all are rarely to be found for a pittance. In Chicago, where Jim Downs and Mackelmann have been uniquely successful in nudging neighborhood associations for conservation into being, the minimum budget for a staff of one leader and one secretary runs from $10,000 to $20,000 a year. And the residents have to get up the money themselves—most of it, anyway. Back of the Yards operates with about $80,000 a year.

The fourth big problem is leadership. There are too few Joe Meegans and Saul Alinskys to go around. It takes dedicated leadership to make community organizations take deep root and the job gets increasingly harder the more the neighborhood needs it.

Moreover, community organizations, if they have strong leadership like the Back of the Yards Council, tend to depend heavily—perhaps too heavily—on their leaders. Alinsky candidly speaks of the council as a "power structure." It is more than that. It is a power structure which has imposed its will on that of Chicago's city government, not vice versa as New Orleans was attempting to do. In this respect, its

[10] Alinsky, who began as a missionary from outside, has come to be so accepted as part of the neighborhood that he is not, in effect, an "outsider" at all. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Alinsky never let himself be labeled *the* leader. He was the chairman of the strategy committee (i.e. braintrust), but chairmanships and leadership titles and duties went to *bona fide* Back of the Yards residents.

position is like Mrs. Virrick's slum committee in Miami, although the Back of the Yards' Council has been more successful. But Alinsky's and Meegan's creation is more than all this: it is now, essentially, a benevolent oligarchy—although its slogan is "we, the people."

This benevolent leadership has wrought a remarkable change in attitudes, as witness the virtually uncontradicted testimony of those who have lived in and out of the area. The physical rehabilitation of the neighborhood is the frosting that suddenly has made the neighborhood realize it has—to finish the analogy—baked a cake.

How much of what came before rehabilitation was essential as a preliminary, and how much was merely incidental progress, we cannot say. But it is noteworthy that the Back of the Yards Council was tinged with educational motivation from the start. Instead of calling a class or study group together, Alinsky summoned people to strategy meetings. Today, he says that much of the resulting education was aimed at "maneuvering people into the right position" to support an immediate neighborhood objective. Once people take a position they have to rationalize the process—and this changes their attitudes, he notes. As that happened, the Back of the Yards movement became a self-teaching process. To state it another way: the action program of Back of the Yards Council has given its participants an adult education in how to organize in their own self-interest, in a big, machine-dominated U.S. city.

Getting people to do things for themselves is the philosophical secret of Back of the Yards Council. This is carried only to a point, of course. Financing it the easy way—through the nickels and dimes at the Free Fair—the neighborhood hires Joe Meegan and his hard-working staff to get done the things that will help the neighborhood. But the feeling of belonging each to the other—the staff and the people of the neighborhood—is strong.

And if the participation is less than ideal, it is still way ahead of most other groups of its type. Back of the Yards Council is, indeed, a 20th Century form of representative government at its grass-roots best. Not perfect, but democracy in action, infusing a community with vitality by doing a vital job.

CHAPTER V

THE LESSONS LEARNED

THE LESSONS LEARNED

Does rehabilitation change the attitudes, values and behavior of the residents of blighted neighborhoods?

The record in Baltimore, in Chicago, in New Orleans and Miami shows that there can be a dramatic change in attitudes accompanying properly organized and well-managed neighborhood rehabilitation programs. The change appears to be more striking among residents of the neighborhood than among the people who have a hand in the program but live elsewhere.

Inside the neighborhood, these things can (and have) happened:

Residents of one-time slum buildings, which have been renovated and repaired along with the general clean-up of alleys and junk-heaped back yards, almost invariably register appreciation at the physical improvement, at the increased comfort and cleanliness. In Baltimore's Pilot Area, mothers note gratefully that the possibility of rats biting their children is no longer a major worry. In Miami's Coconut Grove, a Negro gardener remarks on how good it feels to come home at night and be able to get all the dirt off in the bathtub he never before had. In Chicago's Back of the Yards, juvenile problem-cases tell the neighborhood council's staff counsellor: "This used to be a crummy neighborhood, but now it's all fixed up."

Such attitude changes are elementary—the least common denominator of cultural progress. In rehabilitated neighborhoods there are also more sophisticated indications of attitude change. Fewer people are affected. Even so, the upper levels of change may well be the more significant. These bear promise that rehabilitation can contribute more broadly and fully than is commonly supposed to raising the goals and cultural standards of the nation—in the places where they are lowest.

Some upper-level changes in attitude:

• More neighborly visiting back and forth developed between residents of a block; there were more neighborhood social gatherings. In Baltimore's Mount Royal area, as the president of the neighborhood association put it, the neighborhood was no longer split into home owners and tenants—that is, "good guys and bad guys."

• Awareness grew of the need for housing and sanitation laws. In Baltimore's Pilot Area, for example, housing inspectors came to be commonly regarded as friends and protectors of the residents, instead of authoritarian symbols to be feared instinctively.

• For a few families, horizons of living were raised so much that they moved out of their old homes into new subdivisions or better old neighborhoods. In Negro neighborhoods like the Pilot Area and Miami's Coconut Grove, the families who learned most from rehabilitation were likely to move out to better areas elsewhere. In white neighborhoods like Back of the Yards, Hyde Park and the Mount Royal area, the proudest families were those who had been persuaded not to move by the effects of rehabilitation.

• Statistics (such as are kept) do not prove that rehabilitation has cut crime or juvenile delinquency. But there is some testimony to the effect that rehabilitation works a change in the teenage attitudes that may underlie such antisocial behavior. The probation officer in the Pilot Area, for instance, reported that hoodlum gangs were no longer heroes to younger children. Vandalism at the area's new school was far below the level that teachers had come to expect in a low-income neighborhood in Baltimore. As for adult crime, the Baltimore policeman who saw a 50 per cent decrease may be too optimistic. But certainly the elimination of board fences, broken-down shacks and open, vacant houses removes the hiding places of crime, and drives at least some of it elsewhere.

• A few individuals and families—once frustrated and overwhelmed by worries too big for them to cope with—have learned to deal with their own problems much more adequately. This was a result not so much of the physical rehabilitation as of careful educational case work, such as that done by the Fight-Blight Fund in Baltimore, or the Loan Fund in Coconut Grove, or Back of the Yards' Credit Union. The Credit Union appears to have been particularly effective in changing attitudes on how families should spend their money. (And mismanagement of family income exacts a fearful price from many a slum family.) Indeed, the remarkable success of these activities shows there is a great unmet need where they do not exist. People in blighted neighborhoods need advice far more often than they need cash.

• Some of this new self-reliance extended to the neighborhood level. As residents worked out their own problems in rehabilitation, they found they could handle not only housing problems, but many others besides. In Miami's Coconut Grove, for instance, the educated white residents fought the first battles for the Negro residents—

battles with city hall over zoning and rehabilitation inspections. They organized all the supporting activities inside the Grove's Colored Town, like the summer training program and the nursery. Now, Negro leaders are beginning to carry on for themselves.

• In all types of neighborhoods, perhaps the most gratifying development of all was the change in the children. Where children were drawn into the rehabilitation program and made to feel that they could contribute to the improvement of their own homes, they responded with enthusiasm and energy. In the Pilot Area, where the schools made a diligent effort to teach good housing principles, the youngsters proved to be the best possible instruments to educate their parents. In families where parents were deaf to the urging of rehabilitation workers, the children sometimes shamed their elders into activity. In Miami, it was through the Carver School that some parents learned not to flush garbage down their new toilets. Whenever children learned about sanitation, cleanliness, neatness and home decoration, there seemed to be a good chance that these new standards would remain with them wherever they live.

One area of attitudes that did not change in the neighborhoods studied was the religious life of the people. Religion was already a strong influence. It remained so after rehabilitation. In several of the neighborhoods, this established orientation toward the church was the key to reaching the residents. Churches became focal points for neighborhood action. Priests or ministers were among the most effective spokesmen and leaders of the rehabilitation programs. These, of course, were the churchmen who were not too aloof to fight for better zoning, to circulate petitions against taverns, or to promote neighborhood fairs.

Outside the neighborhood, these are some of the things that can and have happened—though not equally everywhere:

• In some cities (but not all), politicians have learned they must treat once-blighted neighborhoods with new respect. The extent of this change in attitude seems to vary in direct ratio with the power of the neighborhood organization. Some key questions are: Has it bested city hall in some battles? Has its militant existence persuaded city officials that cooperation will win more votes at election time than hostility or indifference?

• Outsiders whose interest or work took them into close contact with residents of rehabilitation neighborhoods have had their eyes opened wide. Many of them have been amazed, for instance, at the welcome given social workers of any stripe who have nothing to offer but guidance. For some professional social workers, exposure to

rehabilitation has changed their view toward their own work. Some now feel for the first time that many a social agency is too far out of contact with those it seeks to serve. Sample: a supervisor in Baltimore's Family & Children's Society discovered: "We were weak on letting people know what services were available."

• In any case, the effect of a rehabilitation program on outsiders was directly proportional to their amount of actual contact with the neighborhood. Those who met the residents face to face, and learned their problems firsthand, learned to have a great deal of respect and sympathy for the average blighted-area family. Those who administered, analyzed, or advised from afar, however good their intentions, seldom completely understood the problems. As their distance from the neighborhood increased, so did their chance of misunderstanding it—and so did the chance that their attitude toward it would remain frozen.

The Effects of Home-Ownership:

In each neighborhood studied, it became apparent that changes in a family's attitudes usually hinge on whether the family owns or rents. Homeowners are more susceptible to higher standards than renters. There are tenants, to be sure, who become permanent additions to their neighborhoods, and who participate in rehabilitation work as much as homeowners. Such tenants change in the same way as homeowners. But most tenants have less incentive to boost their neighborhood—partly because all physical improvements become the property of the landlord, partly because improvements are likely to mean higher rent, and partly because the very fact of renting indicates transiency—no deep roots in the neighborhood.

Most homeowners, on the other hand, seem to have a built-in incentive to better their surroundings, once given the opportunity and the know-how. Neighborhoods with a high percentage of home-ownership—even if this is overhung with oppressive mortgage loans or unenforceable contracts of sale—seem far more fertile fields for rehabilitation than neighborhoods with a high percentage of tenancy. Home-owning seems to provide the ground in which the attitudes of rehabilitation can grow. Still, there are some families classed as homeowners who have neither the money nor the competence to deal with the responsibilities of home-owning. Such families, already in fear of losing their homes through default or misunderstanding, tend to fear and evade a rehabilitation program as an additional burden that threatens to topple a shaky financial structure.

Landlords are the other side of the coin. Where homeowners have a built-in incentive to improve their neighborhoods, most landlords

have a built-in incentive to perpetuate the slum. This seems to be due to the effect of property tax laws and assessing practices. Undertaxation of overcrowded property (whether or not the crowding is illegal) is the rule, not the exception. Hence the more crowding, the more profit. So far—at least in the cities studied in this survey—efforts to take the profit out of slums have proved unequal to the huge task. As a result, landlords usually did as little as possible in the way of rehabilitation, and the landlord who "got religion" in this field was so unique as to be newsworthy.

There is one class of landlord to whom this applies much less. This is the landlord-in-residence—the man who lives in the same building with his tenants, or nearby in the same neighborhood. Such landlords share the conditions of the block and the neighborhood with their tenants. Their relationship with their tenants is often a close one. As a result, such landlords often react like other homeowners. This is also true of the shopkeeper who lives above his store. Such businesses are often non-conforming uses, and, as such, are generally considered to be an influence working toward blight. But in old neighborhoods like the Pilot Area, the storekeeper who lived upstairs sometimes turned out to be at least as strong a supporter of rehabilitation, and all its goals, as the man whose only investment was a home.

The Problem of Population Change:

In some neighborhoods, the success of rehabilitation—and the chance that it would produce changes in attitude—was undermined by rapid change in population. Rapid change in a neighborhood—whether it is a change from white to Negro or from middle to lower class families or some other rapid change—produces a basic instability that makes it almost impossible for the attitudes of rehabilitation to gather momentum. Chicago's Hyde Park and Baltimore's Mount Royal neighborhood are examples—similar in many facets, different in others. On the surface, the statistics would indicate that both areas were good prospects for salvage. Not only were most of the structures sound, but a large proportion of the residents were already well-educated and attuned to middle-class standards and attitudes. The problem was that the influx of uneducated or low-income families—both white and Negro—was so swift that it threatened to destroy neighborhood morale. In both places, city ordinances against overcrowding proved impotent to stem the tide toward blight. Slum profiteers outpaced and outmaneuvered the enforcement agencies, fattening on the Negroes' need and push for living space, and the poor whites' ready acceptance of tenement conditions. In the Mount

Royal area, a unique alliance between white neighborhood leaders and officials of the Urban League raised hope that the racial competition, at least, would be stabilized, and the desire for rehabilitation reinforced by middle-class families of both races. In Chicago's Hyde Park, the population continued to change so fast that middle-class stabilization remained only a goal.

The converse of this situation appeared in two neighborhoods with relatively stable populations: the Back of the Yards and the Pilot Area. In the latter, where racial patterns were changing slowly, rehabilitation produced similar attitude changes in families of both races. In the Back of the Yards, the unspoken hope of preserving a way of life built around Catholic nationality churches was a powerful stimulant to the rehabilitation effort—and to the attitude changes that resulted.

The Question of Race:

Race tensions are still little mentioned in the millions of words now being spoken and written on rehabilitation and urban renewal. This silence is presumably well-intentioned. Officials, planners and assorted volunteers grappling with blighted areas wish to avoid any ground for accusations of race prejudice. Yet the racial situation has a great deal to do with the outcome of a rehabilitation program, and the resulting attitude changes.

Throughout the nation, dwellers in slums are preponderantly Negroes (or, more recently in some places, Puerto Ricans). The slum rehabilitation problem, therefore, happens to be in large part a non-white problem, and as such, it cannot be separated from all other problems facing the non-white population. In the Southern neighborhoods studied (Miami and New Orleans), most Negroes seemed so far sunk in poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and dependency—the product of generations of scanty education and lack of economic opportunity—that neighborhood rehabilitation programs did not reach them with the uplifting, rejuvenating effect that was found elsewhere. There was, nevertheless, a thin veneer of Negro craftsmen, professionals and other leaders living in the same slum with the lowest economic group. To these leaders, rehabilitation has given a hope for better standards in the future. For this alone, the effort is surely worth its cost, anywhere. For the lower levels of Negro society, rehabilitation shows evidence of improving health, infant mortality and physical living conditions, but a general upgrading in educational level seems necessary before any but the most elementary attitude changes can be expected.

The problem of rehabilitating the Southern Negro is not faced by the South alone. Every month, more and more migrating families pour into Northern cities like Chicago, or border cities like Baltimore. These cities, which have made great strides in uplifting their most ignorant and depressed citizens, have found that every family rehabilitated out of the slum is replaced by a family of newcomers, whose education in urban living must be started from scratch. The problem of where to put the new migrants, or how to treat them so that they do not drag down the values of the neighborhoods into which they move, had not been solved in either the Mount Royal area or in Hyde Park. In the Pilot Area, transients moved into the landlords' tenements, destroying much of the confidence that the rehabilitation program had built up in home-owning families. Their other attitudes—nurtured by the program—suffered proportionately.

Perils of Publicity:

Publicity is one of the important tools of creating attitude change within a neighborhood that undertakes rehabilitation. Indeed, some experts have suggested that repetitive pronouncements of success have helped create that success by persuading people to believe it. Still, publicity has its pitfalls.

It is easy to overstate the accomplishments of rehabilitation. This study has focused deliberately on rehabilitation efforts which could be classified either as 1) particularly successful or 2) so well known they were becoming (rightly or wrongly) noted as pace-setting examples of how it ought to be done.

Close study has shown, unfortunately, that many a celebrated rehabilitation effort was really bungled, or that a vital part was botched, or that it succeeded despite mistakes that could have been fatal.

This does not mean that because rehabilitation does not cure every social ill, business sin, political shenanigan and ordinary cussedness, it is more or less a failure. The gratefulness of slum dwellers for simple results like good plumbing and the absence of rats, the friendliness of neighbors who have struggled together, the aspirations of children and the raised horizons of parents—these things alone make rehabilitation worth while.

But it is important that promoters of neighborhood fix-up, no less than its detractors, realize its limitations. Many enthusiasts have performed a disservice to a worthy objective by understating the amount of effort that is needed to turn a slum or near-slum into a good neighborhood. They trumpet as successes efforts which, on closer

examination, look questionable. And they seem to ignore almost completely the efforts that must be made in fields outside the areas of building, planning and zoning if wholesome environments are to rise from the rot of U.S. slums.

This narrow vision, indeed, plays into the hands of some political reformers who believe that government—not the citizens affected—should do most of the planning and thinking. Narrow vision and overblown huzzahs create false hopes of easy success by the mere physical renovation of blighted areas. When success does not follow token or inadequate efforts, disillusion over failure makes it harder than ever to mount the broad attack that is required to cope with the problem.

Other Unsolved Problems:

In none of the cities studied (nor anywhere else we know of) has the complete solution to the rehabilitation of neighborhoods (without a substantial change in occupants) been found. As a result, the potential of rehabilitation for molding attitudes has not yet been fully tested. The urban renewal program is making it possible to attack blight on an ever-widening front. Yet the heart of urban renewal must still be rehabilitation—unless the nation is prepared not only to give up its gigantic investment in existing structures, but also to step up its outlays for demolition and redevelopment to a level that staggers the imagination (and, amid heavy defense expenditures, is clearly impossible). But the long-run success or failure of rehabilitation is inextricably tied up with the attitudes of the people living in the neighborhoods to be renewed. Moreover, the most important effects of rehabilitation may be psychological and spiritual, rather than strictly physical. The problems faced by rehabilitation programs, therefore, are worthy of the attention of the nation's best minds in politics, economics and sociology. Two unsolved problems found in neighborhoods covered by this study are these:

1. Nowhere did a city or a neighborhood actually remove the causes of blight. Once the neighborhood has been rehabilitated—whether it is the Pilot Area in Baltimore or the Back of the Yards in Chicago—it is faced with a continuing battle against the forces that would drag it downhill again before its time. In most neighborhoods, new blight still springs up faster than old blight is removed. The big reason is that slums are still very profitable, despite building inspectors, neighborhood groups, housing codes and housing courts. Instead of preventing the bootleg profit from overcrowding of aged tenements by some such easily-enforced or self-enforcing mechanism as property taxation, city governments rely on police action to cope

with overcrowding after it occurs. This is like bailing out a rowboat without plugging up the leak. What is needed is an approach that makes the creation of slums unprofitable and the maintenance of them financially disastrous to their owners. To do this without an army of housing policemen apparently will require far-reaching changes in our national attitudes toward property ownership, taxation and land use.

2. Organizing neighborhood groups to fight blight—a necessary first step toward rehabilitation—takes a discouragingly long time. Progress is being made, it is true. In Chicago, the organization effort was ably sparkplugged by the Office of the Housing and Redevelopment Co-ordinator. In Baltimore, Negro neighborhoods have made big strides under the leadership of the interracial Citizens Planning and Housing Association. But the prime success story in this area is Back of the Yards. Its organization long antedated city efforts to help; indeed, it took Alinsky, Meegan and their aides 16 years to achieve such local strength that rehabilitation came quickly and smoothly. Few neighborhoods can afford to wait that long.

Political Attitudes:

Rehabilitation can change a citizen's attitude toward his local government, or, to state it another way, change political and civic attitudes. Such changes appear to develop in step with the residents' responsibility for their own rehabilitation efforts. In the Pilot Area, where the rehabilitation program was primarily something done *to* the residents, instead of done *by* them, there was little sign of more civic responsibility or interest in city affairs. When inspectors were no longer making daily trips through the area, residents lost even the habit of making complaints about nuisances.

On the other hand, the individuals who did participate in the leadership of the Pilot program—who entered into the decision-making process affecting their own environment—had to learn what their problems really were, and to decide what they wanted their environment to be. The families who fought their own zoning and liquor-license fights were the nucleus who sustained the neighborhood committee. When the city planned to take over a square of trees and grass for a paved playground, the committee decided an oasis of green was more valuable than an asphalt athletic field. It made this decision stick.

In Back of the Yards, too, participation helped produce more self-reliant attitudes in its residents. As James Downs, then Chicago's housing and redevelopment co-ordinator, has put it: "Rehabilitation

forces people who live in the affected areas to get to understand government and how it works. The process is a great seminar in political knowledge." Saul Alinsky has dwelt on this in words that deserve re-emphasis: "In today's world of the fix and the angle, everybody assumes he can't do anything without influence. But the truth is that 98 per cent of the things people want done they can accomplish without any special pull at all. Every time an individual citizen gets a service done for him by some one else, he becomes indebted to the man who helped him. This is how political machines are built."

As the Back of the Yards Council battled for its life against a city political machine intent on perpetuating the dependency of Back of the Yards residents, it built itself into such a power center that the Council itself, to some observers, now bears earmarks of a political machine. But powerful neighborhood councils, if they are political machines, are machines with a crucial difference. They are not absentee-controlled. They cover territories small enough so they remain responsive to the needs and wishes of their residents. In a sense, they become a big-city counterpart of the New England town meeting.

One trouble with representative government today is that it often works poorly in large cities. Individual citizens come to feel their voices can have no effect on the course of events; so they withdraw from participation in government altogether. The neighborhood urban renewal or rehabilitation organization gives promise of restoring grassroots vitality to the democratic process.

Some Broader Implications:

Wherever the spark comes from—within a neighborhood or outside it—one common thread runs through the stories of all six rehabilitation movements included in this study: housing cannot be vacuum-sealed and separated from other needs and problems of city families.

To create any lasting change in attitudes (beyond an elementary appreciation of clean yards and new plumbing) a rehabilitation program must attack a host of non-housing problems, from loan sharks to juvenile delinquency. In the Mount Royal area, this attack involved only the most depressed of the residents. But in Coconut Grove and the Pilot Area, what started as housing improvement broadened into a whole rainbow of uplift efforts.

One of the best things about rehabilitation is that hopes are established, and a frame of mind created in people that makes the field more fertile for useful work by others—social workers, schools,

churches, probation officers. Rehabilitation, if successful, creates a new climate—which is a changed attitude in itself.

A characteristic of blighted neighborhoods before rehabilitation is a hopelessness, a lostness. Rehabilitation makes the residents feel more important, lets them feel they have acquired friends. Given attention by officials, lenders or do-gooders, they come to feel their wishes mean something.

So rehabilitation produces a climate favorable to changes in attitude. But if neighborhood identity is not also established (or maintained), the climate usually proves transitory. This seemed true in New Orleans (although the rehabilitation efforts there fell short of matching the city's problem in many other ways, too). A clearer example is the Pilot Area. There was no natural neighborhood with which residents could identify themselves. Nothing was done to distinguish the Pilot Area from the surrounding sea of monotonous, blighted blocks. When the program was over it was still a collection of unplanned blocks, with too much traffic, too many taverns, too few play areas and practically no open space. Even the mailman did not know where the Pilot Area began and ended. Soon after, the neighborhood began to be overwhelmed by the same forces that had pulled it down into blight in the first place. The vigilance required to prevent this was more than an amorphous, boundary-less neighborhood could sustain.

In Back of the Yards, on the other hand, and to some extent in the Mount Royal Area and Coconut Grove, there was a strong feeling of community—and it was intensified by rehabilitation. Uniting to fight blight, residents remained together to achieve other gains they had not thought possible.

This sort of neighborhood solidarity—of small-town unity inside a great metropolis—may prove to be a key to the rebirth of cities. It seems to have great promise not only for saving the nation's biggest investment, urban real estate, but also for fostering human aspirations. People who have mastered their physical environment can turn their attention to the fulfillment of their cultural and spiritual needs. And in mastering their environment through neighborhood morale and rehabilitation, they may discover for themselves a new pattern of democracy—a pattern for tomorrow's urban age.