

ADDRESS BY MAYOR ALLEN
HOUSING RESOURCES COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL
10:00 A.M., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1967

Chairman Alexander, Co-Chairmen Dr. Mays and Dr. Atwood,
Ladies and Gentlemen ----

First of all I want to express my personal appreciation and the thanks of your City Government to all of you for your willingness to serve on this most important committee.

As I see it, this is truly a most important committee, for it is tackling the solution of our City's single most serious problem -- the lack of an adequate supply of safe and decent housing for a large portion of Atlanta's population.

By accepting service on this Housing Resources Committee, you are carrying on one of the traditions that all through our first century of progress has made Atlanta a great city and will keep on making it a greater city, year after year.

This tradition is active, enthusiastic, intelligent, and energetic citizen participation in governmental affairs and public service.

The way Atlanta citizens assume the responsibilities of citizenship that are so closely tied with the enjoyment of the rights of citizenship sets Atlanta apart from and above so many other cities. It is one of the basic forces that keeps our Atlanta moving forward while so many cities falter and fall back.

So again I want to thank you for being willing to participate in this high endeavor to see to it that every Atlanta citizen, no matter what his scale of living, has a decent and safe roof over his head.

Also, I want to express my appreciation to your Chairman and two Co-Chairmen for all they have gotten done during the two months that have elapsed since the idea of this committee was put into action on November 15.

Thanks to their leadership and to the activities of all who have worked with them, this committee now has a solid foundation of facts and plans upon which to get into full swing.

The specifics of the challenging opportunities which this committee faces will be outlined by Mr. Alexander.

But before he and our distinguished visitor from Chicago address you I invite your attention to the extent of the problem which we are tackling together and which our joint effort must and shall solve.

I think this can be most sharply brought into focus by referring to a few statements which I made at the November 15 Conference of Housing.

As I said then:

"The problem is simply this -- Atlanta does not have the housing to meet the needs of families and individuals to be relocated by the present or future governmental action which will be necessary for the continued progress of Atlanta."

To bring this general statement down to specific facts and figures, it means that from now until the end of 1971, we shall need 16,800 housing units to take care of the people who will have to be relocated because of governmental action.

This is the total of dwelling units which we must and shall provide to take care of Atlanta citizens who will be forced to move because of changes wrought by such governmental activities as urban renewal, expressway construction and code enforcement to eliminate housing that is not fit for human habitation.

To relocate thousands of people in decent housing presents us with a challenging opportunity of truly tremendous proportions.

But Atlanta is accustomed to meeting challenges and seizing opportunities.

So I am completely confident that by thinking, planning and working together, as we are starting off today, we can and shall meet this challenge and transform this opportunity into solid achievement.

We are setting our sights high at the beginning. We are embarking upon a crash program for 1967 and 1968 to provide 4,900 new housing units each year -- a total of 9,800 units to be ready and occupied by the end of December, 1968.

For us to reach this high two year goal, private enterprise must provide 30 per cent. Non-profit sponsors of 221-D-3 housing must provide 13 per cent. The big push, 57 per cent, must come from public housing.

This is a big order to fill in just two years - but we can and we shall fill it.

I would also like to mention again what I emphasized on November 15th that we have a new and powerful tool to help us -- this is the Federal "Turnkey Program" - which opens up a whole new avenue of progress in housing.

As we set our eyes on the high goal for 1967 and 1968, I want to emphasize that a lot already has been accomplished since November 15.

The most striking tangible results are visible in the big push -- public housing.

One day last month I spent several hours with top officials of the Atlanta Housing Authority taking a look at what is going on and what is being planned to increase our supply of public housing.

Incidentally, we are starting from a very good base, because Atlanta now has far more public housing units in operation than any other city in the southeast.

It was truly a thrilling sight to see what we have accomplished in public housing during the past few months.

The Atlanta Housing Authority is determined to meet the goal of 5,586 units that is set for 1967 and 1968.

This target figure includes the 1,140 units now under development. These embrace 650 under construction in the McDaniel Street section of the Rawson-Washington Urban Renewal Project, 140 units assigned to an area adjacent to Perry Homes and 350 units in the Thomasville Urban Renewal Project.

The McDaniel Street program is being carried out so that 348 units will be ready in 12 months, 402 in 17 months, the rest in 22 months. Included will be a high rise building for the elderly, along the lines of the three now in operation.

The 140 units adjacent to Perry Homes should be ready in 18 months. The Thomasville units will get underway as soon as final plans are completed by the architects.

Now the Atlanta Housing Authority is tackling plans for the units which Atlanta has under reservation from the Federal Government.

Attention is being centered on sites for 1,200 units to be developed under the Turnkey Program. A good beginning has been made on the program to lease 300 more units.

That will take care of the units for which we have reservation with the Federal Government. But that is not the end of our plans for action in public housing.

We have requested a reservation for 3,000 more units -- and I confidently hope we will soon receive approval on this.

So our public housing all-out effort is off to a very encouraging start. Also now in full swing is our preparation to make application for a Federal Planning grant under the brand new Model City Program, in which up to 90 per cent of the cost can be paid by the Federal Government.

I will not go into detail about this new program except to say that an area of some 3,000 acres in the southern section of our City, which includes some 10 per cent of the City's population, and a much higher per cent of its problem situation, has been designed as a target area.

Also on the City's part, we are strengthening enforcement of building and housing codes by building up our inspection staff, as promised, so far the City has hired 15 out of 18 additional authorized inspectors.

So the public enterprise part of our effort to provide the housing we must have is off to a good beginning.

Now our immediate challenging opportunity is to get the private enterprise part of the program -- the part that must provide 30 per cent and the non-profit sponsors who must provide 13 per cent into full swing.

We have not been dragging our feet on this. Interest has been shown by many developers, despite the discouraging tight money situation of the past several months. Many plans are being discussed.

But this a big job for our whole city.

It is a job in which this committee can and will furnish the leadership and the inspiration to all developers, large and small, to join forces in an all - out endeavor.

Then, too, we must arouse widespread interest to provide the non-profit sponsors for 221 housing. We must reach out to foundations, churches, fraternal organizations, educational institutions.

We must show them the opportunities and advantages of sponsoring low income housing.

That is the challenging opportunity of leadership which is presented to this committee.

You will hear more about the specifics of how this has been done in Chicago and how it can be done in Atlanta from the two main speakers who will follow me.

Again, I want to thank each and every one of you for being willing to devote you time and thought and energy to the work of this most important committee.

I salute each and every one of you for so unselfishly assuming the high responsibility of citizenship.

I promise that the City government will work with this committee to its fullest capacity.

We can, we must, and we shall achieve our goal of providing decent, safe housing for every Atlantian.