

Section N Citizen Participation

2/24/67

NEEDS

Residential Instability. The majority of the home owners have moved out of the proposed model neighborhood area leaving an increasingly large percentage of low income rental residents. The high mobility of this group results in residential instability. The short tenure of residence is not conducive to a development of interest in and responsibility for the improvement of the communities in which they live. Interest and a sense of responsibility are important factors in development of citizen participation. Absence of these factors make such achievement more necessary and difficult. There is great need for the provision of facilities, resources and other physical improvements in the area so that the home owners and more stable citizens will remain in the area and other responsible citizens will be attracted to it.

There is a lack of acceptance on the part of the "old settlers" of the highly mobile newcomers. There needs to be developed a willingness to relate to the newcomers and assure them of a place in the life of the community so they will have a sense of belonging.

Motivation. About 45% of the families in the area have incomes of less than \$3,000. A significant percentage (6%) have incomes less than \$1,000. All of the attendant characteristics of people in poverty including a sense of futility and hopelessness are present among a large segment of the people in the model neighborhood area. In addition, the people have been the victims of broken promises and unfulfilled commitments that tend to reinforce their sense of uselessness. There is a need for continuation of the efforts recently begun by the City to improve services, Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Community Council and other public and private agencies as they are working with citizens in the area to help them help themselves. These need to be greatly extended and accelerated to restore the confidence of the citizens in themselves and others, and to provide the motivation they need.

Very significant evidence of the potential of responsible citizenship has been demonstrated by residents of the area. Examples of their efforts are reported elsewhere in this proposal. The number of citizens participating in these efforts needs to be increased.

Information. Information about and knowledge of the nature, role, and processes of governmental and social institutions is lacking. Education and opportunities for their participation in these areas need to be increased. These would help residents of the area to become more adequate to participate in the activities for the improvement of their communities and the quality of their lives.

Communication. Educational level in the model neighborhood area is less than eighth grade for more than 60% of the adults, according to the 1960 Census. The limited training and experience pose special problems in understanding and communication of unfamiliar concepts and methods. Verbal communication needs

to be in relatively simple language and at their level of experience. This limitation also greatly underscores the need for citizen involvement as a means of learning and participation.

Fear. Residents of the model neighborhood area have been subjected to the normal life experiences of people in poverty including eviction. Additional dislocation of people occasioned by urban renewal and expressway clearance in the area have increased the fear of being moved. Citizens are suspect of "new" programs being precipitated upon them.

The need is for information, interpretation and participation to give reassurance to the people.

Isolation. Physical, social and cultural isolation are characteristic of people in poverty stricken areas, and the model neighborhood proposed is no exception. Experience reveals that the residents do not relate to the city as a whole or even the total immediate community in which they live. Expansion of the perspective of residents of their own problems and conditions of life in relation to others in their own community and the city at large is greatly needed. Efforts to increase individual citizen and group participation have begun and need to be greatly strengthened and increased.