

For Release:  
3:00 P. M., Wednesday  
December 11, 1968

URBAN RENEWAL PROGRESS - 1968

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FOR  
THE ATLANTA HOUSING AUTHORITY

BEFORE THE  
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
FOR URBAN RENEWAL

DECEMBER 11, 1968



In reporting to this Committee one year ago this month, I predicted that in 1968 construction totaling \$26.2 million would be started on urban renewal land, including the start of construction of 1,468 dwelling units, a substantial increase over the previous year. I am happy to report that construction was actually started on improvements totaling \$39.9 million, including the start of 1,033 dwelling units of which 884 dwelling units have been completed. This housing construction represents over four times the number of dwelling units started and 21 times the number of units completed the previous year. This is the first time in Atlanta's Urban Renewal Program history where housing construction exceeded the number of dwelling units demolished. I site this as a specific example of a conscious effort on the part of the Housing Authority not only to demonstrate a feasible relocation plan by siting the availability of housing for families being relocated by governmental action at rents people can afford - but actually to provide sufficient housing for those families being displaced. This has not been the pattern of urban renewal in the past in this City or any other, a fault well taken by critics of the Urban Renewal Program. It seems to me that we are clearly moving in the right direction.

From the period December 1, 1967 to December 1, 1968, the Atlanta Housing Authority has acquired 285 parcels of land at a cost of \$6.3 million. The Authority relocated 180 families, 77 individuals, and 55 business concerns from urban renewal areas, and provided housing assistance to an additional 328 families and 98 individuals relocated as a result of other governmental action (i.e. Code Enforcement, State Highway, Board of Education, and airport expansion).

During the past 12 months the Authority demolished 284 structures comprising 484 dwelling units, and completed rehabilitation of 154 dwelling units.



The Authority sold 31 parcels of land for \$3.5 million and put under contract for sale an additional 21 parcels having a value of \$2.6 million.

Construction was begun on improvements totaling \$39.9 million. These improvements include the start of 1,033 dwelling units, the Ira Hardin office building, an addition to the Marriott Motor Hotel, and improvements at Georgia State College and the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Improvements totaling \$11.2 million were completed in the past 12 months, including 884 dwelling units.

Several other activities during this period should be noted. The Housing Authority received Federal authorization to provide 60 relocatable housing units in the Bedford-Pine Area. This was the first authorized use of relocatable housing units on urban renewal land in the country, and was in direct response to a commitment made by the City to residents of the Bedford-Pine Community that only those areas ready for redevelopment would be cleared, and that every effort would be made to permit the maximum number of families to remain in the area - even while permanent housing was being constructed. Site improvements for these units is now underway, and we hope that the first relocatable housing units will be in place and ready for occupancy before the end of the year.

A second item of note was the development competition by the Housing Authority of the 96 acres of Federal surplus land, formerly U. S. Penitentiary property, made available to the City by President Johnson in December, 1967, to help meet critical urban needs. The national competition consisted of the design of an entire community, including housing for families of low and moderate income, schools, parks and shopping facilities - a community designed to encourage a



harmonious social and economic mix. Five redeveloper's proposals were received and submitted for review and evaluation by a jury of five nationally recognized professionals experienced in housing development (the first time a professional jury was employed to judge improvements on urban renewal land in Atlanta). On Monday of this week, the Mayor announced that the Atlanta Housing Authority had selected the National Homes Corporation of Lafayette, Indiana to develop the Federal surplus land. The National Homes proposal contains 600 units of housing for families of low and moderate income, shopping facilities, a town center, two elementary school sites, a middle school site, and a six acre park. The redeveloper's improvements are estimated to cost \$8.7 million.

A third significant activity during this period was the preparation of a Neighborhood Development Program application outlining the City's urban renewal activities to be undertaken in 1969. The Neighborhood Development Program authorized by the Housing Act of 1968, is a program of urban renewal action now. The program was developed: (1) to permit planning and execution activities to be undertaken concurrently, i.e. to permit rehabilitation, clearance and redevelopment to be undertaken in specific areas, even while planning is still underway; (2) to more quickly respond to the critical urban needs of the Cities by accelerating provisions of public facilities and services; and (3) to facilitate a more effective programming and budgeting of urban renewal activities on an annual cash-needs basis, i.e. the Federal government and the City providing funds annually for urban renewal activities to be carried out in specific areas of the City.

The City's Neighborhood Development Program application, filed with the Federal government on December 6, for the period January 1 through December 31, 1969 includes execution activities in three areas: Bedford-Pine, Georgia Tech II, and Model Cities, and planning activities in East Atlanta and Vine City. The application



requests a Federal grant in the amount of \$24.3 million. The City's share is made up of completed non-cash grants-in-aid in the amount of \$10.8 million.

Looking ahead to 1969, the Atlanta Housing Authority will continue its urban renewal activities in 8 existing projects and begin planning and execution activities in the five areas included in the City's Neighborhood Development Program. These urban renewal activities encompass 5,700 acres of the City - a sizable task indeed.

In addition, the Authority estimates that construction will be started on improvements totaling \$59.7 million on urban renewal land in 1969. These improvements include 1,037 dwelling units, the Butler Street elementary school (which will permit the Authority to close out Atlanta's first urban renewal project), the stadium motel, elementary schools in Rockdale and Thomasville, improvements at Georgia State College and Georgia Tech, and the enclosed mall shopping center in West End.

As we stand on the threshold of a new day, a new year, Atlanta shares the same fate as every major City in America. How can the poor be lifted from poverty? What fate befalls our Cities? In our affluent society, it is unthinkable that millions of Americans remain ill-housed; that affluent whites continue fleeing to the suburbs, leaving our urban core to the poor and the black; that spreading slums and blight are leading us not to decay but destruction, while in many cities, officials remain insensitive to the plight of the people.

The bell continues to toll. Time is running out. We will survive only as we succeed in responding to the desperate needs of our people, in terms of providing opportunities for housing, education, and employment; in terms of improving the quality of urban life; in terms of lifting the hopes and aspirations of the poor

and the depressed; in terms of involving people in their destiny.

As we face a new year, this is our choice, our opportunity, our challenge.