

Administering the Demonstration
Cities Program in Atlanta

I. Rationale:

The draft prepared by several agencies in connection with the Mayor's Director of Government Liaison outlines the goals and steps by which Atlanta can participate in the recently passed Model Cities or Demonstration Cities Act of 1966.

What this statement neglects to outline is the methodology by which these goals and programs are to be accomplished. The implementation of this plan is perhaps its most crucial component. Plans there are in abundance. But the skillful execution of such plans remains the key to effective action.

That Atlanta posses the fundamental resources it needs to meet the requirements of the Demonstration Cities Plan is without doubt. What is required is less the creation of new mechanisms than the effective harnessing and, where necessary, the reorientation of those which already exist.

It is paramount that the essential thrust of the Demonstration Cities Program should be kept in mind. It is essentially designed to make a social impact on a low-income neighborhood, bringing together the tools of both physical and social planning agencies. As such the coordination and implementation of the plan should begin with this end in mind and, accordingly, build from this base.

As such the plan calls for an agency which carries both the capacity and means for integrating social and physical planning functions. The only agency which is currently geared to meet this need in terms of action is the Economic Opportunity Atlanta Program.

II. EOA & Demonstration Cities:

On at least two bases, if not all three, the Economic Opportunity Program is uniquely equipped to conduct the plan of attack outlined in the draft statement.

The plan calls for Neighborhood Organization and Resident Participation. In each of the target neighborhoods delineated for the Demonstration Cities Program, EOA has developed well-organized and functioning neighborhood groups. Most of these have been actively involved in initiating planning activities for the Demonstration Cities Program.

These neighborhood groups have made it possible for the first real "grass roots" leadership to participate in planning community life. Every aspect of the community is dealt with, from employment to education, housing to health, recreation and aging.

Secondly, the plan calls for the improvement of Health and Welfare and the physical renewal of the area. In both instances local neighborhood committees have organized to survey needs and recommended programs. These neighborhood committees stand ready to make their contribution.

Finally, as the Act is designed to bring about the coordination of agencies in an all-out attack on the conditions of poverty, the framework of the Neighborhood Service Center program is such that a Technical Advisory Committee is organized to provide this added and much needed resource.

In review it can be shown that the Neighborhood Service Centers in the target Demonstration Cities Area provide a ready made well-organized forum for "grass roots participation," a mechanism for attack and a base on which additional program effort can be laid.

III. Plan of Attack:

It is, however, not the contention of EOA that its present structure is entirely sufficient to meet this task alone. Indeed, were it not for the fact that many agencies have made their services available from the outset would it be possible for EOA to have reached its present stage of evolution. It realizes it is far from the desired goal. But it is on the right road and hopes this latest effort (Demonstration Cities) will reinforce its role and future.

There are some areas of need which go beyond the present structure and activities of the Neighborhood Service Centers. It remains only to outline some of these to indicate the gaps which should be closed with additional programs and personnel.

A. Present activities include:

1. Employment - job placement, counseling referrals, training opportunities, etc.

2. Social Services - multi-purpose needs (health, family counseling, day care, aging, etc.)
3. Education - community schools, adult education, etc.
4. Housing - relocation assistance and housing information

B. Need Areas:

1. Economic infra-structures - businesses - lending institutions, commercial establishment, etc.
2. Social infra-structures-community clubs, recreation halls, etc.
3. Physical infra-structures-roads, parks, etc.

IV. Implementation:

It is recommended that these centers which are located in the Demonstration Cities Area should be merged into a Demonstration Cities Planning Task Force. As such they would be funded through the initial planning grant while providing services at the same time.

These centers would be administered by the Mayor's office under a Demonstration Cities Project Officer who is responsible to the Mayor. Although officially responsible to the Mayor, these centers would continue to operate under the administrative procedures of the local CAA.

The local CAA, EOA, would provide at least one coordinator from its office to that of the Mayor's Demonstration Cities Office.

V. Evaluation:

Under terms still unwritten an evaluation of the Demonstration Cities Program, the Neighborhood Center Program and the coordination of these activities would be undertaken by a local educational institution. Hopefully, this negotiation would lead to a greater, sustained involvement of the academic community in urban problems.

Ideally, Atlanta University and Georgia State College and/or Emory University could fulfill this need.