

A REPORT
To The Citizens of Atlanta
On
URBAN RENEWAL

During
1961

URBAN RENEWAL DEPARTMENT
CITY OF ATLANTA

BY
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PUBLISHED BY
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URBAN RENEWAL DEPARTMENT

City of Atlanta

REPORT FOR 1961

I. PURPOSE, FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary purpose of this report is to bring to the citizens of Atlanta a better concept of Urban Renewal, why we have it, how it works, who is responsible for it, what has been accomplished to date, principal needs for the future and suggestions for accomplishing them.

The Urban Renewal Department performs four major functions, the first and foremost of which is prescribed in ordinance establishing the Department, adopted July 1, 1957 which states, "The functions of this department shall be to study the Urban Renewal requirements of the City of Atlanta, to determine ways and means for their accomplishment and to provide and facilitate timely coordination and orderly development of Urban Renewal plans, projects and other related activities throughout the city . . . and to make recommendations for facilitating progress on Urban Renewal in the City of Atlanta. . ."

In carrying out this function the Urban Renewal Department serves as the staff of the Urban Renewal Committee of the Board of Aldermen and performs the principal coordinating activities on Urban Renewal matters with other Departments and Agencies. This work is performed by the Director, Assistant Director, Rehabilitation Specialist and Secretary.

The second function assigned this Department, as of July 1, 1959, is enforcement of the Housing and Slum Clearance Code of the City of Atlanta. For this purpose the Department is now authorized a Chief Inspector, 8 Field Inspectors and 2 Clerks.

The third function is the city-wide responsibility for providing relocation housing assistance for families displaced by Governmental action, including expressway acquisition, and for issuance of certificates of eligibility to displaced families for purchase of FHA insured mortgage homes under the 221 Program. A relocation Housing Officer and Secretary perform this function.

The fourth and most recently assigned function, since August 1, 1960, is responsibility for enforcement of the City Ordinance requiring that demolitions be accomplished within a prescribed time limit after issuance of demolition permit and that resulting debris, litter and rubble be removed from the premises. This function is performed by the Environmental Improvement Division, in addition to Housing Code enforcement.

The Urban Renewal Department, with advice and assistance of other Departments, especially the Planning Department, initiates and makes recommendations to the Urban Renewal Committee of the Board of Aldermen for new Urban Renewal Projects, reviews Urban Renewal Plans for the Urban Renewal Committee and when appropriate initiates changes in boundaries of existing Projects.

Survey, planning and execution of the City's current Urban Renewal Projects, after selection, designation and adoption of the Projects by the City, has been delegated by Ordinance to the Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta, as the City's Agent.

However, the establishment of broad policies for operation of the entire Urban Renewal program and responsibility for insuring that they are carried out is a duty and function of the City (the Mayor and Board of Aldermen) executed through its Urban Renewal Committee. This responsibility should not and cannot be delegated.

II. SUMMARY—EXISTING URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS:

Atlanta's five Urban Renewal Projects now comprise 1303 acres, originally contained 2,971 substandard residential structures to be demolished, 1500 dwellings to be rehabilitated, will require 4,545 families to move and after redevelopment will house 7,598 families in safe, decent and sanitary standard housing (a gain of 969 families) above the number that were in the areas originally. The net project cost of the first five projects will be roughly \$27,000,000, of which the local share is \$9,000,000, with \$18,000,000 being borne by the Federal Government.

Of the local share, all but \$1,500,000 in cash, the total 1957 Urban Renewal Bond funds, is being provided by non-cash grants in aid by other departments for capital improvements which will serve the areas. \$4,500,000 of this amount is being provided by the Board of Education in the form of school construction.

Taxes (city and county) derived from the areas before the projects started was \$160,000 annually; after redevelopment is complete the value of newly constructed taxable property in the areas is conservatively estimated to be \$125,000,000, producing in real estate taxes alone \$1,600,000 annually, an increase of ten fold.

The first three (center of town) projects were adopted in February, 1956, and the two outlying projects, for relocation purposes, were adopted in August, 1957. Final plans for Butler, Rawson-Washington and Thomasville Projects were approved July, 1959, and for University and Rockdale June, 1960. Execution is considered to have started in Butler, Rawson-Washington and Thomasville Projects January 1, 1960, and in University and Rockdale January 1, 1961. The redevelopment phase is five years for all projects.

By year end 1961, some 2400 substandard properties had been acquired by the Housing Authority at an expenditure of \$17,000,000. 70% of all parcels to be acquired, have been purchased or are under condemnation; all property in the Thomasville Project had been acquired or was in the process of condemnation; over 1,000 substandard structures had been demolished and their occupants rehoused in standard dwellings; 431 dwelling units in the Urban Renewal Projects had been brought up to standards required by the Housing Code and 673 additional units were in the process of being rehabilitated. Six parcels, consisting of 69.43 acres, or 7.5% of the Urban Renewal tracts, have already been sold for redevelopment valued at \$12,068,350. This includes a \$3,250,000, 21 story, luxury apartment building; a 1,000 pupil elementary school, an 8 story Holiday Motel; 596 medium priced rental apartment units; and 100 units of single family 221 sales housing.

III. PRINCIPAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE URBAN RENEWAL DEPARTMENT:

Housing Code Enforcement:

In order to make the Housing Code felt throughout the entire city, the Environmental Improvement Division has devoted its efforts during 1961 primarily to the worst property in the block or neighborhood basis. However, in addition to city-wide coverage, conservation areas in salvagable, residential neighborhoods have now been selected for concentrated effort in 1962 on a house-by-house basis. This should result in substantial increased production during 1962.

**A SUMMARY OF HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT
ACTIVITIES FOLLOWS:**

As of December 31, 1961,

		Sept.- Dec. '59	1960	1961
*/6. Major Repairs:	Cases	695	82	59
		793	544	1960
		1509	1046	1961
	Units	3628	1307	1959
		3063	2270	1961
/4. Demolitions:	Cases	111	51	1960
		326	205	1961
	Units	271	216	1960
		712	407	1961
/8. Minor Deficiencies: (Usually clean up of premises)		201	130	1959
		306	329	1960
		974	410	1961
/2. Properties Inspected in Conservation Areas		747		
/2. Cases referred to other Departments		121		1960
		207		1961
/2. Demolition Permits complied		387		
/2. Court cases for non-compliance with Demolition Permits		(9)		
/3. Cases considered by Better Housing Commission		(137)		1960
		(325)		1961
Units Placarded (with approval of B.H.O.)		(242)		1960
		(675)		1961
Families required to move— for demolitions		(192)		1960
Families required to move for other reasons		(465)		1961
		(7)		
/6. Court Cases for Housing Code violations (all won)		36		1960
		47		1961

***NOTES:**

Where no dates are indicated, figures pertain to 1961 operations only.
Figures in () also included under other items.
/6. Requires average of 6 inspections each.
/4. Requires average of 4 inspections each.
/3. Requires average of 3 inspections each.
/2. Requires average of 2 inspections each.
At year end, Inspectors were carrying an average work load of approximately 225 uncompleted cases each.

The above was accomplished with only 4 Inspectors in 1959 and 1960; in 1961 with 6-1/3 Inspectors; 8 Inspectors are now authorized.

The Better Housing Commission has considered 462 slow moving and difficult cases in an effort to resolve them without court action; and has authorized the placarding of 917 dwelling units.

Relocation Housing:

During 1961, 620 certificates of eligibility (23 to Whites and 597 to Negroes) were issued by the Relocation Housing Division to displaced families for the purchase of FHA insured mortgage homes built by private enterprise. A total of 3,210 certificates (306 to Whites and 2904 to Negroes)

have been issued under this program to date. Since this program started in 1958, building permits have been issued for construction within the City of Atlanta for 2,889 single family, 221 houses (1072 for Whites and 1817 for Negroes). All but 100 of these have been completed and all but 137 of the completed houses have been sold and occupied. This program alone represents \$29,000,000 in new construction in Atlanta.

The Relocation Housing office of this Department has relocated 58 displaced families in private rentals and referred 340 families to Public Housing.

Fight Blight:

During April, 1961, the Urban Renewal Department, with the assistance of other Departments and agencies, promoted and spear-headed a very successful city-wide FIGHT BLIGHT campaign. This was closely tied in with and supported by the Women's Chamber of Commerce in connection with its annual Clean Up, Paint Up, Fix Up Campaign.

Exhibits:

During the week of August 21-26, 1961, this Department participated with other City Departments in providing displays at Lenox Square for the "Salute to Atlanta." The Department also had a very substantial and informative Urban Renewal display at the Southeastern Fair.

Recertification of Workable Program:

The Department prepared, with assistance of material furnished by other Departments and Agencies, Atlanta's annual report for Recertification of Progress in Community Improvement (Workable Program). The principal comments by the Federal Government in its Recertification of the Workable Program (to January 1, 1963) were:

- (1) That progress in Housing Code enforcement is good, but the City badly needs additional Inspectors and suggestion was made that building permit fees might be increased to finance the cost of the Housing Code enforcement service; and
- (2) That activities of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal be more comprehensive and positive in the role of actually accomplishing community improvements.

Apartment Improvement:

Inspection and upgrading major medium rental apartment developments has been undertaken by the Rehabilitation Specialist of the Department.

Revision of Housing Code:

A comprehensive revision of the Housing Code is currently being undertaken, designed to clarify and strengthen certain provisions of the Code, based on our 2½ years actual experience in Code Enforcement.

IV. OTHER MAJOR URBAN RENEWAL

REPORTS AND RELATED PROJECTS:

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Buttermilk Bottoms:

The 160 acre Buttermilk Bottoms tract has, since November, 1960, been designated and adopted by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen as a future Urban Renewal Project. This area has long been considered by many as Atlanta's future Number 1 Urban Renewal Project.

West End:

A General Neighborhood Renewal Plan study is underway in a 650 acre area of the "West End": to be completed in June, 1962. It is anticipated that a \$1,500,000 Urban Renewal Project will develop in at least 10% of the area being studied.

Transportation Plaza:

A Feasibility Study for future Urban Renewal Projects is being made by the Planning Department in the 500 acre tract known as "Transportation Plaza," which includes the area between Whitehall-Spring Streets and Northside Drive, from McDaniel Street to North Avenue.

Georgia State College:

An Urban Renewal Project for expansion of Georgia State College along Decatur Street, between Central Avenue and Piedmont Avenue, is already definitely underway, with the entire local share of the cost of the project being borne by Georgia State College and the State Board of Regents.

Howard School:

Application has been prepared for submittal to the Federal Government for a small Urban Project

sponsored by the School Department primarily for expansion of Howard High School. The Board of Education has committed itself to defray all but \$17,500 of the cost of the local share of this project.

East Atlanta:

An application is being prepared by the Housing Authority for a 110 acre Urban Renewal Project in East Atlanta in the Mayson Avenue-Hardee Street area. About half of this project is contemplated for rehabilitation. There is also sufficient vacant land in this project to provide location within the project for construction of additional public housing units required, before any demolition takes place within the project area.

Bond Issue:

Since 1958 the Urban Renewal Department has been working consistently for adoption of a Long Range Program for future Urban Renewal Projects, has developed such a proposal for consideration by the Urban Renewal Committee and is prepared to present and support the proposal before the Bond Commission. This proposal is for six year program, 1962-7, and, in addition to the projects listed above, includes five other badly needed projects. Two of these are proposed as "companion" projects to complement others. The local share of this proposed six year program amounts to \$8,000,000. This includes a \$1,000,000 revolving fund for non-Federal-assisted projects. This amount is not excessive, when compared with the needs of the City, and is in keeping with the financial effort being made in Urban Renewal by other cities of comparable size.

Relocation Housing:

Other developments in progress, not a direct part of but closely related to Urban Renewal, are the 650 unit Field Road Public Housing Project for Negroes and 250 units of high-rise Public Housing for Elderly (Whites) now underway on Ashby Street, just South of the Joel Chandler Harris Public Housing Project. Also commitment has been made in the Eastern sector of the Butler Street Urban Renewal Project for 200 units of high-rise Public Housing for the Elderly (Negroes).

V. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

The highlight of citizen participation during 1961 was the enthusiastic and effective part played by neighborhood groups, business associations,

trade organizations, clubs and individual citizens in Atlanta's first FIGHT BLIGHT Campaign. The Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal was particularly helpful in a clerical, financial and advisory capacity. Throughout the year the Acting Director of the Citizens Advisory Committee published and distributed to its membership a very informative weekly newsletter. The Citizens Advisory Committee also provided for publication of the 1960 Report of the Urban Renewal Department, and has offered to publish this report. It has also been very active through the courtesy of the Trust Company of Georgia in arranging informative talks and tours on Urban Renewal for various citizen groups.

The Chamber of Commerce has listed progress in Urban Renewal as one of its seven major objectives during 1962. The first edition of "Atlanta" (January, 1962, edition), a publication sponsored by the "Forward Atlanta" movement of the Chamber of Commerce, contained as its primary feature an excellent article on Urban Renewal.

The Central Atlanta Association and the newly organized Uptown Association have both strongly endorsed and adopted policy supporting Urban Renewal.

The League of Women Voters published during 1961 a special edition of its "FACTS" pamphlet devoted exclusively to Urban Renewal. Both this organization and the Voters Guild prominently featured Urban Renewal in their educational campaigns for voters during the 1961 Primary and General Election. All local candidates for re-election during the 1961 Mayor and Board of Aldermen campaign endorsed and promised support for Urban Renewal.

The local press, radio and television have consistently supported and assisted the Urban Renewal Program.

VI. SPECIAL NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE:

(a) According to the 1960 census, there are 40,000 dwelling units within the City of Atlanta that are dilapidated or deteriorating. These represent areas of the City six times as extensive as our current Urban Renewal Projects. It takes little imagination to see the need for Housing Code Enforcement and Urban Renewal clearance projects in these areas.

(b) A Long Range Program for future Urban Renewal Projects, with some degree of acceptance for future development, is essential to planning areas for Housing Code Enforcement, taking full

advantage of capital improvements by other Departments for Urban Renewal credit purposes and for controlling, or at least influencing, interim developments in various critical areas of the City.

(c) Adequate provision for financing such a program on a continuing basis is a must, if Urban Renewal is to serve the purpose intended in Atlanta, and which it is capable of doing, if given adequate financial support. The City simply cannot afford to fail to take advantage of the opportunity now offered, through the Urban Renewal Program, to rid itself of its extensive festering slums.

(d) Future substantial Urban Renewal Projects cannot be undertaken, however, without simultaneously providing for additional Public Housing to accommodate those displaced families whose income is too low to buy or rent standard dwelling units in the open market.

(e) The adoption by the City of Minimum Standards for existing commercial and industrial properties, similar to those now in the Housing Code for residential structures, is essential if we are to eliminate slums and upgrade neighborhoods.

(f) Violations of the Housing Code are so numerous and extensive, it is doubtful that material progress can be made in corrective measures until the Courts adopt the policy of fining offenders on first notice and summons for Housing Code violations, in much the same manner as is now followed in Traffic Court for traffic violations.

(g) The Sanitary, Health and Fire Departments have been and can continue to contribute tremendously to Environmental Improvement throughout the City by assisting in enforcing clean up of premises and removal of accumulations of trash and litter from occupied properties and vacant lots. This will, at the same time, improve sanitary and health conditions and reduce fire hazards.

(h) Improvement of apartment zoning regulations would greatly assist, from an Environmental Improvement standpoint, prevention of future slums, through new construction.

(i) Greater restrictions and controls on operators of junk yards and salvage dumps throughout the City is very much needed. A requirement for screening *existing* establishments in this category with a woven redwood fence, similar to that now required for *new* establishments would be a

tremendous benefit to the City in its Environmental Improvement effort.

(j) Thorough rehabilitation through Housing Code enforcement is the backbone of the City-wide Urban Renewal effort. Increased emphasis *now* on this phase, with additional Housing Code Inspectors, is far cheaper and more practical for the City than clearance and redevelopment *later*, except in those areas which are already so badly deteriorated that it is not economically feasible to rehabilitate them.

(k) The need urgently exists for some appropriate incentives, probably tax concessions, to encourage private enterprise to redevelop, at no cost to the City, slum areas in accordance with plans and appropriate controls established and approved by the City.

VII. IN APPRECIATION:

The Urban Renewal Department is especially appreciative of assistance and cooperation rendered during 1961 in the overall Urban Renewal effort by the following on various and special occasions, for which space herein does not permit detailed recognition.

Various Departments of the City of Atlanta (especially the Planning and Construction Departments):

Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta
Board of Education
Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board
State Highway Department
Fulton County Health Department
Federal Agencies
Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal
Municipal Court
Better Housing Commission
Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
Women's Chamber of Commerce
Central Atlanta Association
Uptown Association
Atlanta Real Estate Board
Fulton County Grand Juries
Grand Jurors Association
Voters Guild
League of Women Voters
Atlanta Urban League
Atlanta newspapers and local radio and television stations
Trust Company of Georgia
And host of organizations, clubs and individual friends and supporters

The Urban Renewal Department especially

wishes to acknowledge the valuable services and consistent support given this Department and the Urban Renewal Program by two former members of the Urban Renewal Committee, Alderman Jesse Draper and W. A. "Bill" Sims, who chose not to stand for re-election in the 1961 political campaign.



