

# CITY OF ATLANTA

AUGUST 2, 1968



CITY HALL ATLANTA, GA. 30303

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IVAN ALLEN, JR., MAYOR

CECIL A. ALEXANDER, Chairman  
Housing Resources Committee  
MALCOLM D. JONES  
Housing Coordinator

I am appearing before you as Chairman of the Housing Resources Committee of the City of Atlanta. In November 1966, we were charged by the Mayor to assist by all means possible the construction of 16,800 units of low and moderate income housing units. These units were to serve as relocation for persons to be moved by urban renewal, new roads, schools, and other government action.

As of May 15 we stood as follows:

Units completed	2,031
Under construction	5,108
In planning	<u>7,151</u>
Total in sight	14,290

Of this 16,800, 9,576 were to be public housing -- 3,906 of these are in some stage of completion, 658 have been leased, and 372 are being negotiated. This means that 4,640 more units are needed by 1971.

In the F.H.A. programs for low to moderate incomes, we are running ahead by 3,165 units. It is then in the area of public housing, the most needed and the most difficult to find land for, that we need help.

In addition to the replacement housing we need, the total requirement for low and moderate units as compiled by the City Planning Department is 31,400. Thus even if we complete the 16,800 units, we are still 14,600 units short of our total needs.

It is no news to you that this program is controversial. White and black, rich and poor, people in government and out, good guys and bad guys, say either, "we need it, but put it somewhere else." or "don't put anymore of it anywhere" And our proposals are themselves controversial, open to misinterpretation and exploitation. But this Committee feels that our requests are justified in terms of the successful completion of this program--and we did not join this committee to fail.

The question has been raised concerning the inability of the people of Atlanta to stand the tax burden of carrying out the program. It should not be forgotten that over 7,000 of these units will, in fact, be tax producing and will present no additional burden on Atlanta's taxpayers. Even Public Housing makes payment to the City in lieu of taxes. All pay, even if at a reduced rate. It is well known that slums absorb an inordinate amount of taxes in the extra police protection, fire protection and sanitary services. When we eliminate slums we also eliminate considerable profitless drain of tax dollars. The Housing program will presumably put over \$170,000,000.00 in construction costs into Atlanta's economy during construction; jobs will be created during construction and long after in management and maintenance. We submit that the net effect on the City will be increased tax yield and substantial improvement in the overall economy.

The point was also made that if we enforce the laws against overcrowding, the people would have no place to go but Fulton and

DeKalb County. We approve of the enforcement of the law, but challenge the assumption of knowing where the displaced would go. If history repeats, they will stay as close by as possible and "block bust" adjoining neighborhoods, unless a definite program is set up to relocate them.

One of the T.V. stations warned us that you would want several questions answered today. They are good questions--we believe we have good answers.

1. Why don't we look for sites already zoned for apartments?

ANSWER: We have--the developers have--the areas now zoned for apartments of all kinds amount to 455 acres and of this more than three-fourths have been tried and found wanting. Zoning isn't the only criteria. The site selected must be priced right, it must satisfy H.U.D., the Atlanta Housing Authority, F.H.A., schools must be available, utilities must be in, terrain must be feasible and so on.

2. What is to prevent prices on rezoned land from soaring?

ANSWER: The more land available, the lower the prices should be.

3. Is the housing being built being used by displaced Atlanta people or is it making Atlanta a dumping ground for the poor?

ANSWER: We acknowledge this possibility and have taken the following steps:

1. We recommended to the Atlanta Housing Authority and they have required one year residency for acceptance in public housing.

Recent figures, however, show that the people who want public housing are our own Atlantans.

From November 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968, the Atlanta Housing Authority received 2,903 applications. Of these only 141 were from persons in Atlanta less than six months, whose applications were rejected.

2. This Committee has brought into being a metropolitan oriented non-profit fund for promoting projects throughout the metropolitan area

3. This committee has encouraged the creation of the Inter-Faith Housing Group, a non-profit group of churches seeking to build housing throughout the area.

4. We have supported and encouraged such organizations as SWAP which have encouraged the stabilization of neighborhoods in transition.

5. We have encouraged the construction of upper income housing in the central city and the preservation of existing neighborhoods.

6. We are moving to organize a state-wide low cost housing group.

Yet it would seem that your fears and ours are not valid. First of all as noted above, the Atlanta Housing Authority figures indicate that there is only a small influx of poor seeking housing. Secondly, we cite the following figure from Sales Management- a publication that many businesses and planning bodies rely on.

Their figures indicate that low income families are on the decline in the City limits of Atlanta and higher income on the rise.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>INCOME LEVEL</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1966	3,000 or less	23.7%
1967	3,000 or less	20.9%
1966	10,000 or more	22.9%
1967	10,000 or more	26.9%

The poor families dropped 2.8% and the \$10,000.00 or better increased 4%.

The Atlanta Constitution, in discussing a similar effect in the metropolitan area says, "Last year's increase of some 13,500 in number of households here also may have influenced the unusual trends, particularly if most of them represent migrants moving into relatively well paid jobs here."

We do not know what part housing plays in attracting poor people to Atlanta, but we are convinced that jobs, schools, community services, and the racial relations here, as contrasted with the rural areas, attract far more than housing.

If we want to stop the poor who do come to Atlanta we should also stop the Forward Atlanta program, the efforts of the local businessmen to find jobs for the hard-core unemployed, the Community Chest and

let race relations deteriorate. In short, stop every effort of these last years that is making Atlanta great in our own eyes and across the nation.

One thing we do need to do is to move on rapidly with the NASH-BANS and other urban renewal projects. The problem with this program is not that we are building too much housing (the need is there with or without clearance projects) but that we are lagging in our slum clearance efforts.

We are vigorously opposed to any slowing down of this program while such places as Vine City, Lightnin', Plunkett Town, Summerhill, Mechanicsville, and severe overcrowding even in the better areas exists.

In order to help this program and, we believe, benefit the entire city, we are asking the Mayor and Board of Aldermen to take the following actions.

1. We request the Mayor to appoint either an existing committee or a new committee to assume the responsibility for the housing program in the Board.

We do not believe you are "the bad guys"--we want and need your assistance.

2. Revise the Building Code for the City of Atlanta at least to

allow experimental housing to be built in the Model Cities Area.

It has been made clear to us that such action is needed if Atlanta is to qualify in the Model Cities experimental housing programs.

3. Revise the ordinance governing non-conforming use of land to allow structural repairs to dwelling units.

We understand that the Planning Commission has this under consideration. We urge haste in this matter to allow the enforcement of the Housing Code in areas of non-conforming use.

4. Accelerate the urban renewal program particularly in the NASH-BANS , Vine City area, and others outside of the Model Cities area which is moving.

As long as the horrible conditions in some of these areas exists, we are asking for trouble--we are inhumane and we are not a great city.

5. Authorize the Atlanta Housing Authority to ask for 2,000 additional units of public housing.

The present allocations are used up and developers are being turned away.

As stated above, 4,640 additional units are needed to complete the program.

We recommend that a substantial part of this housing should be built by the Authority itself so that it can select sites.

6. Finally, we request that a revised District Zoning Map be adopted. This map should be based on the new land use map of the city after careful review of that map.

As a part of this map, we ask that sufficient land be zoned to more than meet the requirements of this program both in low cost single family dwellings and in multi-family units.

We further suggest that the District Zoning Map be updated on a periodic basis, say every four years.

The last rezoning of the City was done in 1954. As you gentlemen well know, the map is now seriously inadequate and the City is constantly being rezoned by individuals seeking changes. This method keeps the City in constant turmoil (one group has even opened a liquor store to raise money to fight rezoning.) This method undermines property values in adjacent areas and causes people to oppose all zoning because there is not certainty that changes will not continue. You gentlemen and the Planning Department should, we believe, control zoning by positive action rather than react to individual requests.

Furthermore, our Workable Program requires that the Zoning Map be updated periodically.



The scattering of relatively small sites throughout the City will prevent large concentrations of public housing with all its attendant problems. It will further allow people to live near their work. The vast pile-up of people transferring buses in the center of Atlanta is clear indication that many live miles from their jobs in the northeast and northwest. Not only would housing close to jobs aid the employee and employer, it also would cut down appreciably on traffic.

We are not proposing specific areas at this time. These should be carefully selected by the Planning Department, the Aldermen, the Housing Authority, and, we hope, the Housing Resources Committee. We assume that the total changes would be spread before the public in open hearing.

We do not believe that it is feasible as has been suggested that, before any more housing is built, those sections of the city where housing does not exist must be brought up to all other areas. The land at the necessary price is just not available.

Furthermore, we have indications that efforts will be made to use this rezoning to "get even" with one part of the city or another.

Gentlemen, we developed this program because we do acknowledge that, due to the location of open, less expensive land, the developers have

sort out areas to the West, East, Southeast and Southwest. We ask this rezoning, a difficult task for you, because we believe that it is right, that it is healthy for the City, and it is a real effort not to strain the resources of a particular area of the City. But we do not believe for a moment that we can equalize low income housing or any other city function throughout the city. This is, however a sincere effort to alleviate but not immediately cure an imbalance. We urge you to proceed.

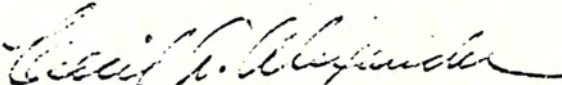
These, then are our requests:

1. A committee of the Aldermen concerned with housing.
2. Revised Building Code.
3. Revised Non-Conforming Use Ordinance.
4. Stepped-up urban renewal.
5. 2,000 more public housing units.
6. Updated District Zoning Map including areas for low income housing.

Gentlemen, we are in the middle of a new revolution that makes the old industrial revolution look like a footnote in history. People, American immigrants, are moving from the rural areas into our urban centers. They come at a time when we are beset with problems.

The poor and uneducated people already in our cities are ill-equipped to compete.

We have built a totally artificial culture. No longer can a man chop down logs and build himself a cabin. He must have the skills and knowledge to trade for this house. We created this society and it will not go away. It's like this--either we house our poor or we have within our midsts, if not in this generation, then certainly in the next, an alienated people ready to grasp by force what we would not provide when there was yet time.

  
Cecil A. Alexander, Chairman  
Housing Resources Committee