

4. Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal

An aggressive and effective force for citizen participation in urban renewal and associate activities is the Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal. Authorized by resolution of the Board of Aldermen, this committee has a membership of some 80 citizens, appointed by the mayor. The membership represents all sections of the city and the various economic strata of business and professional life. Special care is taken to have at least 40 per cent of the membership from the minority race.

Ever since Atlanta became actively engaged in urban renewal, this citizens committee has been very forceful in broadening public understanding of the aims and actions in the various projects. It has subcommittees specifically assigned to each point in the city's workable program. A special subcommittee has worked closely with the Community Improvement Program since its inception. The Citizens Advisory Committee as a whole headed up a campaign which played a leading role in strengthening the city's housing code enforcement program to meet workable program requirements. The full committee meets four times a year.

At the first meeting of each year, the mayor outlines his plans for the year in urban renewal and housing, as was done in January of the present year. The executive committee meets during each of the other months of the year. At its February meeting the executive committee centered its program on the plans for the city's application to be included in the model neighborhood demonstration program. To obtain fuller citizen participation in each new urban renewal project added to the Atlanta program, the main Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee appoints an associate committee in the project area. Chairman of this associate committee meets regularly with the full committee and the executive committee. The committee's executive director meets with the associate committees and attends citizens meetings in the project areas.

The committee conducts citizen tours of present urban renewal projects and areas being considered for future projects. Groups from 40 to 75 citizens are thus given a first hand view of slum conditions. These tours are conducted all through the year, averaging at least one a month.

During the first two months of 1967, such different groups as two Georgia Tech classes, a Georgia State college class, the provisional members of the Atlanta Junior League and a women's club in an area adjacent to the model neighborhood target area were taken on tours by the Citizens Advisory Committee in conjunction with the Atlanta Housing Authority which is the city's agent for urban renewal.

The Citizens Advisory Committee is supported by public contributions and a matching fund from the city. It is staffed by an executive director, who is a former TIME and LIFE staff writer of 25 years experience and a secretary. The chairman is Robert L. Sommerville, president of the Atlanta Transit Company, and one of Atlanta's topmost civic leaders.