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September 30, 1969

Mr. Malcolm D. Jones
Executive Director
Citizens Advisory Committee ←
for Urban Renewal
City Hall
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Jones:

Mr. Persells has asked me to reply to your letter of August 18, 1969 relative to the Executive Committee's concern over several features of Atlanta's Urban Renewal Program. First, let me say that we share the Committee's concern over the length of time required to close out earlier projects. However, to imply that the length of time taken to close out projects is due to an apparent lack of aggressiveness on the part of the Authority is ludicrous. The original five urban renewal projects have been amended forty-two times, requiring an additional eight million dollars from the Federal government, and resulting in a stadium, expansion of Georgia State College, additional land for schools, parks, and neighborhood facilities, acquisition of commercial properties on Georgia Avenue, and numerous other improvements. The average length of time involved in securing Federal approval of an amendment has been twelve months, with several requiring thirty months.

A second major factor delaying project close-outs is the funding and construction of non-cash grants-in-aid. The Butler Street Project, for example, could not be closed out earlier because the proposed school was not funded until the passage of the 1968 bond issue, with construction starting in August, 1969.

Even after renewal land has been sold, many developers have experienced delays caused by the tight money market, high interest rates and soaring costs.

Nonetheless, projects are not closed out without special effort. Recently I established a special task force to identify and expedite all remaining activities to be completed in the original projects. Two of these projects - Butler Street and Georgia State - have been completed this year and are waiting final HUD audit. I want to assure the Committee that the Authority recognizes its responsibility to proceed as rapidly as possible to complete the early projects.

I share the Committee's concern over its seemingly perfunctory role of late. If it is to perform its function as outlined in the Aldermanic resolution creating the Committee, i.e., advise the Mayor and Board of Aldermen and other public bodies concerned with Urban Renewal in the City, then it seems to me that it must continue to review proposed Urban Renewal activities formulated by the various project area committees with an overview of the total needs of the City. The Committee's views on pending redevelopment actions should be expressed to the Aldermanic Planning and Redevelopment Committee, as did Bob Summerville, former Committee Chairman. The Authority will cooperate in any way possible in assisting the Committee in carrying out its function of providing guidance and direction to the City in the administration of its Urban Renewal program.

The comments pertaining to the West End Urban Renewal Project are obviously personal expressions of frustrations shared by the Authority. The West End Urban Renewal Project is now in its third year of execution and to date the Authority has acquired 516 parcels of land (87%), relocated 457 families and 77 businesses (97%), demolished 354 structures (74%), sold or put under agreement for sale 54 acres of land (55%), and completed rehabilitation of 504 structures (22%). In addition, the Authority has acquired and conveyed to the City 8.7 acres of land for park development, and the 1.1 million dollar Dean Rusk Elementary School has been completed. The redeveloper for the 15 acre enclosed mall shopping center is presently securing leases, with construction scheduled in 1970.

In spite of the progress made to date, there are three specific areas in West End where progress has been delayed. The first is the seven acre tract adjacent to the Park Street Methodist Church. This area involves a land use change and is included in an amendment submitted to HUD on June 17, 1969. On September 23, HUD approved an Authority request to proceed with a public hearing and local adoption of the plan amendment pursuant to offering the land for sale for residential re-use. The public hearing has been scheduled for October 17 before the Planning and Development Committee.

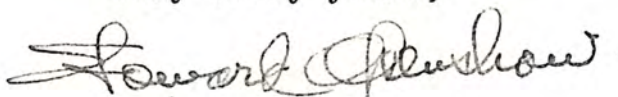
A second area involves some twenty-four acres of land in the vicinity of Lee and Oglethorpe, presently designated for office warehouse and general office use. The West End Advisory Committee had previously agreed that this area needed further study in light of the proposed location of rapid transit in the area.

The third area involves the motel and residential uses on Oak Street, between Ashby and Peoples Streets. The three acre motel site was on the market for 18 months and no proposals were received. Five redevelopers submitted proposals for 76 dwelling units on parcel 19, but the West End Advisory Committee recommended rejection of all proposals, re-study of the site in conjunction with the motel tract, and re-offer for sale. The status of the West End plan will be discussed with the West End Advisory Committee on October 1.

The Authority recognizes the urgency of proceeding as rapidly as possible in each of the eight conventional urban renewal areas and five neighborhood development program areas in the City. I want to assure the Committee that Mr. Persells and I have committed ourselves to this task while making the program responsive to human needs.

We pledge our continued cooperation to CACUR and others devoted to making Atlanta the great city it is destined to become.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Howard Openshaw".

Howard Openshaw
Director of Redevelopment

HO:pc

cc: Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.
Mr. Rodney M. Cook
Dr. Noah N. Langdale, Jr.
Mr. A.B. Padgett
Dean Alex B. Lacy, Jr.