



CITY OF ATLANTA

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
MEMORIAL DRIVE ANNEX BLDG.
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303
522-4463

July 25, 1969

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ATLANTA YOUTH CONGRESS

MR. NAT WELCH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Mayor Allen and the Board of Aldermen

FROM: Community Relations Commission

SUBJECT: Summary of Complaints from Town Hall
Meetings and Recommendations of the
Commission

The key role of the Community Relations Commission (CRC) in the Mayor's Summer Program has been in holding Town Hall meetings in the disadvantaged areas of the City. The Commission initially goes in to hear the complaints of citizens and returns some thirty days later and reports on actions taken by City Hall and other agencies. In many cases, CRC has been able to report corrective action taken by City Departments and other agencies (note Supplement "A" for responses this week to complaints at Perry Homes). Town Hall meetings have been held since March in the following communities: Blair Village, Grant Park, Mechanicsville, Perry Homes, University Homes and Edgewood-Kirkwood.

*San
For your info.
Mel*

This report tabulates the frequency of complaints registered in the initial meetings. The frequency of complaints is not in itself conclusive evidence of the gravity of problems faced by Atlanta.

The purpose of this memorandum is to make recommendations on problems the Commission has been unable to resolve.

Far and away the most frequent complaint received was the need for more and better recreational facilities. Twenty-six complaints were received on this subject compared with eight each on police and garbage service. Twenty-four complaints on recreation dealt with the need for more swimming pools, more play lots for tots, and programs for teenagers. Two complaints had to do with lack of services by

APPROVED
by the
Community Relations Commission
City of Atlanta
Date 7-25-69

Summary of Complaints

Community Chest agencies in the disadvantaged areas. The Commission would like to recommend four areas for improving this situation:

1. The Parks Department capital improvement budget of approximately \$350,000 is grossly inadequate. This sum can easily be expended to build one new park; but this \$350,000 has to be spread over 65 parks. For example, a modern swimming pool costs approximately \$220,000. The City of Atlanta needs to give serious consideration to a multi-million dollar bond issue for improvement and expansion of its Parks system. It should be pointed out that the Parks Department is operating 80 play lots of which 40 are staffed. These are constructed and maintained principally from Federal Poverty Funds. If these funds are reduced, this would throw an immediate and substantial burden on this City.
2. Emphasis should be placed on expanding and improving play lots for tots and neighborhood parks in such communities as Mechanicsville, Summerhill, Fulton Village, Blue Heaven, Bowen Homes, Perry Homes and Grant Park area. Parks need to be in walking distance of these citizens where possible; ghetto families have very poor transportation. Improved transportation in disadvantaged areas will help broaden recreational opportunities.
3. Better utilization must be made of school playgrounds and facilities. This requires more cooperation between the Atlanta School Board and the Parks Department. With the costs of construction and real estate spiraling, Atlanta has to make better use of school facilities for recreation.
4. The need is pressing for improved recreation in public housing. The Atlanta Housing Authority can build recreational buildings. The City should urge action here by the Authority. The Board of Aldermen has offered to pay 50% of the costs of operating recreational programs in public housing if the Authority would do likewise. Under Federal law, AHA can not do so. Therefore, the City must accept its responsibility here in as much as it has assumed responsibility in providing other services in public housing.

A major burden for improving recreation in the City rests with the Parks Department. Churches have been remiss in developing recreational programs

Summary of Complaints

and using their facilities for their neighborhoods. Community Chest agencies need to step up their programs in disadvantaged areas and to guard against serving just the middle class. The Atlanta Children's and Youth Services Council has done an outstanding job in coordinating and promoting volunteer services and warrants continuous support.

Complaints about the Atlanta Police Department were eight in number..... seven dealing with the need for greater protection and quicker response and one about segregation in the department. Four suggestions were made by citizens for improving police services:

1. More foot patrolmen in areas of high crime.
2. Quicker switchboard answering at headquarters.
3. Complete desegregation of the Police Department.
4. Improved street lighting in areas of high crime. This has sharply reduced crime in some American cities.

If Atlanta is to cope with its rising crime rate, citizens must share this responsibility with the Police Department. The Atlanta Police Department must be given adequate funds for operations, salaries, training and research. Atlanta citizens have a strong responsibility to report crimes and to serve as witnesses where needed.

Garbage service also ranked second in number of complaints. The Commission received six complaints on the quality and frequency of garbage collection and two complaints on garbage being strewn over premises. The Commission held a special meeting in June with the Director of the Public Works Department and the Director of the Sanitary Service to inform them of these facts and to make recommendations. The Public Works Committee of the Board of Aldermen needs to take further steps to mechanize garbage collection and to increase the pay of sanitary workers and to elevate the dignity of the job. Citizens need to show more appreciation for the men who perform this important public service.

A serious complaint heard at Town Hall meetings during the spring dealt with the failure of the City to remove junk cars. The responsibility for removing junk cars on private property rests with the Sanitary Department and on streets with the Police Department. In the last few weeks both departments have moved forward with aggressive programs for coping with this nagging problem.

Other complaints received by the Commission are listed below in the frequency in which received:

7 complaints.....on sewers and drainage--5 on flooded streets and
2 on dirty sewers and smelly creeks.

5 complaints.....lack of jobs for youth.

Summary of Complaints

- 5 complaints..... Comprehensive Health--3 on services offered and 2 alleging discriminatory hiring practices.
- 5 complaints..... Model Cities--lack of knowledge of program, inadequate community representation, objections to home purchase and repair programs, and community contractors not getting a chance to bid.
- 4 complaints..... repair of and the need for better street lighting.
- 4 complaints..... need for new streets and the paving of existing streets.
- 3 complaints..... rats.
- 3 complaints..... City of Atlanta--2 on the lack of coordination of City Departments and 1 on the lack of responsiveness to complaints of citizens.
- 3 complaints..... Atlanta Housing Authority--2 on the condition of housing and 1 on high rents.
- 2 complaints..... stray dogs.
- 2 complaints..... Urban Renewal--the desire of citizens for information, and representation on urban renewal committees.
- 2 complaints..... Economic Opportunity Atlanta

The Community Relations Commission itself was not above criticism. One complaint was registered on the lack of youth representation on the Commission and another on the inability of the Commission to respond to complaints.

SUPPLEMENT "A"

The follow-up meeting in the Northwest Perry Homes area was held on July 22. The CRC was able to report the following positive actions on complaints registered by the citizens:

1. Transportation--the CRC met with Mr. William Maynard, President of the Atlanta Transit Company, to encourage the extension of the Perry Boulevard Bus to Hollywood Road. This would enable the residents of Perry Homes to have bus transportation to the K-Mart and several large grocery stores in the Bankhead Highway area. The Atlanta Transit Company agreed to make this extension on a three month trial basis. New bus schedules were handed out to residents of Perry Homes at the CRC meeting.

2. Recreation:

- a. Through the efforts of the Atlanta Youth Council, the Butler Street YMCA and Community Chest a recreation program for teenagers at Northwest Perry Homes has been developed. This program will provide recreation four nights a week during the remainder of the summer.
- b. Mr. Persells reported that the Atlanta Housing Authority will begin surveying for the construction of a new recreation building within the next few weeks.

3. Consumer Services:

a. CRC reported that Mr. Alterman, of Big Apple Food Stores, has agreed to build a new supermarket in the area providing a minimum of three suitable acres can be found. Mr. Welch surveyed the area with a large shopping center developer who promised a best effort to develop a shopping center for the Perry Homes Area.

b. Mr. Lindskoog met with Mr. Yates, of Yates & Milton Drug Stores, to request that a pharmacist be placed in their Drug Store in Perry Homes. Mr. Lindskoog plans to work further on this issue

4. Atlanta Housing Authority:

a. In response to the residents request, new railings will be placed on unprotected stairways.

b. Mr. Persells reported that operations are now under way to eliminate the maggots that have become a serious problem in one section of the housing project.

5. Proctor Creek--citizens were pleased with the report that the City is presently doing extensive work to eliminate the odor of Proctor Creek.

Community Relations Commission

		<u>Percent of Total</u>
Total Complaints	87	
Parks	26	30%
Police	8	9%
Sanitation	8	9%
Sewers, etc.	7	8%
Employment	5	6%
Health	5	6%
Model Cities	5	6%

Cities Services

		<u>Percent of Total</u>
(July) * Total Complaints	708	
Parks	32	5%
Police	133	19%
Sanitation	267	38%
Sewers, etc.	59	8%
Employment	No Figures Available	
Health	19	3%
Model Cities	No Figures Available	

* Other Prominent Complaints

Housing Code	36
Traffic Engineering	40