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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303
March 22, 1967

Dean William S. Jackson
Atlanta University
School of Social Work
1660 Drew Drive, N. W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Dear Dean Jackson:

Our Chairman, Mr. Edwin Sterne, has asked that we reply to your letter dated February 22 expressing your thoughts and those of your class on the subjects of public housing and urban renewal. We are glad to have the opinions expressed in your letter and to have an opportunity to respond with additional information bearing upon these matters.

Your letter states that the class developed an impression that urban renewal was "urban removal" for many Negro families. We have found that this impression is widely held, not only in Atlanta, but throughout the nation. The displacement of families in Atlanta has taken place not only because of urban renewal but also because of clearance for expressway rights-of-way, other street rights-of-way, schools, parks, playgrounds, and private redevelopment. As among the foregoing, urban renewal has accounted for approximately 26.1% of family displacement during the last ten years and expressway clearance 34.6%. The remaining is made up of Code Enforcement, over income in public housing and others.

In 1957 when planning of the first urban renewal projects began, little experience existed which would give guidance to planning for relocation of families from urban renewal areas. One of the major difficulties encountered in the early projects was that people became fearful when an urban renewal project was announced, and many families moved out of the designated area soon thereafter. The Atlanta Housing Authority had no plans, money or staff with which to cope with this movement. Legally, families become eligible for relocation assistance only after the properties in which they live are acquired by an urban renewal project. Of those families which resided in urban renewal projects at the time of land acquisition, more than 90% of these who can be traced were relocated in decent, safe and sanitary housing meeting the requirements of the City's housing code and the Federal government. Some families who wished to remain anonymous because of questionable activities in the communities simply disappeared and cannot be traced or helped.

C O P Y

The urban renewal program, in recognition of the fact that families had moved out prematurely in the past, now permits staff activities to inform families and to work with families prior to the time they become eligible for relocation assistance. These efforts are apparently being successful in the newer urban renewal projects such as West End and Bedford-Pine. We hope to become increasingly successful in this respect in the future.

Partially due to the efforts of the Atlanta Housing Authority, but primarily through the studies made under the federally-assisted Community Improvement Program study, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Atlanta became aware of the fact that insufficient replacement housing for low and lower-moderate income families had been built in contrast to that which had been demolished through various programs. As a result of this, the Mayor held a Housing Conference on November 15, 1966, and announced a crash program to produce 16,800 such dwelling accommodations within a five year period. This program has been implemented and appears to be moving forward at a rapid pace. At this point, it seems apparent that the first two year goal of 9,800 dwelling units will be substantially achieved.

Please understand that relocation assistance afforded displaced families to help them find suitable living accommodations and pay relocation costs was available only to families displaced from urban renewal projects until recently. Few cities in the United States made any real attempt to furnish relocation assistance to families displaced by governmental action other than urban renewal. At the present time, and for the past two years, the City of Atlanta has a contract with the Housing Authority to operate a Central Relocation Service under which the City pays for staff and incidental costs. The displacement of families due to governmental action such as rights-of-way and housing code condemnations is made known to the Central Relocation Service and the families involved are assisted in finding new accommodations. There are no funds available from which to make relocation payments similar to those made for urban renewal project displacees except limited funds for highway right-of-way displacees. More than 50% of families displaced by these actions have been satisfactorily relocated. While this is not an excellent record, it is certainly much better than previously. It is our hope that as time goes on, funds will become available either from local or Federal sources with which to operate a more successful program.

We believe that the construction of the above mentioned 16,800 dwelling units will be of great assistance in meeting the needs of displaced families. One of the services needed in the City of Atlanta is some type of central listing service where families could obtain information and assistance in obtaining better dwelling accommodations even though they are not being displaced by governmental activities. The Housing Authority is without either funds or authorization to perform such a service and probably should not administer it. Hopefully this need will be recognized and fulfilled at some early date, and we pledge the cooperation of the Housing Authority in any such endeavor.

From the references made to the Antoine Graves Homes and to the John O. Chiles Homes, both projects of this Authority, I believe that your visit must have been made some time ago since the situation at Graves has changed considerably from the description given in your letter. The former project now has a very bright and lively appearance with an attractive color scheme ranging from chartreuse to orange in the courts by reason of the fact that the panels surrounding the balconies have been painted harmonizing colors. The interior court now has a tile floor as does the large balcony just above. An attractive plate glass enclosure has been installed in front of the building featuring heavy aluminum frames so that the entire front is quite attractive and practical from the standpoint of controlling the influx of cold air in the winter time.

The project has further been improved by the purchase of chairs, sofas and tables for the public spaces, all designed for use by elderly persons. Your letter makes no mention of the fact that the Antoine Graves Homes has by far the largest and most attractive open garden area in our projects of this type. It is attractively landscaped and equipped with benches for the use of tenants who may wish to be outdoors in good weather. It is on this open area that the east side of the building faces, giving perhaps the most attractive view of any of these projects.

I might mention that the unit costs of each of these two projects were almost identical. Bids on the two projects were taken less than two months apart and it happened that the same contractor was the successful bidder on both projects.

Antoine Graves Homes was recently awarded an Award of Merit for Design Excellence by the American Institute of Architects, the only project of ours so honored.

You were incorrectly informed that the Graves Homes project had all Negro tenants while the Chiles Homes project contained only white families. Negro families were admitted to Chiles Homes whenever they had requested this as their first choice and their applications had been filed early enough to be reached. In the initial process of filling this project, fourteen Negro families were admitted. A single elderly white person was admitted to Graves Homes since this project was her first choice.

I can state categorically that there was no "old practice" of unequal housing in the City of Atlanta during the period that projects were segregated. All projects have been designed to the same criteria by outstanding architects of the city and have the same quality of construction and the same facilities throughout.

In our many years in the field of housing we have, of course, observed that moving families from slums to public housing does not completely, nor automatically, change their living habits. Our management staffs are equipped by training and experience to deal with many tenant problems and this is done within the limits of staff that we are able to supply. We are not able to finance a Department of Social Service within our budget but we have consistently brought into our projects the services of other agencies to cope with

the needs of the families. There is a wide range of city, county, public and private agencies, all of whom are concentrating efforts on our public housing projects in the fields of recreation, education, health, employment and social service. By way of example, both Antoine Graves and John O. Chiles Homes have programs co-ordinated by Senior Citizens Services, Inc., which is funded by EOA and has been established to insure that public space is used effectively for recreation, other leisure time activities, as well as for clinics and other public health programs.

At this time, we are also working closely with the Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services to arrange office space in Perry Homes to house workers of that Department in the project. This should result in a saving of the time of the social workers and should increase their availability to those of our tenants needing their services. A similar arrangement may soon be tried in other locations.

As you probably know, we include in the development of our projects community space for various social and recreational purposes. We provide these facilities with the maximum permitted by Federal design standards and, over the past few years, we have been successful in adding to some of our older projects facilities which were originally omitted or under-designed under earlier Federal economy drives or earlier inadequate standards. It is the provision of this space that enables us to work with the many local social and welfare agencies in providing a maximum of their programs to our tenant body.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a slightly worn copy of a Preliminary Report on Services and Needs Concerning Public Housing Residents. I believe that to some degree it reflects our concern for our tenants. The enclosed report reflects the reports made on one project only. We have continued our survey and now have a more substantial body of information. In the meanwhile, while we were surveying other projects, EOA came into the picture in Atlanta and their services cut across much of the subject matter of our survey. It then seemed most appropriate, since they had the available manpower and financing, that we offer our fullest cooperation to them, a move which we believe was of mutual benefit. If the time comes that the services we are now receiving are not available to us, we shall have to search elsewhere for resources. Of course, we currently receive services directly from many of the agencies who in the future may be able to expand their efforts.

Sincerely,

MBS:dm

M. B. Satterfield
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: ✓ Honorable Ivan Allen, Jr.
Dr. Rufus E. Clement