

April 12, 1967

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Cecil A. Alexander, Chairman  
Housing Resources Committee

During the past several weeks I have become increasingly concerned over progress (or perhaps lack of it) being made in getting many of our proposed low cost housing projects off the ground. Very few have actually made it, thus far. Recently at least eight (8) developers have talked with me seriously about it. They are becoming quite apprehensive about the success of the program, unless some of the current obstacles and roadblocks are removed and several have suggested withdrawing from the program entirely.

The summary report on problem areas, recently prepared for the Executive Group meeting of the Housing Resources Committee, April 16, tends to bring the problems into sharp focus. Of legitimate proposals which have already been made, 4900 units are in jeopardy. The principal problems are the following:

1. Difficulty for developers in obtaining suitable land at prices which make development of low cost housing economically feasible.
2. Constant opposition by single family home owners to apartment and co-op developments anywhere in the general area in which they live.
3. Limitation on availability of sites considered "excellent" by FHA; and FHA's extreme conservatism on approving sites in proximity to other approved sites, for fear of glutting the market in such areas.
4. Reluctance of the Planning Department to support necessary rezoning in certain areas for which general plans have been made or are contemplated for other types of development in the future.
5. Opposition by NAACP and local Negro officials in HUD to construction of additional low cost housing in areas which they consider occupied predominately by Negroes. The effect of this is being also reflected in FHA. This has reached a very serious and critical stage and is extremely detrimental to the program.
6. Difficulty, politically, because of neighborhood objections to get rezoning of available sites for low cost housing.



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One barometer of the seriousness of the problem is indicated by the decreasing number of housing units permitted in Atlanta in recent years:

1963 - 9129; 1964 - 3829; 1965 - 2656; 1966 - 2382

Still another problem is the difficulty, with current facilities, in keeping up with the program and timely follow through on all proposed developments. On February 20, we had 59 known proposals. Today we have 70 and the number is increasing. It is virtually impossible under our present system for one person, myself, to timely follow up on all projects as closely as is desirable or essential to insure their successful execution.

Furthermore, our Committee Panels have not thus far proven very productive. Keeping contact with them is a ~~time~~ <sup>consuming</sup> job within itself.

Consequently, as the program progresses I am becoming more and more conscious of the necessity for a change in procedures; and suggest the following:

A. An all out effort be made to resolve the current difficulty with HUD, promoted by the NAACP. I do not see how the City can afford to lose on this issue, and I doubt that it can be satisfactorily resolved at the local level, but will require strong representations from the Mayor direct to Washington.

B. Implement John Cherry's initial suggestion of setting up teams of key people (Realtor, Financier, Site Planner, Architect, Builder and when appropriate, a Nonprofit Sponsor). This is perhaps the most practical approach to this complex problem. Each team could thus be given a specific assignment of a certain number of units to produce. Ten such teams with assignments of 500 units each seems appropriate to start with. This would produce 5,000 units (or one year's goal for the program). Such procedure would also permit a pyramiding of administration through the Housing Resources Committee, in as much as we could then deal with only one selected individual (Captain) of each team. This would also automatically broaden the base of responsibility and effort among the several key people on each team, rather than leaving it all to individual developers. Other developers, of course, would not be discouraged, and more time would be available for lending assistance and advice to them when needed.

C. Initiate concrete steps toward creation of a Housing Development Corporation, with adequate funds, and with mission similar to the one in Philadelphia.

D. Also, an educational program should be conducted for City officials (Board of Aldermen and Planning Board) to thoroughly acquaint them as to needs for housing and advantages of the program; and with the general public, explaining how the people themselves can help rather than hinder the program. The latter should preferably be done through lay groups. The Board of Aldermen should be specifically briefed on the problems confronting the Housing Resources Committee in accomplishment of its mission and their whole hearted cooperation and support where needed, should be solicited.

E. A series of clear talking, straight from the shoulder, newspaper, TV, and radio presentations are needed as to requirements and obstacles that need to be overcome. This is very much in order now. (A typical example of this need was illustrated in the Zoning Committee hearing April 6, (#2-67-33-G) in which petition to rezone a 20-acre tract off Browns Mill Road from M-1 to A-1, to permit construction of 264 units



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of 221 d (3) co-op sales housing was denied, over ruling the Joing Planning Board recommendation, because people in the general neighborhood apparently did not understand what was proposed and about a dozen people from the area appeared in opposition at the hearing. This opposition killed the rezoning and may cause the death of the project).

F. Rezoning is needed of substantial tracts of vacant Industrial and low density Residential land to higher density Residential, with certain portions ear marked for low cost housing. In this connection, major policy decisions are necessary as to which is to have preference: continuation of existing zoning in anticipation of future development, which may never materialize, or making suitable locations available now to meet the City's urgent need for low cost housing. In this connection, three specific plans, Collier Heights, Boulder Park and the Peyton Road area, all perhaps well conceived at the time they were prepared, constitute the majority of the open land area in the western part of the City and most of it is currently reserved for single family development at very low density. The current needs of the City for higher density development, requires a reconsideration and evaluation of those plans. The R-4 Zoning in the bulk of the Seventh Ward, much of it open land, is another example.

Recommend the procedures proposed in A - F above be placed in effect as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Malcolm D. Jones  
Supervisor of Inspection Services

MDJ:eo

CC: ✓ Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.  
Mr. Dan E. Sweat, Jr.