

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

In attempting to realize the goals established for this program, specific objectives have been set in seven broad areas: housing, health, education, welfare, employment, youth opportunity and senior citizenship.

By far, the greatest effort has been expended on the problems of housing. Informational programs about the urban renewal process citizen participation in planning, the selection of school sites and freeway routes have resulted in a growing body of residents knowledgeable about the basic questions involved in the implementation of these processes.

The failure of the city to deal adequately with the problem of relocation housing and housing for low-income families provides citizens with a major area of concern and action. Major successes have included the rehabilitation of an apartment building to provide relocation housing for freeway area residents; an intensive maintenance program to repair homes (including abandoned and boarded-up units) in the redevelopment project area; and the development of an "air rights" demonstration housing project for the freeway area. The Neighborhood Council issued a report dealing with relocation problems and including a number of recommendations to improve and humanize the relocation process, the majority of which have been adopted and effected. The immediate construction of public housing in the urban renewal area was an issue which was dramatized during a direct action campaign, resulting in the commitment of three government agencies to work speedily to assure that construction would begin within a three-month period.

Citizens have been involved also in solving the health, education and welfare problems of the community. They have defined the community's health needs, and have established an informational program which has served two purposes: the education of the committee members, and the education of the community-at-large. The Welfare Committee appeared at Congressional hearings and wrote letters to the President and Congress to press for an increase in welfare payments. Within the past year, the senior citizens of the target area have been organized and have established a center for recreational activities, meetings and programs, and a thrift shop; and have lobbied for increased benefits. In the area of education, several successes have been realized, notably the reduction in the overcrowded conditions in several area schools, and obtaining a commitment from the school superintendent for a new school within the urban renewal area.

One of the major concerns of the Employment Committee was the obtaining of jobs for persons with police records. This concern led to the establishment of an organization of 300 rehabilitated ex-convicts which has been able to make significant changes in the ability of ex-convicts to secure jobs. In addition, a special recruitment for the custodial and maintenance civil service registers resulted in numerous placements. Through recommendations of the Neighborhood Council, civil service jobs (federal) were created for the category of urban renewal aides, where are sub-professional jobs for community residents.

Neighborhood Development Youth Programs. One of the earliest objectives set by the Neighborhood Advisory Council was to establish a youth program and to provide more neighborhood recreational facilities and youth centers. Through re-allocation of community organization funds, a summer program was provided in 1966 for youth, in which more than 300 youngsters were involved. A football team for older youth (most of whom were high school dropouts) was established, and several youth groups with a community action orientation were organized. The teens established an employment bureau called JOBS, and participated in a summer job orientation clinic which provided information about opportunities, interviews, civil service procedures, and testing procedures.

At the close of the summer, funds were made available for a year-round youth program based on a city-wide format. The Neighborhood Council withheld its acceptance of the program until a successful effort had been made by the delegate agency to effect changes in the proposed program structure. These changes were in line with a comprehensive proposal which the Center had developed months earlier. By December, a youth staff had been hired to develop action programs in the areas of employment, recreation, police relations and education. Clubs and communities have been formed among youths, ages 10 to 19; special events and programs have been carried out; a youth staff has been trained; and a central center has been established.