

WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND PROGRAM—PIERCE STREET: AN URBAN RENEWAL EXPERIENCE TWO YEARS LATER

SUMMARY OF ACTION TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS MADE AUGUST 17, 1966
TO THE COMMUNITY ON CHANGING RELOCATION PRACTICES

The Neighborhood Advisory Council of the Urban League Neighborhood Development Center published a report in August 1966 relating to the experiences of families relocated from Pierce Street in the Northwest One Urban Renewal area in Washington, D.C. The report was prefaced by a number of recommendations to the community and urged appropriate agencies and persons to make modifications in current relocation procedures and programs.

Much of the effort expended by the community organization program of the Neighborhood Center during the two years since the report was released has been devoted to the implementation of these recommendations. How well both the community and the urban renewal agency, the Redevelopment Land Agency, have succeeded in making modifications is summarized in the following statements.

RELOCATION STAFF

Recommendation 1: Hire local residents to assist relocation staff and in inspecting relocation housing.

Progress: The U.S. Civil Service Commission responded to the Local Agency request and established a new category of civil servants, urban renewal aides, in the Spring 1967. Twelve positions at GS-3 and GS-4 were allocated, and are being filled by neighborhood residents.

Recommendation 2: Make staff available evenings and weekends.

Progress: The office staff was scheduled to work half-days Saturdays for approximately a year.

Recommendation 3: Increase effective use of social services to meet family and employment problems.

¹Progress: Interpretation of regulations relating to eligible project costs denies Local Agency permission to provide direct services relating to relocation.

Unsuccessful attempts have been made by Local Agency and community groups to get District government agencies to provide new neighborhood services for Northwest One residents. Moreover, there has been a gradual curtailment of services provided by the anti-poverty program. Since 1966, the neighborhood employment service, located in the area, has been shut down. The neighborhood legal service office was merged with one in another part of town; and the housing office which conducted a code enforcement program has been closed. Of the remaining anti-poverty programs, only three provide direct services to residents—one day care center, a credit union, and a family counseling unit, all of which serve an area-wide population of 30,000.

Residents have been demanding new social services during the entire period of family relocation. They have made appeals, presented testimony, appeared at budget hearings, and issued reports to the Board of Commissioners and the City Council, the Urban Renewal Operations Committee, the Community Renewal Program, the Board of Recreation, the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Licenses and Inspections, the Board of Education, the Police Department, the Department of Public Health, and USES-DC. Additionally, an inquiry has been made of the National Capital Housing Authority to discover whether the agency can provide any social services to residents who hold priority rights to return to new public housing in Northwest One. The Agency regulations apparently bar such "advance" social services.¹

Recommendation 4: Simplify and provide more assistance in obtaining documents needed for public housing.

Progress: No significant changes have been provided.

"Illegal tenancy"¹ was another problem relating to documentation which was discovered in the Fall 1967 when the site was being evacuated for the construction of the first moderate income housing. Several families who claimed they had lived in the project area for several years but who were not included among the Agency's list of surveyed families and individuals were reported to be denied relocation benefits. They were termed "illegal tenants" because they were presumed to be living in acquired properties without authorization.

¹ Congressional review recommended.