THE ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS IN URBAN RENEWAL

A THESIS

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RICHARD LYLE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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To my mother and father, Mrs. LILLER LYLE and Mr. HUBERT C. LYLE, whose constant encouragement and support made it possible for the writer to pursue this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Underlying the explicit official aims of the Urban Renewal Program there is an unstated basic and challenging assumption. It is that officials and citizens in a city can work together, not just to renew the physical aspects and economic values of residential areas, but more importantly to revise and reorient residents' ways of living in and using their neighborhoods. Urban renewal is more than just bricks and mortar. What is the implicit idea is that group or even neighborhood change can be discussed, decided upon, and undertaken through professional and citizen cooperation. We know that a passive or negligent decision can allow blight to occur. We know that particular families can change their ways and benefit from better physical settings by moving away from blighted areas. In urban renewal there is felt to be a chance to carry out some physical corrections and some cultural adjustments planned to fit needs and problems of whole neighborhoods.

The Renewal Agency recognized at the outset that no plan for the renewal of an area can be any better than the cooperation, interest, and

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support of the people living in the area. They must share the thinking and must have faith in the goal if renewal is to be complete and lasting.

Therefore, even before an area is officially designated a renewal area by the City Council, the residents should be informed of what is in prospect.

The next step is the formation of an association, composed of leading residents of the neighborhood, representatives of clubs, organizations, and public interest groups that have been functioning in the area.

From here on the association will have an essential part in planning the area. The members should give their ideas on the most needed improvements, point up the problems that they foresee, warn against changes that would run counter to the interests and tastes of the residents, and review all plans preliminary and final before they become the official plans of the agency.

Many writers believe that neighborhood organizations are essential as means of involving citizens in an urban renewal program.

Murray Ross states that the process of community organization requires some kind of structure and social organization. The task, or problem or project will be considered by some group, committee, council, commission, or other form of organization. This latter may be formal, with title, offices, and employed staff, or informal with a few persons meeting in a home or schoolroom. But there will be some form of association through

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which are channeled the aims and efforts of the persons concerned.

According to Whitney Young, citizen participation is crucial and essential to urban renewal not only for the purpose of protection and solving problems, but also for enhancing and promoting the kind of environment in which human beings might experience happier and more satisfying lives.

One of the difficulties in gaining improvement of our cities is the fact that, to both the official administrator and the residents, there seems to be a lack of sufficient communication to reassure them that renewal can in proper situations be made a reality. The official needs to know how he can reach an understanding of and with the citizen for this broad objective. The citizen needs to know how he and his fellow citizens in an area can gain the professional services of the official in remaking their section of the city according to what they would like it to be.

Citizen participation is not to be confused with pressure group tactics. It is the mark of the earnest constituent in any representative political government, from the municipal level through the wide forms, that citizens do not expect the official administration to do his bidding without his active effort being applied wherever it may be helpful. In fact, it is the constituent who works at any particular matter whose concern and opinion on the subject are respected by political officials.


There should be opportunity for as full participation as possible of the various organized communities. The objectives should be to achieve a concerted type of community participation with all groups working toward a common end. Widespread participation should be sought at the time planning of urban renewal activities is initiated and should continue throughout the execution of each project.

The writer feels that it is necessary at this point to define the term "neighborhood organization" as it will be used in this study. This term refers to a process whereby interested citizens in the Harlem Park Community, which is located in Baltimore, Maryland, have combined their efforts to meet the needs of the above named community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to show the nature and kinds of contributions that neighborhood organization has made to the Urban Renewal Program in Harlem Park.

Method of Procedure

Using the random sampling procedure, the writer will select nine of twenty-seven block clubs, five of thirteen churches, one of the five parent-teachers' associations, and the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council for inclusion in this study. The leaders of each organization will be interviewed, using a schedule containing structured and unstructured questions.

The writer will also have an interview with the Director of the Community Organization Division of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency.

All data will be interpreted with emphasis on those factors which indicate contributions made by neighborhood organizations in the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Program.

Scope and Limitations

This study will be limited to the student's six month block field work placement: From September 3, 1963 to February 28, 1964. Another limiting factor is the student's experience in research.

This study will focus on the role of Neighborhood Organization in the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Program from 1957 to February, 1964.
CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE AGENCY

The Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency was created January, 1957, as the result of recommendations by the Urban Renewal Study Board. The Board consisted of six outstanding men in the fields of municipal government, planning, and renewal. They were invited to Baltimore to study local housing and redevelopment problems and make recommendations for a long-range renewal program and for improving the administrative process of renewal in Baltimore. Most of their recommendations were adopted almost immediately by the Major and City Council.

During the twenty-one years before 1957, Baltimore brought to focus and efficiency many of the tools necessary to combat slums and blight.

Prior to 1957, the three tools used were Public Housing, Redevelopment and Law Enforcement. These tools were used until 1954 without making any apparent effort to expand, change or revise its housing program. Baltimore's city officials quickly responded to the 1954 Housing Act passed by Congress. This act included broad stipulations concerning housing and living conditions in urban areas.

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Establishing the Agency

After studying the 1954 Housing Act and discussing it with other city officials, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr. decided that the Housing situation in Baltimore needed careful study before badly needed new measures were passed. He turned to a group of National experts in housing, later called the Urban Renewal Study Board. After months of study this Board made its report to the mayor on September 12, 1956. The first of fifteen recommendations was to "establish a new Renewal and Housing Agency, vesting in it responsibility for planning and executing the central functions of Urban Renewal". On the basis of this Board's recommendations, Baltimore enacted a City Ordinance which gave authority for creation of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency. This agency adopted a policy that encompassed the seven point "workable program" as required by the Housing Act of 1954. After becoming organized and functioning, the agency designated a precisely defined area of the city as the first urban renewal area. This area was known as Harlem Park.

Ethnic Patterns in Harlem Park

The early settlers were largely German, Irish immigrant and industrial laborers. Following the Civil War, Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews settled in great numbers. In the pre-Civil War period only thirteen percent of its population were Negroes; after the war this number increased to twenty percent. At one time during this period, the large town houses

1 Op. Cit.
2 Ibid.
on the perimeter of the blocks housed wealthy whites, while the alleys housed the servants or laborers.

At the time of this study, Harlem Park had over ninety-nine percent Negro occupancy, with an estimated population of 13,500 people.

Present Status of the Program

The Harlem Park II, Baltimore's first area of extensive rehabilitation, evidenced new vigor during the year as the urban renewal process there approached the halfway mark. Of the 2,000 houses scheduled for rehabilitation, 635 complied in 1962 with the standards set forth in the Harlem Park Plan, raising the cumulative completions to 900. Commitments have been obtained from the Federal Housing Administration to insure home improvement mortgages under Section 220 of the National Housing Act for 30 properties, containing 106 dwelling units.

There was marked progress also in the areas scheduled for clearance of the small houses, sheds, and garages that run through the block interiors, plus 46 other non-residential buildings. Acquisition of this property was 85 percent complete, and demolition contracts had been awarded for 21

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2 Harlem Park: Its People and Their Homes, Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency, Maryland. Mimeographed.

blocks.

In accordance with the specifications of the Harlem Park Plan, the cleared block interiors will be redeveloped into park-like areas. Two of these parks have now been completed, six are in active planning, and 11 more are scheduled to be well advanced in planning by July, 1963.

While the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency is responsible for the development of the parks, the people whose houses border them are responsible for their maintenance. Residents and property owners participate in the planning of the parks from the earliest stages, and their wishes and preferences, insofar as possible, are incorporated into the final plan.

Care of the 900 street trees planted during 1960 and 1961 has been one of the many neighborhood beautification projects undertaken by the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council. Efforts to educate the young of the project on respect for the young trees have met with a fair degree of success. While there have been some casualties, most of the trees are growing unmolested.

Harlem Park II was rapidly emerging from an old and decaying section to a neighborhood with a future. Many of the old houses were being restored to their original brick, while others have been painted or resurfaced with

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1 Ibid.


new types of material. One of the most encouraging signs is that, since
the beginning of renewal activities, home ownership in Harlem Park has risen from 30 to 37 percent.

The 153-acre project is bounded by Lafayette Avenue on the north, Fremont Avenue on the east, Franklin Street on the south, and Monroe Street on the west.

Fifty-six of the 66 properties slated for rehabilitation in the Harlem Park Demonstration Block have now been completed. Three contiguous houses, extensively remodeled by the Reynolds Metals Company, were finished early in the year. They comprise nine two and three bedroom apartments which have had almost continuous occupancy since they were completed.

The Demonstration Block, bounded by Carey Street, Calhoun Street, Harlem Avenue, and Edmondson Avenue, was formerly a part of Harlem Park II. It was originally established as a separate project to serve as a proving ground for the techniques of rehabilitation, many of them previously untried, and the experiment had served a highly useful purpose in the renewal of Harlem Park.

It was recognized from the beginning of the Urban Renewal Program in Harlem Park that if there was to be real neighborhood rehabilitation,

1 Op. Cit.


vehicles had to be created through which residents of the community could participate in the planning and in the execution process. Through the efforts of the Community Organization Division of the Harlem Park Renewal Area, a neighborhood Council and Block Association were formed.

The primary purpose of the Community Organization Division in Harlem Park is "The Enlistment of Citizen Participation, which is implicit to the success of Urban Renewal..."

Since its inception, the Community Organization Division established certain basic objectives in carrying out the aforementioned program. Some of the objectives are as follows:

1. Intensified and continuous interpretation of the role of community organization within the Agency.

2. Increase Community Knowledge about Urban Renewal and all its facets.

3. Broaden citizen participation with emphasis upon youth involvement.

4. Broaden social Agency Participation in meeting community needs.

5. Increase citizen awareness of the range of social service available and greater use of these services.

Many of the above objectives were set forth by the urban renewal study board report. The Community Organization Division was charged with the responsibility of providing channels for citizens participation.

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1 Annual Report for 1957, op. cit.

CHAPTER III

THE PURPOSE OF URBAN RENEWAL

Although concern over blight and deterioration in American cities goes back many, many years, the last decade or so has seen a notable increase in it. This increase has had two chief characteristics. More and more people in more and more walks of life have sensed that something was seriously wrong with most of our urban centers. Although much remained to be learned about the preconditions, causes, and results of the disease, our understanding of it has improved a little in recent years.

Every public agency that directly influences the pattern and quality of physical development in urban centers should have some stake in, and some responsibility for, redevelopment programs to eliminate blighting conditions. Mayors, city managers, and other top administrative officials, as well as members of local legislative bodies, should also be directly concerned. So should leaders and members of civic and neighborhood organizations, labor, various business, financial, and industrial groups. Even the unorganized citizen and housing consumer — our old friend the man in the street should not be overlooked. He will be affected, more or less directly, both as a citizen and taxpayer by what is done as well as by what may be left undone in redeveloping his city or town.

This is not to say that all of these agencies, organizations, and individuals have the same degree of concern and responsibility for redevelopment. Some of them clearly have to take the lead and shoulder most of the burden. Only a little thought, however, is needed to see that effective redevelopment is bound to be a joint product.

Before proceeding further with this discussion, the author feels that it is essential to define the term "Urban Renewal" as it will be used in this study. Urban Renewal is the term used to describe the diversified efforts by localities, with the assistance of the Federal Government, for the elimination and prevention of slums and blight, whether residential or nonresidential, and the removal of factors that create slums and blighting conditions. In the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, as well as in other legislation, Congress enacted a number of provisions which included loans, grants, technical assistance, and special mortgage insurance in urban renewal areas. Taken together they represent a "kit of tools" making possible a partnership among local governments, private enterprise, citizens, and the Federal government in mounting an offensive against slums and the cause of urban blight.

With this concept, it was hoped that a more successful program could be created. From the functional standpoint, these are the basic elements of urban renewal:

1. A comprehensive city-wide master plan (for the metropolitan setting and large enough to look ahead and meet needs as they

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1Ibid.

2. Capital Budgeting (a device to insure reasonable matching of city and Federal Funds; as well as to establish priorities in terms of the city-wide master plan).

3. Detailed Neighborhood planning (this is distinguished from the first elements, but definitely related to it).

4. Redevelopment (this is the reuse function designed to reuse land either in the same form or differently, but always improve it).

5. Inspection and Enforcement.

6. Public housing (provision for low-rent housing, but not necessarily in keeping with the present Federal Formula).

7. Rehabilitation (improvements which are economically feasible).

8. Conservation (here the major concern is with structure and not questions of economic feasibility, but more with the prevention of a downhill trend and the creation of an area attractive enough for a renaissance through capital improvement, etc).

9. Relocation.


11. Private Investment.

12. Citizen Participation (this element is related to all of the above through the medium of community organization).

The Federal Government has assisted in the housing field through mortgage insurance, clearance payments, planning advances, redevelopment financing, etc. Through urban renewal, however, the Federal Government is doing all of these things and more within a new framework. In essence, the Federal government is redirecting its efforts toward a greater concern

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1Report of the Urban Renewal Study Board. (Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Publication), (September, 1956), p. 41.

for the people in its programming than heretofore has been true. The single new program feature is the emphasis on community rehabilitation. In addition, the prerequisites of the so called "Workable Plan" must be met by a local body prior to its receiving funds from the Federal government. The "Workable Plan" consists of: a comprehensive community plan; codes and ordinances; financing; administration; relocation; neighborhood planning and finally, citizen participation.

Fundamental to the Urban renewal program in a particular area is the right to acquire private property for public purposes. This right has to be broadly defined to include the option of resale for private use. This is determined by proper public authorities in accordance with their view as to the best reuse for that particular property. This is accomplished through the power of "eminent domain." "Eminent Domain" as defined by Archer, is the rightful authority which exists in every sovereignty, to control and regulate those rights of a public nature which pertain to its citizen in common, and to appropriate and control individual property for the public benefit as the public safety, necessity, convenience, or welfare may demand.

Federal effort is being crystalized in the direction of getting private owners to review their own housing concepts and to encourage raising of sights and standards. In effect, one of the central problems and major tasks of urban renewal is sensitizing people toward a revision

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2 Charles S. Archer et. al., op cit, p. 467.
of their values in terms of higher housing and neighborhood standards. This entails the development of ways and means of communicating and enlisting a sustained interest on the part of local people in bettering their housing standards and neighborhood conditions.

Since 1950, words like redevelopment, slum clearance, and urban renewal have become commonplace both in government and in the public campaigns of civic organizations. The precise meaning of these terms have varied according to the programs being discussed. All of the usages imply that there is too little acceptable housing and that the environment of the city has become unattractive and full of decay. All programs call for the removal of community "blight" and an attack on the "accumulated obsolescence" of Urban Property.

The basic purpose of the urban renewal program in any neighborhood is to extend the life of the neighborhood, placing maximum emphasis on rehabilitation of existing structures. Clearance is undertaken only when necessary to eliminate structures which are too far gone to be saved, or incompatible with the residential neighborhoods; or when clearance is necessary to make space for needed public facilities, such as schools, playgrounds, or fire houses. Baltimore recognized that the physical deterioration of buildings in its older areas was a major problem. Recognition of this fact gave rise to the urban renewal program placing

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maximum emphasis on citizen participation.

Citizen Participation

Recognition by the Federal Government of the important role that citizens play in the development of a community, the Housing and Home Finance Agency made citizen participation one of the seven key elements in the nation's urban renewal program.

With this concept of urban renewal in mind, citizen participation can mean different things to different people. In this respect there is no currently accepted Federal definition. The only certainty as to what will evolve as a workable definition of citizen participation is the firm notion that the citizen himself must be part and parcel of the defining process.

According to Hillman, participation means a variety of specific forms of activity. Active membership in organized groups, especially where there is an opportunity even indirectly in community wide programs, should be included in an urban renewal program. Participation in forums and discussion groups is another form. Work on special projects or committees, service on social agency boards and committees, volunteer work of various kinds, all represent participation. There are other minor, and more passive and sporadic forms.

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2 Remarks by Ellis Ash, Director of Management, Housing Authority of Baltimore City, and President of Middle Atlantic Regional Council, National Association of Housing and Revelopment Officials, at the Annual Banquet, Pacific Northeast Regional Council, Seattle, Washington (July 10, 1956).

The author does not by any means wish to imply that citizen participation must always involve group activity, but individual action can be made more effective when adapted to the efforts made concurrently by others.

Krech and others in their book entitled "Individual in Society" states that ... Few men can achieve their goals without the help of their fellows - or so many men stoutly believe.

Norman Shaw, the Associate Editor of the Cleveland Press, and chairman of the subcommittees on District Community Councils of the Advisory Committee on Citizen Participation of the Community Chests and Councils of America, states that the discovery of such a mechanism, through which people can work together for common causes, is as basic as the technological discoveries of the atom bomb.... Community association are the mechanism for improving neighborhood conditions in metropolitan areas and are most important because they are the means through which standards can be raised. Community associations mean that citizens are no longer alone in their efforts; they can speak and act jointly.

One must understand that citizen participation is important, but that it should relate to all citizens at whatever level of understanding and capacity they present. However, especially among public officials, there seems to be a tendency to believe that citizens, in the broad general

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1 Ibid., p. 192.
3 Ellis Ash, op cit.
sense, clutter up and interfere with progress. It is true that citizens have a tendency to act when aroused. At times, their enthusiasm may exceed their knowledge, and certain experiences with citizens group may well have disheartened and frightened some able and well intentioned public servants.

But if citizens are affected by a program, they will act whether you like it or not. Joseph C. Logan states:

You can't be intelligent for people. If you persuade people to accept your intelligence they develop none of their own, and with the loss of their intelligence departs the willingness even to be intelligently served.2

Another writer similarly states:

...it has been assumed by some social workers that only agencies provide sufficient professional attention to volunteers which they require for the successful operation of their programs.3

A comprehensive urban renewal program will affect all levels of citizens. In developing an urban renewal plan, we need to plan with and not for citizens. This means that citizens should actually be involved in the planning process. This principle does not suggest that citizens generally have the professional know-how to undertake planning studies or to reach sound planning conclusions. In view of this, one should appreciate the use of professional community organization services in the citizen participation process.

1Ibid.


The professional community organizer has been described by Ross as an Enabler, Guide, Educator, and Interpreter. The community organizer enables citizens to understand their needs and problems, objectively to appraise alternative solutions. He becomes the link between the professional planner and administrator, either as an individual or as he functions in the group. Participation is effective only when it becomes meaningful and important for citizens.

A community grows and prospers as it attracts more people who will work, play, think, and act together for many constructive purposes. It flourishes as it provides avenues for meeting the minimum needs of all its people and as it offers to its people the plus values that make for growth and development. It suffers from chronic illness when people are isolated from each other. "...it certainly perishes when people lose that sense of unity which transforms an aggregation of self-centered individuals into an effective group which has a staunch pride and willingness to work together."

In Chapter IV, we will discuss the types of organizations, in the Harlem Park Community, through which citizens may or may not have made some contribution to the urban renewal program.

1 Murray G. Ross, op. cit., p. 200.

CHAPTER IV

TYPES OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS IN HARLEM PARK

In an attempt to ascertain what significant contributions, if any, neighborhood organization has made to the urban renewal program in Harlem Park, the author feels that it is essential to first look at the community's organizational structure, i.e., its clubs, its associations, and its various group relations. These are all vital parts of the community and have a major influence on its development.

Certainly the future and richness of every community should be tied directly to the state of development and the effectiveness of its institutions, and organizations.

Throughout this study, the author will focus on the total community, and all contributions man had made through community organizations for its overall enhancement. As was pointed out in chapter three, the Federal Government realized the importance of citizen participation in urban renewal and included it as one of the elements of the "workable program." The following discussion will concern itself with various organizations through which citizens participated.

Neighborhood Council

In an effort to insure citizen participation in Urban Renewal in Baltimore, the mayor in 1955, appointed two residents of the area
The purpose of the Council is to promote and improve the health, safety, and welfare of the community through the development and implementation of policies and programs that address the needs of the community. The Council is composed of representatives from various community organizations and agencies. The purpose of the Council is to ensure that the needs and interests of the community are represented in the decision-making processes of the local government. The Council meets regularly to discuss and make decisions on issues affecting the community. The Council's work is guided by the principles of cooperation and collaboration among community stakeholders. The Council is an important part of the local government's efforts to improve the quality of life for its residents.
with and solving area problems positively and effectively.  

Since the council represented the total community, it was so structured to include a large number of citizens and governmental agencies in order to achieve certain goals that were in keeping with the overall purpose of the council. (See appendix for chart which explains the organizational structure of the council).

The council, through discussion with lay and professional community leaders at various meetings and workshops arrived at its present structure. Agency records reveal that one of the most significant workshops which afforded fruitful suggestions for the council's consideration was held in 1959. From this workshop came the following suggestions:

1. The council must be fully represented by having an elected representative from all groups and organizations in the area actively participating in some capacity on the council.

2. The council structure should have built into it the assurance that there will be a constant back and forth communication between the council and residents of the community by way of the groups to which they were members and their representatives who are active in the council.

These suggestions were willingly accepted by the council in hope to communicate more effectively with all residents, groups and

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43 Constitution for the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council, Baltimore, Maryland. Mimeographed.

44 Ibid.

organizations in the Harlem Park Community. It was hoped that such suggestions would help the council ascertain the real problems and concerns of the people and develop means for improving the neighborhood.46

Incorporated into the council's structure, provisions were made for extensive committee involvement. However, the major committees of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council are as follows: Health and Welfare, Membership, Youth, Home and Neighborhood Conservation, Public Relations, Finance, Legislative, and the Executive Committee. The precise functions as defined by the council for solving its problems are quite similar to community organization principles. The precise functions of the council are as follows:

1. Collect all facts possible from every available resource in the course of studying the problems.

2. Share its findings with all interested citizens, groups and organizations

3. Develop a plan of action

4. Put the plan of action into effect 47

In reference to principles in community organization, Ross states that the community organizer uses the following steps in planning:

1. Collect all facts possible from every available resource in the course of studying the problem


47 Ibid.
1. Definition of the problem

2. Studying the nature, meaning, and implication of the problem

3. Decision regarding ultimate solutions

4. Action on the solution agreed upon

According to the constitution of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council, Article VII states the provision made for the establishment of the Executive Committee. It states that this committee shall be composed of the elected officers of the council, the chairman of standing committees, and four members-at-large elected by the Delegate Assembly. It is this committee's responsibility to formulate the council's policy.

Block Organizations

The Harlem Park Neighborhood Council assisted in the establishment of block organizations. In 1959, Mr. Hackshaw, included in his address to the council the following recommendations:

The council must assist every block in the area to establish a formal organization through affiliation with the neighborhood council, and work with other Harlem Park residents in focusing the problems in the area.

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48Murray G. Ross, op. cit., ppl 137-150.

49Constitution for the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council, op. cit.

50James O. F. Hackshaw, op. cit.
The council, giving full consideration to the above suggestion and in keeping with Article IV of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council Constitution, in addition to other factors, supported the idea of establishing block organization. The council also divided the Harlem Park Community.

Parent Teachers' Association

The Harlem Park Junior High School was a newly constructed school which opened in September, 1963. A few months later, the Parent Teachers' Association was organized. This organization was brought into action on community wide programs through the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council.51

Churches

The church could perhaps be one of the most effective forces for stimulating wholesome community programs. In history, the church has been closely identified with the community, and the strongest churches could make great contributions to a community program.

A community in which people put "first things" first is likely to see that professional leadership is more important than a large community hall without provision for leadership.52

51Agency Records, op. cit. No. Specific.
52Ibid.
Every community has its own peculiar character or way of doing things that make it different from all other communities. This character is a mixture of many things. In a sense, it is the sum total of all the characteristics of the people who live in the community. This makes it a tricky thing to get at. It is intangible in nature, it can not be seen, it is difficult to measure. To discuss it, it's like trying to grab hold of smoke. But it is this character that in large measure will determine the whole destiny and progress of the community. In the same way that impulses of emotion and emotions for the people as a whole will shape the actions of the community. 53

The more leaders of the organizations keep in touch with the actual "state of mind" of the community, the more sensitive they will be to the desires of the community at large and the importance of guiding their organization into actual usefulness. 54

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

ACTIVITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS IN HARLEM PARK

In this chapter the author shall discuss the activity of all institutions and organizations in Harlem Park that were selected through random sampling for inclusion in this study.

With a fair degree of success, the Community Organization Staff attempted through the years to solidify Harlem Park and involve the citizenry in effective planning and execution of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency's Program. Through this process, work was done with existing neighborhood groups, schools, churches, and a selected neighborhood council.

The sociologist Ernest Burgess, writing about the neighborhood in 1929, said that it ..., is in general the unit area for the life and growth of social institutions like the school, the church, and the social center. The cultural life of persons, families, and groups in the city depend largely upon the intimate face-to-face contacts and associations.

The development of locality identity which has a measure of cultural independence and makes a contribution to the larger community, has always been held urgent. The report prepared by the National Association of Housing Officials in 1935 called "A Housing Program For The United States",


says, ... the first need has always been that the citizens should not become a more unorganized council, but should continue life and interest in each of the subsidiary units, which should contribute as a whole to the life and activities of the great communities.

In discussing Harlem Park as one of the subsidiary units of the city of Baltimore to ascertain what contributions, if any, neighborhood organizations have made to the urban renewal program, the names of the organization are withheld. Letters of the Alphabet have been used to identify each of these organizations. See chart in appendix for a guide to identify the names of each organization.

The following is a discussion of material which was obtained through the use of an interview guide. It is hoped that this discussion will reveal some of the activity in which neighborhood organizations were involved in an effort to make some contributions to the urban renewal program in Harlem Park.

Through the use of the interview guide, the author found that representatives of all organizations used in this study participated in the planning of the urban renewal program for Harlem Park. Their participation came through organization A which the interview guide indicated as the parent organization in the community. The interview guide also revealed that organizations A, and N through P were told during the planning of the urban renewal program about the zoning regulations affecting every

57 Ibid.
block in the area, minimum housing standards, the conditions under which conversions were permitted, defective porches and stairs, inadequate fire escapes and sanitary facilities, defective wiring or plumbing, improve garbage and trash disposal, rats and vermin. With this scope of knowledge about the program, organizations A and H through P made attempts to help correct such conditions.

Organizations Efforts to Rehabilitate Property

From the beginning of neighborhood rehabilitation efforts in Harlem Park, block and neighborhood inspections were required. Such inspections included all houses, whether resident owned or absentee owned to meet uniform standards as set forth by the Baltimore Urban Renewal Housing Agency in Harlem Park.

After residents became familiar with the Housing Codes, efforts were made by neighborhood organizations to encourage landlords, particularly absentee, to meet the minimum housing standards. Leaders of the various organizations used in this study stated that the primary focus was on the absentee landlords because they did not show any sincere concern about the conditions of their property or the welfare of the occupants. Owner occupants, for the most part, were very cooperative and rehabilitated their properties to meet the minimum housing standards. These occupants did not create the same difficulty as did the absentee property owners.

The interview guide revealed that the neighborhood organizations, at times, had some difficulty in getting absentee owners to rehabilitate their property. These organizations felt that the best way to handle property owners who were in violations of the Housing Codes was to call on the offender,
and invite him to attend block and neighborhood meetings.

Organizations A, and H through P were involved in making telephone calls, sending letters to property owners inviting them to meetings. Their purpose was to discuss with them housing violations, and to encourage them to rehabilitate their property.

Neighborhood organizations that were involved in the above activity encountered successes and failures. Absentee landlords did not always respond favorably to the organizations' request or recommendations. However, in most attempts, they were successful. In an event wherein absentee landlords did not respond favorably, neighborhood organizations referred their complaint(s) to the Inspection Department of the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Agency.

Action by the agency helped reinforce the activity of neighborhood organizations. It generated enthusiasm, and increased confidence among the different community organizations. Those residents who were less successful or just starting out learned that they too could solve such problems in their area, and were encouraged to do so.

Activity of these organizations also helped to change the attitudes of some of those who had formerly been apathetic and hostile. They gained new and greater aspiration for solving their own problems through neighborhood associations. This being so, more block clubs developed as existing clubs grew stronger.

Of the sixteen organizations used in this study, only ten were involved in the above activity. Those involved were organizations A, and H through P. The remaining six organizations (B through G) were not involved in the
above activity. The interview guide indicated that these organizations were not involved because many of the members of these organizations were also members of organizations A, and H through P which were already involved in neighborhood rehabilitation.

The schedule guide revealed that organization A, published a list of approved contractors. The purpose of this list was to help absentee landlords to find competent and reliable persons to rehabilitate their property at a reasonable rate. For example, many property owners in Harlem Park in an effort to rehabilitate their property to meet minimum housing standards had employed incompetent and unreliable contractors. These contractors charged property owners an unreasonable amount of money to repair their property. In several instances, their property did not meet minimum housing standards after the work was completed. Therefore, property owners had to pay additional cost to have their property rehabilitated to meet the minimum housing standards. This caused property owners to become very hostile. In view of this, organization A published a list of approved contractors which served the people in Harlem Park thousands of dollars for abating a housing violations.

Meeting Related to Urban Renewal

Of the various existing community organizations used in this study, all of the organizations did not hold meetings that were urban renewal related.

Of the sixteen leaders interviewed, the leaders of organizations A, and H through P were the only organizations that held meetings related to the urban renewal program. Each of the organizations held monthly meetings to plan and discuss matters such as ways of improving police protection, methods of
channeling complaints, and the proper agency or department to which complaints should be forwarded. The remaining six organizations B, and C through G did not hold meetings that were related to the urban renewal program. Organizations C through G held meetings pertaining to religious activity. Organization B held meetings that were primarily concerned with planning educational activities and establishing a more meaningful relationship with residents in Harlem Park.

Interviews with leaders of the various organizations indicated that neighborhood organizations were involved in varying kinds of activity. Organizations H through P were involved in improving police protections, sanitation services, and some of the activity of organization A. Activity of this organization A not only concerned itself with improving police protection, sanitation services, the proper agency to which complaints should be forwarded, and method of forwarding complaints, but also with Code Enforcement, Zoning and battles with city hall against more liquor stores in Harlem Park.

Organizations C through G were not involved in any of the above activities, nor was organization B. Many of these members were also members of organizations H through P.

Action for Inner Park Construction

The schedule guide revealed that neighborhood organizations, already pleased with their previous efforts to preserve the neighborhood, helped to obtain appropriation for construction of inner parks. Before pursuing this discussion further, we shall explain what is meant by inner park.

The Harlem Park Community had a total of thirty-two blocks. Twenty-
nine of these blocks had no main streets running through them. Urban renewal plan, inner parks were to be constructed in each of these 29 inner area. The "314 Demonstration Block," was the first to have an inner park constructed.

Following the success of this inner park, appropriations were granted for six, and later eleven additional inner parks. The latter was approved in 1964. Final plans for other inner Parke had been worked out between members of the various neighborhood associations, the city planners, the inner park study committee, and the community organization staff workers. However, many of these blocks for which no plans had been made for inner parks, planning was in process.

In 1964, construction had not begun on the eleven inner parks. The city attempted to reverse its decision, refusing to grant appropriations which had been officially approved in 1962 for constructing the eleven inner parks. The city stated that sufficient funds were not available.

The schedule guide revealed that the residents of Harlem Park refused to accept the statement made by the city. In view of this, residents, working through their various organizations contacted city hall. Organizations A and H through P, in an effort to have the city reverse its decision, sent letters, made a telephone calls, and made a joint group visit to city hall that was spearheaded by organization A. As a result of this action taken by neighborhood organizations, the city immediately reversed its decision. Inner park construction proceeded as it was originally planned. Representatives from all sixteen organizations participated.
Neighborhood Beautification Program

The author, through interview with leaders of the various organizations used in this study, found that all of the organizations, though not individually, had participated in a community beautification program. The schedule guide revealed that this program was organized by organization A. This organization, being conscious of the importance of marshalling all of its resources, put forth every effort to obtain the support of all community organizations, institutions and the various city departments and agencies which served the community. Representatives from organization A made personal contacts with leaders of other neighborhood organizations, sent letters to the Sanitation Department, Health Department, Police Department and Inspection Department requesting their cooperation and support. Notices and letters were circulated throughout the community soliciting participation of all residents in the community. The schedule guide further revealed that the distribution of letters and notices was done through mail, schools, churches, block organizations, Barber Shops, restaurants, store front business etc. The cooperation of all agencies, organizations, and residents that were called upon participated and made this program a success.

Of the sixteen organizations used in this study, each one participated to some extent in the above activity. Six of the organizations B and C through G participation was limited to their assistance in distributing letters and notices concerning the campaign. However, members of these organizations were also
members of other neighborhood groups that took a very active part in the program. This perhaps is one of the reasons why organizations B and C through G have not actively been involved to a large extent in the clean-up campaign.

Organization A, with the combined efforts of other organizations, (H through P) acquired the services of a mechanical street-sweeper. Originally, plans were made to utilize the services of this mechanized sweeper in East Baltimore. This was in effect for a period of time but was dis-continued because residents in the named area failed to cooperate with the plan i.e. observing parking violations on those days when the sweeper was scheduled to clean a particular side of the street. Vehicles parked in violations prevented the sweeper from doing an effective job. In view of this, the sweeper was removed from East Baltimore.

Residents in Harlem Park became very concerned about acquiring the services of this sweeper for their community. They felt that their community was well organized and that the sweeper could operate effectively in Harlem Park. In view of this, organizations A with the assistance of the Renewal agency requested and received the mechanized sweeper. Residents of this community had been very cooperative in observing parking violations which permitted the sweeper to assist them in helping to keep the community clean.

According to interviewers, organizations A sponsored a leadership conference at Morgan State College for the purpose of strengthening existing leadership, and seeking new leaders thereby, enhancing neighborhood organizations. For example, leaders of the various organizations who attended the conference stated that they learned more about how to effectively perform their role as leaders of organizations, and various techniques which had facilitated the
achievement of their objectives. This program, according to the data collected was a success, and residents expressed deep interest in leadership conferences and were considering plans for organizing others.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain what significant contributions neighborhood organizations have made to the urban renewal program in Harlem Park. From this study, we found that the following was achieved through neighborhood organizations:

1. Residents through the Harlem Park neighborhood Council participated in the planning of the urban renewal program.

2. Block organizations invited absentee landlords to meetings and encouraged them to rehabilitate their property to meet minimum housing codes.

3. The Neighborhood Council sponsored a successful neighborhood beautification program which involved cleaning alleys, streets, improving sanitation conditions, and general paint-up fix-up activity.

4. Group action pressured city officials to reverse its decision and reapprove appropriations for the construction of eleven additional inner parks.

5. The Harlem Park Neighborhood Council in cooperation with the Renewal Agency acquired the services of a "Mechanical Street Sweeper."

6. The council helped to enlist the interest of others in the neighborhood; to promote and interpret its program.
7. The council published a list of approved contractors which saved the people in Harlem Park thousands of dollars in repair cost for property rehabilitation.

8. The council held a leadership conference at Morgan State College for the purpose of broadening its members knowledge of leadership, and enabling them to become better acquainted with various community leaders.

According to data collected, the only organizations actively supporting the urban renewal program in Harlem Park during the time of this study was organizations A and H through P. Organization A was the parent body of existing associations. Its most powerful allies were organizations H through P. Organizations B, and C through G. the business men and the recreational agencies were not making any significant contribution to the urban renewal program. These organizations could perhaps be a powerful array of forces to help preserve and enhance the total community.

Organization A had made an essential contribution to revitalizing the community. Without the pride which organization A had made in engendering neighborhood pride and responsibility, the renewal of Harlem Park would not have been possible.

The most basic achievement of organization A had been to identify potential leadership. The leadership in turn had helped to identify potential leadership. The leadership in turn had helped to develop the human resources of the community into a continuing program for better living conditions in a decent neighborhood.
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Name of Interviewer

2. Address

3. Length of residence in area? ________ Months ________ Years

4. When was this organisation established? Year

5. Length of membership in organisation? Months Years;
   How long have you been the leader of this organisation?

6. What position have you held previously in this organisation?

7. How many meetings does your organisation have per month?

8. Do you know the majority of the people in your block? Yes No

9. What are some of the community activities in which your organisation is presently involved?

10. As the leader of this organisation, what are some of the things you have helped this organisation to achieve? Does your organisation participate in all community activities that are urban renewal related? Yes No

11. Name some of the activities in which you would like to see your organisation participate in an effort to improve the community.

12. How does your organisation feel about the Urban Renewal Program in Harlem Park? Favorable Unfavorable

13. Does your organisation support this program? Yes No

14. Did your organisation participate in planning the inner park? Does it plan to? Yes No

15. What did your organisation do when the City refused to grant appropriation for constructing the 11 inner parks?
16. Did your organisation help to get the mechanical street sweeper in Harlem Park?

17. What has your organisation done in an effort to encourage absentee landlords to improve their property?

18. What has your organisation done about sanitation problems in the community?

19. Has your organisation done anything to help beautify the community?

20. Does your organisation participate in paint-up and fix-up programs?
   Yes    No

21. What has your organisation done to see that streets and alleys are cleaned?

22. Did your organisation participate in the planning of the Urban Renewal Program for Harlem Park? Yes    No
## NAMES OF ORGANIZATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

A. Harlem Park Neighborhood Council  
B. Parent Teachers' Association (Harlem Park Junior High School)

## CHURCHES

C. Metropolitan Methodist  
D. Saint James Episcopal  
E. Wayland Baptist  
F. Emanuel Christian  
G. New Mount Zion

## BLOCK CLUBS (Numbers)

H. 84  
I. 85  
J. 101  
K. 102  
L. 103  
M. 108  
N. 109  
O. 120  
P. 121
AREA CHART

LAFAYETTE

Area Representative
Area A.

Clubs
Organizations
Throughout Area

Area B

Clubs and
Organizations
Throughout Area

AVENUE

Area Representative
Area C.

Clubs and
Organizations
Throughout Area

Area D

Clubs and Organizations
Throughout Area

Agency C.O. Worker

Agency C.O. Worker

Agency C.O. Worker
COUNCIL STRUCTURE

Harlem Park Neighborhood Council
Harlem Park Residents, Clubs, Organizations, Businesses, etc.

Community Organization Staff
Delegate Body
(Composed of Organization Representatives and Neighborhood Council Members)

City Wide Agencies via Health and Welfare Council

Executive Committee
(Officers, Comm. Chairman & Four Delegates - at - Large)

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