



CENTER CITY

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT— NOT TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

We can certainly expect that the federal government will assume new functions in the months and years before us in an effort to methodically realign the complicated economic problems and the ensuing social disruptions of our time. Let us address ourselves to one of these fluctuating functions: the redistribution of monies into areas deemed of substantial importance to the continuing welfare of the American citizenry. An understanding of this process, if both its basic patterns of operation and the rationale underlying these operations can be discerned, will serve to instruct our perspective on the relationship between federal and local governments as well as our prospects for the future. Could we, to general satisfaction, define this redistribution as a *national investment in the future well-being of our nation's economic, social and cultural development: an investment in improved systems which should facilitate the interactions of people, and an incentive to stimulate progressive and stable development.*

CENTER CITY has often taken on the task of impressing upon its readers the importance of citizen participation in the determination of Memphis' development, especially in the downtown district. This has been done by supporting various community improvement programs, whether publicly or privately initiated, which are concerned with offering opportunities for citizens to work in some organized and meaningful capacity for the public benefit. Public involvement is an evolving necessity, and a tool being explored nationwide that holds the promise of a revived social creativity and a new social cohesion. Therefore, CENTER CITY wishes to do its part in informing its readers of the efforts of City Hall, which, in accordance with provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, has solicited citizen assistance in devising and implementing a Memphis Community Development Plan. Now, it would seem, the City of Memphis has the opportunity to establish its long-range priorities, policies and programs on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, founded on objective data and the ideals of citizens rather than political impulse and disjointed meandering.

In August, President Ford signed into law the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Last October Memphis City Government held a one day seminar to discuss with the public the implications of Title I of this Act: Community Development. In the booklet distributed to those

in attendance, Mayor Chandler stated that approximately thirty million dollars is expected to come to the city by way of this Community Development section of the Act over the next three years. And he said that it has "for the first time" made it possible for this city to "formulate and control its own priorities and implement them with a predetermined level of funding."

The primary objectives of Title I, as related by the City's seminar booklet, are: (1) the elimination of slums and blight and the prevention of blighting influences; (2) the elimination of conditions which are detrimental to health, safety, and public welfare; (3) the conservation of and the expansion of the Nation's housing stock; (4) the expansion and improvement of the quantity and quality of community services, principally for persons of low and moderate incomes; (5) a more rational utilization of land and other natural resources; (6) the reduction of the isolation of income groups within the community; and (7) the restoration and preservation of properties of special value for historic, architectural or esthetic reasons.

A program requirement of Title I is a community three-year plan "identifying community development needs and demonstrating a comprehensive strategy." This plan must include a listing of all the activities to be undertaken and all the additional financial resources to be utilized; and it must be accompanied by an environmental evaluation of the effects of these activities. The plan must outline specific programs that will eliminate blight and improve neighborhood facilities. And of particular interest to us here, there must be adequate citizen participation in the formulation and monitoring of this Community Development Plan: for certification of an application for these funds, an applying unit must "provide satisfactory assurances that the program will be conducted and administered in conformity with federal civil rights laws; and, provide satisfactory assurances that, prior to submission of its application, it has (A) provided citizens with adequate information concerning the amount of funds available for proposed community development and housing activities, the range of activities that may be undertaken, and other important program requirements, (B) held public hearings to obtain the views of citizens on community development and housing needs, and (C) provided citizens an adequate opportunity to participate in the development of the application...."

As a beginning, to meet the citizen participation requirements of Title I grants, the Mayor created a 31 member Action Program Advisory Committee in October, which is to serve as the primary city-wide citizen participation structure. But as the community development planning process proceeds "additional citizens will be drawn into the program in order to provide even more program recommendations."

The block grant approach to returning federal funds to localities differs in procedure, and presumably in results, from previous federal legislation. CENTER CITY has asked John Dudas, Manager of the Policy Planning and Analysis Bureau, Claudia Shumpert, an Urban Systems specialist, and Charles Hill, a representative of the Department of Housing and Urban Development currently on loan to the city, to comment on these variations and the prospective uses of this Community Development Act money. But before we go into the questions and answers it might be helpful to explain briefly the origins and role of the Policy Planning and Analysis Bureau at City Hall. It was created in February 1973 with funds made available by the Housing Act of 1954. The purpose of the Bureau is to provide information, analysis, and alternatives to the Executive Office, the City Council and the various Divisions of City Government in regards to managing the community development process and the effective delivery of city services. Since spring of 1973, the Bureau has been at work accumulating data on existing housing and street conditions, and analyzing U.S. Census figures so as to formulate geographic profiles on the city of Memphis. This has been done to assist decision-makers in identifying potential priority areas and the functional deficiencies of these areas which will require attention during this community development process.

Claudia Shumpert has been primarily involved in the goal setting and citizen participation aspects of community development. Charles Hill has been working on the housing assistance aspect of the development plan; he has been particularly interested in further developing a housing rehabilitation program which by utilizing low interest, long term loans would help prevent deterioration and salvage threatened housing.

CENTER CITY: Hasn't there in the past been a fundamental doubt — even distrust — on the part of the federal government as to the ability of local governments to formulate their own priorities, poli-

cies and programs in the area of community development?

JOHN DUDAS: I think that in the past the federal government has tended to functions that they thought needed to be done, but which the cities and states themselves were not able to do or were not becoming involved in,... not only in community development but in social services and economic problems. I don't think there was distrust as such.

CHARLES HILL: I just don't think local government in the past perceived these types of activities as being one of the functions of local government. Local government perceived their role as general government functions: picking up garbage, maintaining a police department and those standard activities.... It was a combination of local government not perceiving its role as including the activities that we call community development, as well as an attitude on the part of members of the federal establishment that there was less than adequate capacity on the part of local leaders to actually carry out those kinds of things.

JOHN DUDAS: One of the key problems, too, was that during the time all these things came into existence — community development and all the social programs — people were very reluctant to expand government as such, and there was that feeling in terms of local government that they (cities) were to provide basic things, like police and fire protection, and building streets, and really keep control down to a minimum. The whole question of having to pay more taxes to pick up these other services, and do that in a more direct way, was really difficult to sell to a local population. It's a lot easier, I think, to sell the people of the country as a whole, in terms of their income taxes, to provide these services. It's really easier to collect income taxes for some reason than property taxes. So the prime reason then, instead of it (community development) being financed locally, it's financed on the federal level. That's why we have all those elaborate control methods on the management of that money.

CENTER CITY: So the federal government made the initial steps in these neglected areas. Would you say then that these funding changes reflect a growing sophistication of government systems, or a reaction to new and increasing problems that shifts the responsibility back to the localities?

JOHN DUDAS: No, they've started backing-in to the problems; there were always a lot of problems — and, of course, they're getting bigger all the time: they haven't allocated adequate resources to take care of community development by any means. I think the backing-in process should gradually take on more and more of the responsibility, meeting the physical deterioration problems and the social deterioration. It's not that the problems are getting bigger, but that the involvement is getting greater.

CHARLES HILL: It is a reflection, to an extent, that government in general is more capable of dealing with these types of problems than they ever have been before. But there's a feeling on the part of people throughout the country that this is not the case: there's a general lack of confidence in government on all levels. That's a reflection more of the concern people are expressing about the role changes we're all going through in our society.

It is my personal opinion that local and federal governments are more capable of meeting needs than ever before. Then it's really a question of priorities more than of the ability to meet the needs. We have not yet decided to face these particular problems with allocations of the amount of money and the amount of resources needed to actually solve the problems: our priorities have been elsewhere.

CENTER CITY: Does federal review account for a great amount of money being filtered out of the public coffers to feed a growing bureaucracy of go-betweens? Have not the local governing bodies been

obliged to establish an army of experts sensitive to federal designs and regulations who can, so to speak, play the proposal game?

JOHN DUDAS: I think that there's an advantage to developing a local expertise: a staff of professionals who are able to, in fact, develop decision-making to really identify needs and set priorities. It's not only important in terms of specific programs, but in terms of all the decisions that are made. You almost have to view a local government as a corporation that is involved in many, many spheres of influence. You really need to determine internally in what direction the city needs to go and what is important and how you approach the problem. If all cities continue to rely on federal research and development types of operations, which are really geared on a national scope, then we will be dealing with generalized solutions that really don't fit our specific needs.

CHARLES HILL: So far as the Community Development Act is concerned, I think that HUD's bureaucracy is being reduced as a result of the orientation. Now the cities are going to have to expand their capabilities. As the old categorical grants are phased out many of the people who worked in those programs will have to find new jobs. ... In many areas there just aren't the people available currently on the staffs of city governments to carry out the new responsibilities ... I really think that where community development is concerned the federal bureaucracy will be reduced significantly over the years.

CENTER CITY: Then this systems sophistication started by the federal government is now being further refined by bringing it back down to the localities, which means that city governments must have the specialist capable of reading local problems accurately, and prescribing the correct treatment?

JOHN DUDAS: Remember now, the federal government is encouraging all of this: it's being transferred. HUD has a program now called 701; this program is aimed specifically to providing additional capabilities to make decisions and deal with problems in terms of the Chief Executive Office. They have funded cities to help develop this internal capability to really provide the wherewithal to assist the Chief Executive's Officer in these decisions. To a certain extent they have patterned these local systems on what they have used on the federal level; so they would like to see a lot of direct transfer from their approaches to local approaches. Even though those problems are of a different scope and a different nature, the method of approaching the problems is very similar.

CHARLES HILL: Another way that the federal government is attempting this skill transfer is through the Inter-governmental Personnel Act, whereby federal employees can be loaned to the cities.

CENTER CITY: Is there developing a tendency in the federal government to remit to the localities larger portions of their responsibilities, thus their self-government, allowing for greater latitude in the use of federal monies? Just how does the Act alter the procedures and purposes of federal funds shared with the localities?

JOHN DUDAS: Well, the block grant is really a lot more sophisticated and more valuable than general revenue sharing, because general revenue sharing does not necessarily direct resources to the area of greatest need. Even though it depends on what the cities perceive to be their greatest needs, in effect general revenue sharing has substituted for a lot of the specific, so called, categorical programs that were oriented for specific problems. In many cases, as several studies have shown, general revenue sharing funds have not been used to try to solve the problems, but rather, have been used to do things which are detrimental to the overall good of the city, such as encouraging suburban sprawl by providing for projects that in fact expand the city way

out in the hinterlands. Now the block grant approach, as opposed to the general revenue sharing, has some strings attached, so to speak, but they are important in that they give the cities a lot of flexibility in developing their own approach to this problem of urban deterioration. But at the same time, the program states that you must use these funds to solve your problems of urban deterioration — not just simply to do any project that seems to be interesting.

CENTER CITY: Do you see a need for both a general and specified funding? Is the block grant approach a corrective of federal revenue sharing?

JOHN DUDAS: You know, originally community development was supposed to be funded by what Congress called "community development revenue sharing"; I have a feeling that they (Congress) purposely wanted to leave out the word "revenue sharing" and put it under the term "block grant" so that they might better direct the resources, rather than give the ultimate flexibility of general revenue sharing. I think that I prefer to see all federal funds come down within general purpose categories, such as community development, human services and human resources development, even perhaps a category such as, downtown development, transportation development and others. I think that if we have broad grants ... in each of those areas and we developed the same type of decision-making systems for determining priorities, not only would the cities get more benefits for their money, but the federal government would feel that its Congressional objectives were being adhered to.

CHARLES HILL: To me the greatest benefit of the block grant over general revenue sharing ... is that under general revenue sharing there is no requirement for the city to formally identify needs, establish objectives and priorities beforehand—before they spend the money—it can be done on a very informal basis. But under the block grant program we must formally go through this identification process—identifying needs, establishing objectives, setting goals, etc.; and in doing that, the money tends to naturally flow to the areas where need is greatest. And, there's less chance that the money can be diverted to purposes that are contrary to the public purpose.

CENTER CITY: How much does Memphis anticipate receiving in the next three years?

JOHN DUDAS: Under Title I the first year's allocation will be approximately 5.7 million, the second year 9 million, and the third about 14 million—about thirty million in three years. Under the system whereby it's allocated to Memphis, we're actually wiser in going up in these increments. We have to point out that this is rather unusual for a city this size to start out at a low level and almost triple its funds over a three year period. Most cities of our size or larger are actually decreasing, that is, they will be dropping some each year. Memphis, perhaps, has not gone all out to become involved and receive federal funds, especially in the area of community development types of programs; as a result, we are now way under allocated based on our real need.

The federal government set the formula for allocating these funds. What they've done is say that cities with the greatest poverty index and overcrowded housing, based on their population, will receive the greatest amount of funds under this program. Memphis, as you know, has a considerable number of individuals and families living below the poverty level, and a moderate degree of overcrowding; all this together indicates that by the third year Memphis will be receiving a considerable amount of money. But five million, compared to what cities half our size all throughout the country, like Nashville and others, will be receiving—twice and three times as much as us, just because we haven't really been into the business of community development to the extent that we should have, as far as receiving federal funds.

CHARLES HILL: The reason for this is that, while we are being phased into the program, cities who were receiving more federal funds in proportion to their population and poverty index than we are, are being phased downward to the formula. So, for the first three years of the program, especially in the State of Tennessee, the city of Memphis will not receive—proportionate to its population and need—as much money as Nashville, Chattanooga, or even Knoxville; but, if the program extends for a second three year period for the full six years, the city of Memphis will receive far more money than those other cities. But the first three years the city of Memphis is being penalized because of a less aggressive approach to the use of the old federal programs than other cities in the state.

CENTER CITY: What options are being considered for the use of these monies?

JOHN DUDAS: Of the possible uses of Title I monies, basically we have chosen housing improvement and overall neighborhood improvement in areas which have experienced deterioration in the last few years—but not necessarily to the extent of the total clearance of all the buildings in these areas. We will be removing structures that are no longer in safe and sound condition; but, major emphasis will be on trying to repair and preserve much of our housing and neighborhoods. The major expenditure will be for either repairing housing, or acquiring structures which are no longer safe and sound; the land will then be used either for park space or for other structures.

The first step is to designate the areas of the city that have the greatest need and will bring about the greatest benefits. We have developed a comprehensive system to identify the areas which are in need of redevelopment treatment and also to identify specific needs these areas have. Now the purpose of this is an attempt to reduce the approximately 30 million that we have just to the absolute highest priority areas, but that's only about ten percent of our need, so obviously, it's very important to go about this priority setting process in a very careful and systematic manner. Now, what we have done is prepare a description of the conditions, needs and programs required for each of those areas, and [we] have been narrowing down the 132 potential geographic areas to a number which can be properly treated for thirty million dollars. We anticipate that the [APAC] Committee will on Friday [Jan. 31] be able to make recommendations to the Mayor as to which of those final areas will be treated. At that point the Mayor will make his recommendations to the Council.

CHARLES HILL: In the first three years of the program our orientation appears to be toward conservation of existing housing, especially oriented in an attempt to save existing neighborhoods—to keep them from becoming slums; in contrast, the Urban Renewal programs of the past were mainly oriented toward clearance and providing land for uses other than residential purposes.

JOHN DUDAS: One point that we need to make, as far as priority areas, is that the APAC set as a criterion that we would be working in areas that were primarily residential. However, there are activities that we are contemplating that are not necessarily restricted to these nine priority areas to be chosen, for example, historic/landmark preservation and special impact programs.

CENTER CITY: What are the possibilities of downtown benefiting from either Title I or Title II insofar as residences? Could Memphis develop a new community downtown under Title II?

JOHN DUDAS: I don't think that downtown is ignored by the Housing and Community Development Act, because there still remains the possibility of rehabilitating structures which are not used for housing by turning them into housing.

Generally, in the past the term "new community" was seen as entirely new development. What we

hope to see is a different type of new community: a community that is a whole neighborhood environment, but one which is located in the midst of our major regional commercial center. What we're lacking basically now is of course permanent residents; there is a very limited amount of housing available in the downtown area.

Yes, the Act could provide for new development.

CENTER CITY: Does this bringing the city back inward serve the intent of the federal legislation?

JOHN DUDAS: Absolutely, I think the federal government has made it clear that on all national levels several problems—not the least of which is deterioration—could be solved by revitalization of the central city. We need to redevelop our central city in order to reduce some of our energy wastefulness: we have to transport energy over long distances over which we lose much of it and people have to commute to work. We are rapidly decentralizing our city ... investing in areas previously undeveloped.

CENTER CITY: Does this cause a strain on city utilities and services?

JOHN DUDAS: It's a strain on everything—a strain on taxes: we have to build new roads to accommodate new development; we have to build new sewer systems, water systems, parks; we have to provide fire and police protection. We are spreading ourselves thinner and thinner. By directing people back into the city we will be making the greatest use of our existing resources. For the most part, thanks to Urban Renewal, we've replaced old utility lines, etc., but they're not being put to better use. It's simply a matter of basic common sense: why duplicate? But, treating in-town residential areas, in fact, increases the viability of the downtown area by prolonging sound housing close-by.

CHARLES HILL: The major vehicle for the production of subsidized housing under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 is Title II, Section 8. This section provides that you can provide subsidized housing in three ways: new construction, substantial rehabilitation, and the use of existing housing. By using a mix of all three the federal government anticipates that there will be more diversity in subsidized housing than ever before. Insofar as Section 8 is concerned for the downtown, I must say that all three aspects of the Section 8 program are still oriented toward providing housing for low and moderate income groups; but, the program has a lot more flexibility than any of the other subsidized programs before it.

CENTER CITY: Citizen involvement in determining the priorities and policies of a community is being discussed nationwide; some say this is a major revolution in American political life, and that such participation should be institutionalized. One key item of Title I is that adequate citizen participation must be provided by the applying cities. What function will Memphis citizens perform in formulating a community development plan?

CLAUDIA SHUMPERT: I would first like to say that citizen participation is not new to the community...it just evolved into a different form. I'd like to think that on our Advisory Committee we have a broad cross-section of people. We took these citizens from existing boards and commissions; so, we didn't have a new group coming in that we had to orient into the citizen participation process, but had people who were already involved and could immediately jump into community development. We were planning to bring about this APAC group even if we didn't become involved in the community development programs of the Act.

JOHN DUDAS: When we started the process we wanted to get maximum, let me say, feasible citizen participation from the very beginning ... In order to expedite it, we decided to concentrate the first few months on the community development plan preparation, so we didn't break the APAC down in-

to the subcommittees as we originally intended; however, we do plan to move into that in the near future.

CLAUDIA SHUMPERT: They have been involved in the goal setting process, and in reviewing current conditions and the fundamental objectives of community development. Now we are really getting into selecting the priority areas. They were involved in setting the criteria for judging the priority areas. They have toured the fourteen possible areas remaining after limiting the original 132 by criteria.

JOHN DUDAS: They narrowed it down by using these criteria, as we mentioned before; these were essentially: that the area should be residential and have no inherent factors that would impede our carrying out community development in regards to the National Environmental Policy Act. There were certain basic criteria which pretty well eliminated areas almost immediately. We scored the areas, but the APAC was indirectly involved in the elimination because they selected the criteria.

CLAUDIA SHUMPERT: Friday they will go over this material and make their final recommendations to the Mayor.

CENTER CITY: Has Memphis City Government considered how this citizen participation could be further broadened and extended to the neighborhood level, and possibly even institutionalized in the structure of local government?

JOHN DUDAS: Well, I think we need to say that it's broadening all along: we did start off with 31 people and at the present time we have over 60 people participating in the community development task forces we have formed to deal with specific aspects of the Act, such as housing and transportation, etc. ... We have some ideas about neighborhood involvement.

CLAUDIA SHUMPERT: We anticipate getting participation from the priority areas after they have been determined.

CENTER CITY: Could the city benefit from elaborating citizen participation and making it more effective and permanent?

JOHN DUDAS: There are a lot of different ways you can do this. Last year we put a State of the City Address in the Sunday newspaper, and attached to this was a citizens' questionnaire in which we asked citizens to evaluate city services...; that could become a fairly formalized method of communication. We may go to more elaborate opinion surveys. We also hope to maintain APAC and to really keep the neighborhood organizations going strong. We have continually supported the work of neighborhood organizations that are set up, such as the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association and the Mid-Memphis Improvement Association, and others, by attending their meetings, speaking and listening to their ideas...I think that it is fair to say that this is a very important part of whether the city will succeed or fail in the next ten years in becoming a totally viable community: the city government alone can't do it.

CENTER CITY: So it's a two-way street: the city government takes a step—the citizens take a step; but, the citizens themselves must be informed, organized and cooperative?

JOHN DUDAS: Right, citizens need to support their neighborhood organizations and attend meetings. It's a gradual process.

FOR THOSE WHO
CARE TO KNOW

MEMPHIS FILM SERIES

Southwestern

February 8 – “Common House”
Lyceum Film Theatre

February 11 – “Captains Corageous”
Southwestern

February 12 – “Dead End”
MSU

February 14 – “The African Queen”
UT–Center Film Society

February 14 – “The Fox”

The annual membership meeting of the Memphis-Shelby County Association for Retarded Children will be held on Tuesday, February 25, at 7:30 p.m., at the Board of Education Auditorium. If you need transportation, please call the MARC office: 452-0452.

Editor's Note-CENTER CITY would like to have a correspondent from the Medical Center area and one from the Midtown area to report at least once a month on activities and points of community interest in those two inner-city locations. If you are interested, please call or write to: CENTER CITY First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar, 38103; 525-5619.

Those who fancy themselves grammarians, please let us know when we make mistakes: CENTER CITY wants to hear from its readers.

The deadline for the first "Exploring Downtown" contest will be February 8. Winners will be announced next week, February 12.

Center City

First Presbyterian Church
166 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Thirty paintings by US Navy combat artists go on display February 3 through February 28, at the National Bank of Commerce. The collection will be on display from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The special service at First Presbyterian Church commemorating the Civic Center Community Culinary Club has been rescheduled to this Sunday, February 9, at 11:00 A.M. All are invited to attend.

THE WLYX-FM COLLOQUY PROGRAM schedule for February features “Thresholds Interview” Part I Thursday, February 6 at 8:00 P.M.; Wednesday, February 12 at 5:15 A.M.; Thursday, February 20 at 8:00 P.M.; and Wednesday, February 26 at 5:15 A.M.

CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY CULINARY CLUB

Serving from 11:30 to 1:00

First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar Avenue

PRICE: \$1.50 per serving, including drink

MENU FOR FEBRUARY 6 – FEBRUARY 14

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Turkey & Dressing, English Peas, Cranberry Sauce, Rolls

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Salmon Croquettes, Hash Browned Potatoes, Tossed Salad, Rolls

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Roast Beef, Whipped Potatoes, English Peas, Rolls

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Spaghetti, Cole Slaw, French Bread

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Fried Chicken, Rice & Gravy, Squash, Rolls

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Meat Loaf, Potatoes Au Gratin, Lima Beans, Rolls

*Second-class
postage paid at
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