

INNER-CITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION: THE WEST END

by

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WEST END RESTORATION

The West End was founded around 1820; a vast farm area surrounding a few houses, some of which are still standing today. Built before the railroads, a neighborhood existed here before Atlanta became a commercial hub. Sherman missed it in his march through Georgia, though it is only a five minute drive from the heart of the city.

Most of the 1200 houses were built between 1880 and 1910 by the well-to-do of Atlanta, and from here have come such people as Dean Rusk and Joel Chandler Harris. The houses were large, decorative single-family dwellings, primarily of a carpenter Victorian style. The white families lived on the streets, and the blacks lived off the alleys in the center of the block. These wealthy families built smaller summer homes on the northside of Atlanta in areas such as Midtown or Morningside.¹ When the first World War came, most of the men went off, leaving the houses to fall into disrepair, a progressive condition which was never fully dealt with upon their return. When the depression struck, many of the families had to give up their larger homes and move into the smaller homes on the northside

¹Like most southern cities, once its major industry went from wholesaling to manufacturing, it grew north due to the prevailing northwestern winds that drive smoke and smell south, leaving the poorer people on the less desirable side.

of town, taking with them, eventually, the fashionable air that West End once possessed. The larger homes were bought, and eventually most were unsensitively divided into apartments.² Bathrooms were put into closets and kitchens were tacked on to the back of the house as codes began to require them. When the city needed to expand in the mid-fifties they utilized the housing code to legalize the black removal, and tear down the slums situated almost in the heart of the business district. This forced thousands of blacks into other neighborhoods not able to handle the extra people without again over-crowding, thereby merely relocating the ghetto. Many of these families moved into the mid-block communities in the West End, where they remained a separate and distinct society.

When the block-busting nemesis began an upward swing in the sixties, the West End, like most neighborhoods on the southside of Atlanta where the majority of the rental property existed, was one of the first integrated.³ Because of the mentality of the time, a stigma

²This was, of course, an evolving process that took forty years. The cycle ran from low maintenance to lower chargeable rents until it was no longer conceivable to catch up with the decay.

³Tension ran high in this neighborhood, adjacent to the church of Martin Luther King, but because of this inability to struggle against, or flee integration due to economics, this stands as one of the only comfortable racial mixtures in Atlanta or the nation. Other reviving neighborhoods have been a white reclamation of the real estate, sending the lower middle income blacks out to the suburbs; areas that do not supply the services necessary to supplement their incomes as the city does. West End is one step ahead of the other neighborhoods because the hurdle has been overcome.

was attached to the southside and to everyone from here, dividing the city racially: north and south. The West End was assumed black, poor and dying, and being without its share of the influx of money hitting the northside of the city, it began to fit the mold.

By the late sixties, the neighborhood was 90% renters, with an average stay of nine months. This made responsibility to the neighborhood nearly non-existent, and all community strength and unity quickly fell apart. With increasing decay, rents dropped until the area was 90% low-income. These two factors combined to contribute to the crime rate being the highest in Atlanta. Property values were also declining, which made owners think twice about, and then usually decide against making any major repairs or improvements to their homes, because the expenditure could not add to the market value, therefore it would give them no return on their investment. This quickened the decay, which in turn caused local banks to redline the area, which merely aggravated the problem.⁴ With no money available, there seemed no way to change the downhill course.

A local high school was headed for scheduled closing, due to lack of facilities and money to make improvements or keep up with the problems of one of the oldest school buildings in Atlanta. Quality of education no longer seemed to be a factor in a transient community.

⁴Redlining, though a valid economic stand in the eyes of the banks (how can one give a 20 year mortgage in a neighborhood that will last only 8-10 years?), is one of the most difficult facets of revitalization, because a bank policy, once set, is not easily changed.

Services, in general, were slipshod from the public and the private sector, merely because it was the southside of town. An attitude of superiority was taken when dealing with the residents, because they obviously had no power to protect against this lack of respect.⁵

Fourteen million dollars had been spent in West End during the urban renewal phase, and not one iota of self-improvement was in evidence. Many old houses were condemned and demolished in the interest of progress, leaving families without any type of shelter, even substandard.⁶ The government had hoped that vacant property would bring in new houses, but construction costs would not allow a profit in the inner city, and so lots went empty. The prejudice against land south of Interstate 20 also made hope for investors grow dim.

In 1969, Mr. Wade D. Burns became familiar with the area while doing some work for the Atlanta Housing Authority, and moved into a house on Peeples Street. The West End area had long been designated as an urban renewal neighborhood and the many vacant lots told of the program's initiatives in putting together parcels of land for future

⁵Over a period of time, this lack of respect from outsiders worsened until the community members lost all respect for each other.

⁶Because the urban renewal officials had no belief in the area, there was no real concern for the development of West End into a stable community where someone would choose to live, not have to. The houses razed were often the largest and nicest, but this was of no consequence to those who made the decisions, for they were looking toward housing project styles.

development, as was going on in northern Atlanta. Even with all the money the federal government had expended in the neighborhood the administrators had yet to realize that the logic used to develop the northside of Atlanta became faulty when the attitude factor toward the southside was considered, even though the employees of the AHA themselves had the same negative attitude about the area.⁷

The blocks surrounding Mr. Burns' home were owned primarily by Mr. F. H. Pound, an elderly white man who was still resisting the integration of the neighborhood. He had bought many of the houses near his own, and rented them cheaply to older white couples, many of them also long time residents of the West End. Maintenance was at this time a lost art, and homes fell slowly apart. He was considering selling to a K-Mart or to the city for a police precinct when Mr. Burns' plans finally matured.

While working with a local architectural firm, he established his plan for rebuilding the West End. He purchased houses as they became available along a three linear block area, buying only rental properties and obtaining mortgages directly from the owners. He established "sweat equity" programs with the existing tenants.⁸ The attempt was to create more stability by increasing the number of

⁷Mr. Burns has expressed the opinion that this kind of work can not be as successful when done by an outside developer, making it vital that he live in the restoration area.

⁸Sweat equity, in this case, is a program in which Mr. Burns provided necessary material for improvement on the property and the tenants provided labor in return for low rents.

owner-occupants, and to establish concern for the neighborhood from the tenants with longer residency. Success in dealing with the worst crime problem in the city⁹ helped greatly toward giving the residents a feeling of adequacy, and more: the strength that the residents needed to go ahead with any sort of revitalization.

It took five years to reconcile local HUD officials, the AHA, supportive bankers and residents to the plan. It eventually took the break-up of the Nixon administration to obtain the total backing of the federal government for the project.¹⁰

The idea was to buy a total of 25 structures in a 50 structure, 3 linear block area, many of which had been owned by Mr. Pound. Except for one or two, these were all rental properties and the tenants were offered the option of returning after the work was completed by use of the Section 8 rent subsidy program (See Appendix A). Eventually, only one family took this opportunity. The fifteen worst houses were to be completely redone, taken apart to the studs, and put back together, highlighting the exquisite old details while creating more

⁹Mr. Burns and other residents, in conjunction with local police, through careful study and through the institution of a neighborhood watch, were able to transform West End's crime rate from the highest in Atlanta to the lowest, in 45 days.

¹⁰One of the Nixon era directives was to eliminate the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or to strip it of all its social programs. This meant that as Mr. Burns went over people's heads to get the project approved, he finally found himself having to get around a presidential directive to utilize existent programs.

contemporary spaces, and more functional floor plans.¹¹ These were to be put on the market under the financial package Mr. Burns had put together between HUD and the local banks. The remaining ten houses were to be brought up to code, and where possible, "sellable" details were to be added or enhanced. These would be sold when market values had reached an acceptable level, approximately at the time they are paid off, in the mid nineteen-eighties. Surrounding residents were encouraged to follow suit and, with assistance, made very visible improvements at minimum costs. Therefore he had a 50 structure visual area for the price of 15. Work finally started in 1974.

To alleviate overhead costs which were not written into the budget, Mr. Burns acted as owner, architect, developer, general contractor and, eventually, broker for the restoration project. It was this single minded decision making and his naturally aggressive personality that aided him in overturning or overruling any regulation or official which stood in the way of the success of his project. Hard-lining rehab advisors from the city were pacified and then ignored. Ordinances were changed when necessary, proposals were written for any possible money, and lobbying was done; the likes of which a city hall seldom sees.

¹¹To continue a neighborhood, just like a society, one must have "new babies." The houses were given another 100 year life span, increasing the lifespan of West End, and breaking the redline.

The financial package was the inducement that Mr. Burns hoped would catapult this project forward. HUD loaned money to the regulatory limit on each of the fifteen houses: \$17,500 per unit at 3% interest, through a federal program for low interest construction loans in urban renewal areas. Citizens & Southern Bank had, at that time, a division that was to deal with loans for projects designed to benefit the city of Atlanta, and take risks that other banks would not. For that reason, and on the merit of many presentations that Mr. Burns made to them, they agreed to match all the HUD money at 6% interest, the rate which bank officials get for their own personal mortgages.¹² That gave from \$70,000 to \$105,000 per house, and because Mr. Burns was acting as general contractor, it allowed an overflow of money to go into the ten rental properties. The work on the houses to be rebuilt was done at about \$20/sq. ft., the current price of salt box construction. These figures, averaged with the normal interest rates charged for the initial purchase of the property, would give a prospective buyer an effective rate of approximately 4-3/4%. All mortgages were also set up to correspond with the HUD loan, which would be paid off in 20 years. The new owner then inherits three separate mortgages¹³ which, with the low interest rate, saves him

¹²The initial loan was made during the boom years around 1974 when interest rates were running at an all time high of 13-14%. When the recession came, and it became obvious that the bank could not collect that from the project, rather than lose the entire amount through bankruptcy, the loan was renegotiated.

¹³The first mortgage is held by Mr. Burns, the second by HUD, and the third by C&S Bank.

\$30,000 in twenty years, or \$70,000 over a thirty year plan. To simplify the problems of the purchases further, Atlanta Federal Savings and Loan is previously committed to making the first mortgage which pays off the original purchase loan, and the other two mortgage holders have agreed to subordinate to them. The original loan is therefore comparatively easy to obtain.

Publicity was not included in the financial setup of the project, yet, due to the location of the project, it became a necessary part to transform the attitudes of a majority of Atlantans, striking down the stigma of the southside, before the market for these homes would open up. Luckily, the mere remarkableness of the restoration in West End leant itself to media publicity. Over 100 pages of newspaper and magazine articles have been written about the West End Restoration and several hours of radio talk shows have been spent on it (See Appendix B). It got people out to see it. The initial reaction was "How nice it is." The second time out, it was "This is nice enough for me." The houses began to sell before construction was complete. Publicity continued as the neighborhood grew. Commercials were filmed here and local university projects on the area became numerous. The local high school uses it for senior picture backgrounds, and the art classes spend hours sketching it. Yet, even with this, it is better known on the national level than on the local one.

The project has received national notoriety due to salesmanship on the part of Mr. Burns, who has spoken to 10% of all the AIA members, and due also to a few noticeable differences between this and any other inner-city revitalization effort.

For example, Mr. Burns attempted to avoid a white reclamation of the real estate by buying up only rental property. This motivation has controlled other decisions throughout the restoration. Secondly, he not only provided an example for owners, but offered free architectural assistance to the low income residents. Also, there has been work done toward offering some sort of educational program, whereby low income, long time residents are informed on the hazards of selling their homes for what seems like a good profit but which, in actuality, would not be enough to buy a house in any other revitalizing neighborhood. And, too, there is an attempt to pass some legislation through the state government that would prohibit a reassessment of a home because of location until the property has changed hands, so that low income residents are not penalized or even deprived of their homes because of increasing taxes going beyond their means.

Another important ingredient of this project is its concern for the public places. With the realization that the houses could not sell themselves in a \$10,000 neighborhood, came the idea to incorporate street improvements into the design. With a \$175,000 grant from the city through the Community Development Block Grant funds, brick

sidewalks, wrought iron flagpoles, street lights, trees and tree protectors were bought, and arranged to create a pedestrian scale attractive enough to sell the idea of future expansion of the restoration area to potential buyers. It also encouraged more pedestrian traffic, which increased the security of the neighborhood. In addition, it helped raise the tax base \$5 million, a good return on the city's investment. Those attempts are now being made to work out a formula agreeable to all parties that would permit similar sidewalks and street lights to be installed throughout West End. With a persistent help and encouragement from the Honorable Mayor Maynard Jackson, the section directly controlled by Mr. Burns was able to obtain underground utilities while the new sidewalks were being put in, by having the companies declare this a new neighborhood, and count the debits of the neighborhood toward the cost. Even with this, there was still \$25,000 needed to do the three block area. Without the hammering of the mayor, and finally his promise that the city would eventually find a way to pay the remainder, the lines would not have been put underground.

This was just one of many things that the mayor's favors made possible. Through and because of his frequent verbal support, both councilmen and administrative staff were pulled to the cause. With this support, came the ability to maneuver around rules and regulations in the interest of the future of the project. It also meant that any governmental visitor being given a tour of the city was

brought to the West End as an example of the eleven inner-city revitalization movements, spreading the name nationwide. Also, because of this mayorial support, Mr. Burns has been asked to fill the role of consultant, on occasion, to the city to offer views on what has transpired in West End, how it has happened, and what the future will bring (See Appendix C).

The project did not receive all praise and good will, however. A second wave of new community residents, feeling that these three blocks of the West End Restoration Project were receiving all the credit for a community wide effort, joined together and established West End Neighborhood Development (WEND). Their initial steps were aimed at eliminating Mr. Burns' power as much as building a neighborhood organization and, due to their efforts, he lost the support of local councilmen. But it did not take the politicians long to realize his detractors were a vocal minority and that long time residents were fully behind his work. It has taken two years to wear down all the hard feelings accumulated over the previous year, but the neighborhood is finally pulling together.

The name that Wade Burns had established for himself, as well as luck of the Georgians after the election of Jimmy Carter, brought him to Washington, D.C. on the eve of the cancellation of the HUD Section 312 program, the one used in the West End Restoration, to write an appeal for its refunding. The appeal helped save the program, and the success of the West End was what swayed them to put \$240,000,000 aside

for the program nationwide over the next three years, the largest allocation ever. Mr. Burns was also put on a committee at that time which reworked all the regulations for the Section 312 program. He has also been asked to contribute to an educational seminar that HUD is preparing for all their employees to help them understand the possibilities of the program they administer.

The project, with all of its grandiose impressions, is still in its infancy. It must be nurtured, and pulled along even though on the surface it appears to be growing and thriving. If skepticism develops, it could undermine all that has been achieved. A positive momentum must be maintained, because no action is as bad as a negative action at this point. There must always be something new to drive toward for the first ten years so that it is still a challenge. Then, when a stable neighborhood has become a reality, and the exaggerations on its success are no longer necessary, neighborhoods such as West End can truly be called revived.

Conclusion

After looking back over the information collected, my initial reaction to the possibility of reapplication of the West End process to other inner city neighborhoods was negative. The possibility of the advantageous coincidences converging again were extremely unlikely. For there to be two Wade Burns was (thank God) impossible. For the West End to have become nationally prominent without these two things would have taken more luck than any neighborhood deserves.

But that does not mean the principles involved could not be utilized in developing a strategy for other areas.

Firstly, a project of this kind must incorporate both public and private organizations, and tap each for their resources. In today's economy, neither of these parties can overcome all the handicaps, but such a coalition is an unbeatable force. The governmental agencies do not have as realistic a grasp on the principles of investment and return and of profit and loss as the private sector. The private sector, on the other hand, is seldom as civic minded as a community needs it to be. Together, they have an efficient operation with their hearts in the right place.

Secondly, the goals of the project must be established, and the implementation of piecemeal regulations should not be allowed to hamper progress toward that end.

Thirdly, there must be a comprehensive knowledge of the area and its options, and a responsive ear for anything new that could be adopted for its use.

Fourthly, though the temptation to play "God" is there, and though the fewer people making key decisions the more efficient is an operation, it is critical that one work through existent neighborhood and government organizations whenever possible, to avoid future condemnations. But one must be so far ahead of their snail's pace and so well prepared

that all drive1 can be passed over and all of their major concerns already addressed before the questions can be asked.

Lastly, and most importantly, must be the complete abandonment of any negative thinking, and the adoption of a driving persistence in the work. These two things will carry one through when all previous strategies have failed.

APPENDIX A

This is a paper written on the application of the strategic planning method to overcome one of the major issues surrounding neighborhood revitalization, gentrification.

During the last 10 years, the city of Atlanta has been experiencing a shift in socioeconomic migration patterns. During this time period, 11 separate inner-city neighborhoods have seen an upswing in numbers of middle and upper income families and an overall decrease in population density for the first time since the improvement of transportation allowed wealthier residents to flee the city. This change has been attributed to fuel shortages and changes in family structure, with an increase in one person households and childless couples, both of which have dictated a change in the value system of the American homeowner.

The result of this "back to the city" migration has been the displacement of low-income, predominately non-white residents previously isolated here, unable, for a variety of reasons, to cope with the change. This has sparked a concern for both those displaced and their area of relocation, but no clear actions have been taken. The city government of Atlanta has taken a "wait and see" stance just

as most local city governments have, and in doing so, have reaped the benefits of the emigration.

Atlanta, in the last forty years, has become the provider of multiple public services while losing a large chunk of its tax base to the surrounding metropolitan area each year. This new influx of higher income people into a neighborhood previously 90% low income and 90% renters has helped to stall an inequitable relationship between the input and output of the city, an always impending disaster as illustrated by New York City in recent years. To any way impede the process of inner city revitalization might be cutting their own throat. Though their sympathies may lie with the displaced residents, to completely deter displacement to meet the needs of the poor is out of the question.

Ignoring the displaced families does not, however, make them disappear. As low cost housing stock is converted back to higher income dwellings and the number of homes and apartments within the lower price range dwindle, overcrowding becomes inevitable in whichever neighborhood or neighborhoods have the most reasonable rents. Increased costs for shelter heighten the economic problems of those families who had been just making ends meet. This economic displacement is, however, unavoidable because of the pattern of "peer" neighborhoods created by property tax increases, rising property values, and social pressure. Therefore, to completely ignore that many of the original residents will have to move, and that this move will

incur problems, is to ignore what this increased density will do to other neighborhoods, unready to deal with the mass immigration and also increase the money pinch on those least able to handle it.

It has become obvious that the complete freedom of letting nature take her course in the restoration areas is ultimately not to the advantage of the city. If it is not dealt with in the reviving neighborhood, it must be dealt with in the remnants of the now thriving area. To date, most cities have no policy on the displacement question, with the result being a white reclamation of the real estate. The pretense that long time residents are part of the work being done is only an excuse to not handle those left out. It has been calculated that a neighborhood can turn over in approximately three years. Without a strategic plan to include this phenomenon, soon any advantages that could be gotten from this change for the low income residents is lost, and the recipient area is already on its way to decay.

A 100% white restoration is less likely on the southside of Atlanta in the West End neighborhood that I will use as my example because of the negative attitude toward it held by most Atlantans, and the stigma connected to the black and poor sections there. In this section of the city, a strategic plan would need to include not only the residential neighborhoods, but be a comprehensive plan for the area. However, I will not deal with the overall problem in this paper.

GOAL: To overcome problems of gentrification during and subsequent to inner-city residential restoration.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

There are three different approaches open to city planners when dealing with the problems created by gentrification: 1) deterrence of restoration for the short term benefit of the low income residents regardless of the long term detriment to the city; 2) acceptance of the revitalization and stabilization of as many of the residents in the shortest time possible in reviving neighborhood and assistance to those displaced, and their destination; or 3) acceptance of the revitalization as inevitable and the end product being a middle to upper income neighborhood, so therefore directing all programs to the recipient neighborhoods having a short term negative effect on the poor, but should ultimately provide a better environment for them.

Each of these approaches has different subgoals to the stated goal, with widely discrepant ends and means. I will try to deal with each of them separately.

ALTERNATIVE 1: Deterrence of displacement

There is little chance that this alternative would ever be acted upon by a city government for the reasons stated earlier, but it could become necessary to implement such a program if the shortage of low cost housing becomes too severe for the city to deal with. It can

also be applied now, in an effort to stabilize neighborhoods revitalizing too quickly, or as an effort to maintain the mix.

Objectives, Programs and Policies

--Eliminate speculation.

To rid a neighborhood of speculators, you need only to remove the profit potential. Their purpose is to make money, not to destroy low cost housing. There is legislation being discussed now in several cities that would prohibit "flipping"; the quick turnover of property in a reviving neighborhood that allows easy profits to be made.

--Strengthen fairshare housing regulation for the neighborhood.

To receive federal money, it is necessary for a city to line up with established levels of low and moderate income housing. Perhaps the city could be split into neighborhoods, and each of these could be assigned individual percentages so that reviving neighborhoods would have to maintain a portion of the area for low cost housing.

--Establish a stronger political voice.

Politicians will respond first to the wishes of the rich, looking to invest money in their jurisdiction, unless they feel they have their position of power to lose in doing so. The poor of a reviving neighborhood must make their opinions widely and vocally known, raising not only the ire of their fellow residents, but that of other area groups throughout the city who could in some way be affected by the gentrification process. This, hopefully, will then

gain the support of the elected officials who will in turn pass legislation deterring the gentrification process.

--Reduce the number of houses on the market.

Increasing homeownership by lower income residents must be accompanied by large amounts of education, but basically the hope would be to get more of the ownership in the hands of someone with more than just a profit motive in control of what is done with the property. This could be done through mortgage subsidies, government loans to bypass the bank redlining, co-op ownership, redistribution of abandoned property quickly or information seminars on just basic home financing: the where and how of homeownership. It could also be made more profitable for absentee landlords to hold on to their property than to sell it by increasing the numbers of rent subsidies allowed.

In some more borderline areas, the mere restriction of low interest loans to moderate income levels would be enough to discourage some upper-income families who were swayed to the neighborhood because of the advantages of the financing.

ALTERNATIVE 2: Stabilization of a demographically mixed neighborhood.

I see this as the most attractive alternative presented in a restoration area, the reverse condition to the government trying to force integration in suburban communities. But to implement any workable policies, the government would need to be one jump ahead of even the

beginnings of a restoration movement. Not all families can be stabilized to get this mix of income groups, but it can be a number large enough to take some of the burden off of those who are displaced and the neighborhoods they flee to. Peer behavior patterns which will be transferred from a middle income homeowner to a first time lower income homeowner, even as simple as home maintenance or career expectations of children are invaluable in raising the quality of life, if not the standard of living. It is, of course, unlikely that any established levels of low and moderate income residents could be retained, even if a family could remain from the time the neighborhood was at its worst, through that time that it becomes a balanced income area, simply because of the high mobility rate in American families; moves oftentimes having nothing to do with the quality of the living conditions. Be it one year or fifteen years in the transformation, eventually the residents, because of property values, if nothing else, will become homogeneous.

Objectives, Programs and Policies

--Eliminate speculation.

Here, too, it is necessary to legislate against speculators, but since the trend back to the city is so accepted now, the time to get such laws on the books is the present. In this alternative, the city must stay "one step ahead of the bill collector."

--Increase homeownership by lower income residents.

When revitalization begins, the most likely to sell is an absentee

landlord. There is no recourse for the tenant, and the city has no control over what a landlord does with his property. This will be accomplished the same as in the deterrence alternative, but with more emphasis on the education end of it. With a complete turn around of a neighborhood possible in three years, there is no time to waste. Personalized assistance, wherever possible, is the most direct means to stabilizing a family, whereas mailings might never even be read. Backup programs must be pooled, and federal programs such as home improvement grants and loans paralleled to housing code inspections. Waiting until property values are on the upswing loses too much time and may make it already too late to inform inexperienced homeowners of the disadvantages of quick sell for apparent quick profit when dealing with residential real estate.

--Establishing community identity.

Low income neighborhoods tend to have a higher level of transience than the overall city, with average stays as short as nine months. With this length stay, few people build up any sort of identification with where they live, and thus no feeling of responsibility toward such things as school or crime problems develop. There must be a guided effort to establish a community feeling, either through community organizations, intramural sports, parades or whatever. There must be a reason for living there over anywhere else. Otherwise, there will be no built-in resistance to the displacement. How can you care about a neighbor put out of his apartment when you have never met more than ten people on your block? But, without that concern it could be you out in the street next month.

--Property tax legislation.

Again, even if a family has stuck out the restoration movement, there are small things that can drive him from the neighborhood. As property values increase around a longtime resident's home, though he may make no improvement, his property taxes go up. On a budget that is already stretched, an increase of three hundred dollars a year in taxes could put the house payment out of reach, and he may lose the house, after having stuck it out. Legislation to forbid the increase in property tax due to location until the house changes hands would permit a low-income resident to make improvements that he could afford to pay taxes on, without penalizing him for remaining in the neighborhood.

ALTERNATIVE 3: Focus expenditures on recipient neighborhood

There is the possibility that there is nothing one can do as a planner in a given city that could in any way affect the displacement which is occurring, due to basic city policies which discourage your dealing in issues of the private sector. Or that one accept that there is no hope for a stabilized community in ten years and, therefore, expenditures to a community already on its way up without your help would be wasteful, and therefore, one should concentrate his energies where they will in the end do the most good.

The money would be used to aid the displaced residents, a preparation of the recipient neighborhood for an increased population and the

construction of more low cost housing units to provide replacements for those being converted to upper income dwellings.

Objectives, Programs and Policies

--Information and assistance for relocating.

This is to make the change as easy as possible for the families who must find new places to live that still fill the needs as the neighborhood they must leave did. This would include apartment listings, grants and loans to cover first month's rent and deposits on utilities, help in moving, etc. It would need to become a very visible community agency, not only waiting to be called on to provide assistance, but to use community links to find people who could use the services they provide.

--Improvement of transportation, schools and public services in the recipient neighborhood.

The majority of the money should go to the recipient neighborhoods to help them cope with the increased population. The improved services would improve the quality of life where it is most needed, trying to provide transportation to jobs, parks and recreation activities, or whatever those who had been displaced had had to leave. Expenditures here would profit more people than if the money had been spent on a losing battle.

--Construction of more low cost housing

--Providing additional rent subsidies

This increased number of rent subsidies would then allow the displaced residents more options in choosing a new home, and thus build mixed demographic neighborhoods from the inside out.

REVISED ALTERNATIVE FOR THE WEST END

None of the pure approaches would be appropriate when applied to a real neighborhood. In the case of West End, five minutes from the center of the city, the time frame is longer, due to varying degrees of negative reaction to the entire southside of Atlanta, and the increased time it is taking to convince even inner-city enthusiasts of its potential has given the city government more time to react.

West End bottomed out in 1972, with one of the highest crime rates in the city, 90% rental, 90% low income, high percentage of transients, and a dismal school system, with the local high school on the verge of closing. It was at approximately this time that a resident of three years with knowledge in the areas of architecture and construction began putting together a proposal for the revitalization of the area. Three years later, with the financing finally in place, he purchased 25 houses. Utilizing Section 312 3% loan money, and with a local bank matching HUD dollar for dollar at 6%, he set about rebuilding 15 of the houses completely, and bringing the remainder up to, and beyond code requirements. The fifteen were sold at approximately \$70,000 (within 2% of cost), still four times the average cost of a house in the neighborhood though property values had gone

up 199% from the day that construction began. The remaining 10 he rented, and will sell when they are paid off in the mid-1980's. This is the only direct profit he will see from the three years of work.

West End has had no other speculators to this date, and there has been no mention of any in any other reviving communities throughout Atlanta.

Both Section 312 loans and CD loans are available in the neighborhood. There is a program in the works now that will promise rent subsidies until approval and incentives if a developer comes in and brings a unit up to code.

Without going into it all, the neighborhood is on a slow incline toward an economically mixed neighborhood.

It seems that the West End is ripe to be converted to a demographically mixed neighborhood. Displacement up until this point has not been great. Changes are occurring slowly enough to see what each of your policies is doing in the area. The housing stock is varied enough in character that, even though there are certain areas that go far beyond the means of a lower income family, houses in the next block are neither large enough nor original enough to bring in top dollar sale values.

The community organization, while not overwhelming, is growing stronger with each month, and has learned how to complain rather loudly to the correct people in the city government.

In this community, deterrence is too late. The process is underway. It can, however, be controlled.

First, property tax legislation must be enacted to protect long time residents. Second, information sources for both those ready to stay and become part of the restoration and for those ready to move on are hard to come by in the city area office. Personalization of assistance is as effective now as it was in the early days of bossism. Third, the overall coordination of city programs, so that problems are worked on with all the weapons available, all at once, rather than piecemeal would make each more effective, and avoid confusion which now is rampant between the administrative branches, each with an iron in the fire.

Last, there is needed political support from the top echelon of local government in the way of a southside policy statement which, while supporting the West End restoration because of its involvement of poorer residents, will at the same time include some economic statement of incentives for industry and business in that area which will provide jobs for those poorer residents who stay.

APPENDIX B

This is an example of the articles written on the West End. It was requested by a weekly newspaper in conjunction with a series of articles they were writing on the inner rejuvenation and written by Sheila Ochner.

The revitalization of the inner city rests on the ability of public and private concerns to reestablish the residential areas as stable, pleasant places to live. This requires not merely the rebuilding of the homes themselves, but the restoring of a sense of safety to the streets. This, in conjunction with the establishment of a pedestrian scale, develops the feeling of responsibility to the security cycle. Thus, one of the last hurdles of in-town neighborhood redevelopment is overcome, allowing the charm and advantages of close-in residential areas to predominate.

The West End Restoration Project's attempts to do this have met with great success. Mr. Wade D. Burns, the architect and developer of the project, moved into one of the houses in 1969, and soon after that began formulating the ideas which would eventually culminate in the rebuilding of a three block, fifty structure area. It took Mr. Burns five years to put together a design and financial package acceptable to the local Housing and Urban Development officials, supportive banks and residents. It included plans for rebuilding fifteen rental

properties into single family owner/occupant units, for rejuvenating ten other properties to make them visually compatible with the rebuilt houses and maintaining them as rental units, for giving architectural assistance to the owners of the remaining twenty-five structures, and for transferring the low interest rates used in construction to the purchasers as an additional incentive.

Prior to the beginning of the restoration the area was 90% low-income and 90% rental. The houses were one-third abandoned and one-third for sale. The crime rate was one of the highest in the city and the schools were headed for scheduled closings. The percentage of transients was high, with an average stay of 9 months. Since then all these trends have been reversed. The hope is for a demographically mixed neighborhood, with more stability and more resident concern. This will take major changes in the property tax legislation on one level, but, more importantly, it is taking a change in attitude on the part of both the city and the residents concerning the possibilities for the southside of Atlanta.

The dense urban setting still provides a greater range of possibilities than the suburbs of the large cities will ever be able to accumulate. In-town neighborhoods have the diversity and the convenience for which there is an ever-growing demand. The West End Restoration Project capitalizes on this demand by giving the residents the feeling of separateness from the noise and dirt of the city and of the luxury of owning their home and their own front sidewalk that many

fled to the suburbs for, and gives it to them five minutes from the center of the city.

The charm of the houses made them easily marketable in any area and the care taken in the design of the elements of the street provided a context which helped to override the initial hesitancy of prospective clients in this newly reviving neighborhood. It was this total impression that sold the houses in the end. Through the use of wrought iron fences, flagpoles, street lights, and trash receptacles combined with brick pillars and pavers, Mr. Burns, with the financial support of the City of Atlanta, was able to create a core for the reviving West End, a catalyst for the individual property owner. The cost to institute this core was minimal: street lights with a touch of style; sensitivity to the colors which would highlight the house and compliment the street. The fences established the demarcation line between private and public, yet their openness and the fluidity of design between house and street encourages the anonymous person-ability peculiar to an urban community.

The street became an enjoyable place to walk, with the equalization of priorities for the automobile and the pedestrian. As this pleasantness grows, activity on the sidewalks increase, reinforcing the initial goals of security and responsibility, and instigating a continuing growth of this feeling into the surrounding blocks.

APPENDIX C

This is an article requested by the mayor's office of economic opportunity and written by Wade Burns and Sheila Ochner.

1. MAINTAINING FINANCIAL SOLUBILITY

THE GOALS: --TO START A RECYCLING OF STRUCTURES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
--BALANCE DEMOGRAPHICS BY BRINGING MIDDLE AND UPPER INCOME INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
--ESTABLISH A SENSE OF PERMANENCE TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S FUTURE.
--INCLUDE LOW INCOME IN THE PROCESS BY STABILIZATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD INSTEAD OF RESIDENT DISPLACEMENT.
--ALL GEARED TOWARD BREAKING THE RED LINE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

THIS REQUIRED OVER-BUILDING THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO BREAK THE RED LINE BY STARTING A RECYCLING PROCESS.

MAXIMUM IMPACT WITH MINIMUM COST. WE USED A THREE BLOCK, FIFTY STRUCTURE AREA AS A CATALYST FOR REVITALIZATION. WEST END RESTORATION BOUGHT TWENTY FIVE STRUCTURES. FIFTEEN WERE TAKEN APART AND REBUILT AT A COST OF \$20/SQ.FT. COSTS WERE MINIMIZED BY ACTING AS OWNER, GENERAL CONTRACTOR, ARCHITECT AND BROKER. THESE RESOLD FOR APPROXIMATELY \$70,000. THE TEN ADDITIONAL HOUSES RECEIVED LESS EXPENSIVE COSMETIC IMPROVEMENTS TO BLEND WITH THE OTHERS. THE OWNERS OF THE

REMAINING TWENTY-FIVE HOUSES, SEEING THE RESULTS AT MINIMAL EXPENDITURE, TOOK THE INITIATIVE AND FOLLOWED THE EXAMPLE OF THOSE HOUSES ALREADY COMPLETE, MAKING THEIR HOMES VISUALLY COMPATIBLE AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE.

THE CITY OF ATLANTA AND THE UTILITY COMPANIES MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO WEST END BY INSTALLING UNDERGROUND UTILITIES, BRICK SIDEWALKS, "VICTORIAN" STREET LIGHTS, WROUGHT IRON TRASH RECEPTACLES AND TREE PROTECTORS AROUND NEW TREES AND FLAG POLES, COSTING A TOTAL OF \$350,000.

THEREFORE, YOU HAVE FIFTY VISUAL STRUCTURES FOR THE COST OF FIFTEEN PLUS.

THE SECOND STEP WAS IN MAKING THEM MARKETABLE.

THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, AN ATTRACTIVE FINANCIAL PACKAGE WAS PUT TOGETHER THAT WOULD OVERRIDE APPREHENSION OF THE AREA, INCLUDING A 4-3/4% INTEREST RATE ON MORTGAGE LOANS. SECOND, A POSITIVE MARKET MOMENTUM WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE INTEREST OF THE MEDIA. PUBLICITY CONCERNING THE UNUSUAL FINANCIAL POSSIBILITIES AND THE CHARM OF THE HOUSES THEMSELVES WAS WIDESPREAD. PEOPLE BECAME INTERESTED IN A NEIGHBORHOOD THAT COULD BE TURNED AROUND AFTER A FIFTY YEAR DECLINE AND THEN BECAME MORE THAN INTERESTED AS IT DEMONSTRATED ITS STABILITY.

2. IMPACT OF THE WEST END PROJECT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

PRIOR TO WEST END RESTORATION, 1/3 OF THE HOUSES IN WEST END WERE FOR SALE AND ANOTHER 1/3 WERE ABANDONED. THE CRIME RATE WAS HIGH. PROPERTY

VALUES HAD DROPPED STEADILY FOR FIFTY YEARS. NO YOUNG FAMILIES WERE MOVING IN. NO OWNER/OCCUPANTS WERE MOVING IN. STABLE LOW INCOME PEOPLE WERE MOVING OUT, LESS DESIRABLE AND MORE TRANSIENT PEOPLE WERE MOVING IN. SCHOOLS WERE DECLINING WITH SCHEDULED CLOSING.

SINCE WEST END RESTORATION BEGAN, ALL THESE THINGS HAVE BEEN REVERSED, INCLUDING THE FACT THAT IT NOW HAS ONE OF THE LOWEST CRIME RATES IN THE CITY.

BECAUSE OF THE POSITIVE DIRECTION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THIRTY ADDITIONAL FAMILIES HAVE PURCHASED OTHER HOUSES, MOVED IN AND ARE IN THE PROCESS OF RECYCLING THEM.

ACCORDING TO HUD DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FLEMMING, SUCCESS OF THE 312 PROGRAM IN WEST END HAS DIRECTLY INFLUENCED CONGRESS IN APPROPRIATING \$240 MILLION OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAM. ALSO, THE PROGRAM ITSELF IS BEING MODIFIED, PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF THE WORK DONE IN WEST END.

WEST END WAS INITIALLY PART OF THE DEFENSE FOR ATLANTA'S \$62 MILLION MORTGAGE CONSORTIUM.

WEST END HAS ALSO INFLUENCED MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE WHO, UPON SEEING WEST END MAY FEEL THEMSELVES NOT READY FOR THIS AREA, BUT, NOT DENYING WEST END'S STRENGTH AND INCREASING COMEBACK, BEGAN MOVING INTO ONE OF THE MORE MIDDLE CLASS DEVELOPMENTS, SUCH AS MIDTOWN, AS A MIDDLE OF THE ROAD MOVE. YOU MIGHT SAY THAT DUE TO SOME PEOPLE'S OWN

MISCONCEPTIONS WE PUT A CURVE IN THE SCALE AND BROUGHT PEOPLE OFF THE FENCE AND INTO OTHER INTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS.

3. DEVELOPMENT AROUND MARTA STATION AND ITS MARKETABILITY

THREE FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT: (1) AVAILABILITY OF LAND, (2) PROXIMITY TO TRANSPORTATION, AND (3) POSITIVE REAL ESTATE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE LAND.

WEST END HAS SUCH A PIECE OF LAND. THERE IS A 70 ACRE TRACT WHICH, BECAUSE OF THE ABOVE FACTORS, IS THE MOST DESIRABLE PIECE OF DEVELOPABLE REAL ESTATE THIS SIZE IN THE CITY. IN ITS CENTER IS A MAJOR MARTA STATION ON THE NORTH/SOUTH LINE WHERE IT INTERSECTS I-20 EAST/WEST, WITH SIX RAMPS MEETING THE MAIN SERVICE STREETS: GORDAN ST./GEORGIA AVE., ASHBY, LEE AND WHITEHALL/PEACHTREE STS., WITH I-75/85 NORTH/SOUTH ONLY 3/4 MILE AWAY ON SIX LANE GEORGIA AVE.

WEST END IS NOW, DUE TO THIS RESTORATION AND OTHER FACTORS, A REVIVING, EXCITING AREA, WITH REAL ESTATE VALUES ON THE INCREASE. THERE IS AN EXISTING MALL AND STABLE BANKS SURROUNDING THE 70 ACRES, AND A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE RESIDENTIAL SECTION. THE 70 ACRES, OWNED BY THE CITY, HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY STUDIED; THRU MARTA IMPACT STUDIES, ECONOMISTS, AND URBAN PLANNING TEAMS, INDICATING THE AREA CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING \$300-500 MILLION OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OVER A TEN TO FIFTEEN YEAR PLAN FOR HIGH DENSITY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

DEVELOPMENT, ITSELF, COULD PROCEED EASILY IN STAGES. FIFTEEN ACRES ARE AIR RIGHTS OVER THE STATION BETWEEN TWO LARGE TRACTS. THEY COULD BE HELD BY A DEVELOPER FOR A LOW OPTION FEE. THIRTY-EIGHT ACRES TO THE EAST OF THE STATION ARE CURRENTLY CHANDLER WAREHOUSES AND, SINCE FUNCTIONING WELL AND CARRYING ITSELF, COULD CONTINUE UNTIL THE DEVELOPER CONSIDERS IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO RAZE THE BUILDINGS AND GO IN WITH MAJOR NEW CONSTRUCTION. THE REMAINING 17 ACRES, LYING TO THE WEST OF THE STATION ARE THE KEY, AND MUST BE DEALT WITH FIRST. IT IS THE IMPORTANT PARCEL, BEING ADJACENT TO A RESTORING RESIDENTIAL SECTION, NEW SHOPPING MALL, THE I-20 ACCESS RAMPS AND THE FRONT DOOR OF THE MARTA STATION. WORK COULD PROCEED AS FOLLOWS:

--A SINGLE HIGHRISE OFFICE TOWER, WITH, TEMPORARILY, ONGRADE PARKING, COULD BE BUILT AND EASILY LEASED DUE TO ITS PROXIMITY TO THE STATION AND INTERSTATE RAMPS. IT COULD COMPETE BECAUSE LAND IS NOT THAT EXPENSIVE AND ONGRADE PARKING IS A POSSIBLE, ATTRACTIVE OPTION. IT WOULD BE ONLY THREE MINUTES ON MARTA FROM FIVE POINTS, AND SO IN COMPETITION WITH THE DOWNTOWN, BUT HAVING MORE MARKETABLE RENTS.

--ON LEASING THE FIRST 100,000 SQ. FT., THE DEVELOPER CAN JUSTIFY THE SECOND TOWER, AGAIN WITH ONGRADE PARKING, PERHAPS RESTAURANTS, AND GROUND-LEASE SHOPS COULD BE INCLUDED BECAUSE OF PROXIMITY TO THE MALL.

--THIS, IN TURN, COULD JUSTIFY A THIRD TOWER AND SOME PERMANENT DECKED PARKING, WITH PERHAPS THE CAREFUL ADDITION OF HOUSING AND CONDOMINIUMS.

THEN WITH MORE PARKING DECKED AND PEDESTRIAN PLAZAS, SHOPS, OFFICE SPACE, HOTEL, ETC., THE 17 ACRES HAVE PHASED FROM PERIMETER OFFICE PARK DEVELOPMENT COST, TO HIGH DENSITY URBAN DEVELOPMENT YIELD, WITH LEASED AS DEVELOPED SPACE IN EXCESS OF \$80 MILLION.

--ONCE DEVELOPMENT ON THIS TRACT OF LAND IS MATURE, INCLUDING ACQUIRING ALL THE LAND TO GORDAN ST., SOME 25 ACRES TOTAL, THEN THE STEP CAN BE MADE TO CROSS THE MARTA STATION BY USE OF ALREADY EXISTING PEDESTRIAN RAMPS INCLUDED IN THE DESIGN OF THE MARTA STATION AND BEGIN ON THE HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT TO THE EAST.

--THE 38 ACRES WOULD DEVELOP BY PHASES AND STAGES UNTIL IT MATURED, WHEREUPON THE AIR RIGHTS COULD BE BRIDGED AND DEVELOPED ABOVE THE STATION.

70 ACRES THEN DEVELOPED ARE AT APPROXIMATELY \$400-500 MILLION.

THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THEN OF GROWTH FROM THE 70 ACRES EAST, TO THE STADIUM AND NORTH TO OMNI. THIS 70 ACRE SITE IS NO FARTHER FROM FIVE POINTS THAN THE LIFE OF GEORGIA TOWER. WITH THIS NODAL DEVELOPMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON LAND CONNECTING TO THE CBD, ONE WILL HAVE CHANGED ATLANTA'S MIND ABOUT ITS SOUTHSIDE. IT BECOMES EQUAL TO THE NORTH AND A COMPETITIVE BALANCE IS ACHIEVED.

THOSE WHO THINK THIS LEVEL OF WHITE COLLAR DEVELOPMENT COULD NOT TAKE PLACE ON ATLANTA'S SOUTHSIDE, OR WHO THINK THE SOUTHSIDE OF ATLANTA, BECAUSE OF ITS PREDOMINANCE OF LOWER INCOME OR BLACK POPULATION OR LACK OF POSITIVE REAL ESTATE MOMENTUM CANNOT COMPETE ECONOMICALLY OR SOCIALLY WITH THE NORTHSIDE, PROBABLY ARE AMONG THOSE THAT THOUGHT WEST END WOULD NOT BE A REVIVING NEIGHBORHOOD NOW. THANK GOODNESS THAT OPINION WAS NOT UNANIMOUS.

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Abstract

INNER-CITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION: THE WEST END

by

Sheila B. Ochner

Thesis submitted to the graduate faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

in

Architecture and Urban Design

This article is concerned with the reapplication of procedures used by Mr. Wade D. Burns in his West End Restoration Project in other inner-city reviving and borderline neighborhoods.

Besides a basic historical account, it includes an article written by Sheila Ochner about West End for publication, a descriptive outline requested by the mayor's office and a paper dealing with gentrification, a controversial evolution brought on by the revitalization process.