

POLICY PAPER ON NEIGHBORHOODS
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER CHARLES JORDAN

INTRODUCTION

THE KEY TO BRINGING THE CITIES BACK TO LIFE IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD. IT IS NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH DECAY OR REGENERATE, AND THEREBY DETERMINE THE HEALTH OF THE CITY AS A WHOLE. MOST CITY LIFE IS ACTUALLY LIVED AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL, AND IT IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD OVER WHICH INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS CAN BEGIN TO EXERCISE CONTROL.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD GROWTH AND WELL-BEING AS AN IMPORTANT GOAL. IN PARTICULAR, GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF PROGRAMS WHICH IMPROVE A NEIGHBORHOOD'S PHYSICAL WELL-BEING, HELP CITIZENS HAVE A SAY IN WHAT HAPPENS IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND WHICH MAKE NEIGHBORHOODS ATTRACTIVE AND VITAL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS.

IN LATE FEBRUARY 1977, I WAS APPOINTED COMMISSIONER-IN-CHARGE OF THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS, THE BUREAU OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT, AND THE POLICE BUREAU, WHILE RETAINING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE METROPOLITAN HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION AND THE RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY LICENSING BOARD. THIS HAS GIVEN ME A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT SOME OF MY IDEAS ABOUT FOCUSING ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS THE STARTING POINT FOR URBAN REVITALIZATION.

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IN RECENT MONTHS I HAVE INITIATED SEVERAL PROJECTS AND POLICY CHANGES INTENDED TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. THESE INCLUDE:

- AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS INDICATOR SYSTEM THAT WILL RESULT IN "NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY PROFILES". SUCH PROFILES COULD PROVE OF GREAT UTILITY BOTH TO INDIVIDUAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND TO THE CITY.
- A STUDY OF THE NEED FOR AND FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A CITY-WIDE CITIZENS' "ACTION LINE" THROUGH WHICH RESIDENTS CAN CHANNEL THEIR INQUIRIES, CONCERNS AND/REQUESTS FOR SERVICE.
- THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CRIME PREVENTION PLAN, NOW BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE CRIME PREVENTION DIVISION OF THE POLICE BUREAU. THE PLAN EMPHASIZES CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN DEVISING CRIME PREVENTION OBJECTIVES AND METHODS THAT ARE TAILORED TO NEIGHBORHOODS.
- THE CONTINUATION OF AN ATTEMPT TO FIT SOCIAL IMPACT STANDARDS INTO LAND-USE PLANNING DECISIONS, WHICH ARE OFTEN MADE WITHOUT REGARD TO THEIR EFFECT ON NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THEM.
- A STUDY OF THE NEED FOR AND FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A CITY-WIDE CITIZENS' "ACTION LINE" THROUGH WHICH RESIDENTS CAN CHANNEL THEIR INQUIRIES, CONCERNS AND REQUESTS FOR SERVICE.

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RELATED TO THESE SPECIAL PROJECTS ARE NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING AGENCIES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS WILL INCREASINGLY FOCUS ON ASSISTING GRASS ROOTS, BLOCK LEVEL ORGANIZING. THE BUREAU OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT IS INITIATING PROGRAMS FOR WORKING MORE CLOSELY WITH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS TO INCREASE VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CODES. THE METROPOLITAN HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION IS DEVELOPING A PROGRAM FOR THE MEDIATION OF NEIGHBOR-TO-NEIGHBOR CONFLICTS THAT WILL RELY ON NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEERS.

THESE PROJECTS AND POLICY CHANGES HAVE BEEN INITIATED WITHIN A CONTEXT OF CONCERN FOR THE HEALTH OF NEIGHBORHOODS, A CONCERN SHARED BY MANY RESIDENTS OF OUR CITY, AND BY THE ENTIRE CITY COUNCIL. FOR EXAMPLE, RECENT PROGRAMS INITIATED OR SUPPORTED BY THE COUNCIL HAVE RESULTED IN THE UPGRADING OF STREET AND SEWER SYSTEMS, THE DESIGNATION OF SELECTED NEIGHBORHOODS AS HISTORIC CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, THE CREATION OF A FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOUSING, AND ZONING CODES DESIGNED TO STABILIZE NEIGHBORHOODS COMPOSED OF SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLINGS.

IT IS APPROPRIATE TO ASK HOW ALL THESE PROJECTS FIT TOGETHER. DO THEY FORM PARTS OF AN INTEGRATED WHOLE, A STRATEGY TO REVITALIZE THE CITY THROUGH ATTENTION TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS, OR ARE THEY UNCONNECTED, PERHAPS CONFLICTING PIECES?

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I VIEW THESE VARIOUS EFFORTS AS AN INTEGRATED WHOLE. IN PARTICULAR, THE SPECIAL PROJECTS WHICH I HAVE INITIATED STEM FROM A PARTICULAR VIEWPOINT ON NEIGHBORHOODS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO PRESENT THAT VIEWPOINT, AND TO EXPLAIN IN MORE DETAIL THE SPECIAL PROJECTS MENTIONED ABOVE.

GENERAL VIEWPOINT

THE REASONS BEHIND THE TREND TO CONSIDER THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS THE ULTIMATE UNIT OF URBAN HEALTH ARE COMPLEX, BUT THE FOCUS OF CURRENT STRATEGIES ARISE FROM THREE INTERRELATED CONCEPTS: NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, AND NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY.

NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY IS NOT A NEW CONCEPT. FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD TO BE AN ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE PLACE TO LIVE, IT MUST HAVE A MINIMUM LEVEL OF PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING. A RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD SHOWS EVIDENCE OF DECLINE: ABANDONED AUTOS, DETERIORATING HOUSES, UNKEMPT SHRUBBERY. MOREOVER, RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOODS ARE FREQUENTLY CENTERS OF HIGH RATES OF CRIME. SO THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH OF A NEIGHBORHOOD IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS A PREREQUISITE OF A NEIGHBORHOOD'S ATTRACTIVENESS.

THE CITY'S INTEREST IN NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY IS REFLECTED IN SUCH PROJECTS AS ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF UNION AVENUE AND OTHER AREAS OF NORTHEAST AND NORTH PORTLAND AND IN THE BASIC SERVICES PROVIDED TO NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH THE BUREAU

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OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT. ON UNION AVENUE, IN PARTICULAR, THE CITY CO-SPONSORED A UNIQUE PROGRAM WHICH INVOLVED APPLYING PHYSICAL PLANNING TECHNIQUES TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT TO BOTH IMPROVE THE AREA'S ATTRACTIVENESS AND TO REDUCE CRIME.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, ESPECIALLY ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL, IS A SECOND STRATEGY WHICH HAS BEEN USED TO REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOODS. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IS TO BE ENCOURAGED BECAUSE IT IS CONSISTENT WITH DEMOCRATIC VALUES: CITIZENS HAVE A RIGHT TO EXERCISE CONTROL OVER THE OFTEN IMPERSONAL CITY BUREAUCRACIES WHICH MAY INFLUENCE THEIR LIVES AND OVER THOSE WHO MAKE CITY POLICY. IT IS PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE TO EMPHASIZE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL, BECAUSE THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AS THE CENTER OF DAILY LIVING, IS THE PLACE TO WHICH MOST CITIZENS HAVE STRONG TIES. ALSO, LOCAL PROBLEMS ARE ONES WHICH ARE BOTH FELT MOST URGENTLY BY LOCAL PEOPLE AND ARE OFTEN MOST AMENABLE TO LOCAL SOLUTIONS.

THE CITY'S CURRENT EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ORIGINATE CHIEFLY FROM THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. THIS OFFICE PROVIDES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FLEDGLING AND ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS TO ENABLE THEM TO PRESENT THE CONCERNS AND NEEDS OF THEIR PARTICULAR NEIGHBORHOODS TO CITY GOVERNMENT IN ORGANIZED WAY. THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS, ASSISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE COMPILATION OF "NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS REPORTS"

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WHICH CATALOGUE THE IMPROVEMENTS WHICH CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS REQUIRE, AND WHICH CAN BE PROVIDED BY CITY AGENCIES.

THE THIRD CONCEPT WHICH HAS INFLUENCED NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED STRATEGIES OF REVITALIZATION IS NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY. DIVERSITY IS COMING TO BE RECOGNIZED AS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE OF NEIGHBORHOOD VITALITY. THIS FOLLOWS IN PART FROM INDICATIONS THAT THE TREND TOWARD SUBURBANIZATION OF THE PAST THREE DECADES MAY BE ABATING. WE ARE SEEING INCREASING NUMBERS OF YOUNGER, MORE AFFLUENT PEOPLE MOVING BACK INTO THE CITIES, OR OPTING TO REFURBISH INNER-CITY HOMES RATHER THAN ESTABLISH HOUSEHOLDS IN THE SUBURBS.

THIS IS A TREND WHICH MUST BE ENCOURAGED. IT CAN BRING WITH IT BOTH THE BENEFITS OF REFURBISHED NEIGHBORHOODS AND A GREATER TAX BASE. JUST AS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, WE MUST BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL DISADVANTAGES OF A MOVEMENT BACK INTO THE CITY; NAMELY A LOSS OF DIVERSITY AS POORER PEOPLE ARE DISPLACED, PRICED OUT OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS AND FORCED TO CONCENTRATE IN LESS DESIRABLE AREAS.

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT A MOVEMENT BACK INTO THE CITY IS BEGINNING TO OCCUR IN PORTLAND, THOUGH IT IS PROBABLY NOT AS ADVANCED AS IT IS IN THE LARGE EASTERN CITIES. THIS IS ENOUGH REASON, THOUGH, TO ANTICIPATE SOME OF THE POSSIBLE HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A MOVEMENT. IN PARTICULAR, IT IS NOT TOO EARLY TO TAKE STEPS NOW TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY--A MIXTURE OF PEOPLE

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OF ALL DIFFERENT INCOMES, RACES, AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS, RESIDING IN ONE NEIGHBORHOOD--BY DISCOURAGING THE HOMOGENIZING OF NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH ARE ALREADY DIVERSE, AND BY UNDERTAKING REBUILDING PROJECTS IN NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH WILL ENHANCE DIVERSITY.

IT MAY WELL BE ASKED WHY DIVERSITY IS ITSELF A VALUE WORTH PROTECTING. FOR ONE THING, ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY MUST FRANKLY BE SEEN AS A WAY TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF LOW INCOME GROUPS IN A MORE HUMANE AND SOCIALLY BENEFICIAL WAY. IT IS CERTAINLY MORE HUMANE TO ALLOW LOW INCOME INDIVIDUALS TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES AND NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THEY HAVE LONG RESIDED, THAN TO FORCE THEM OUT INTO STRANGE NEIGHBORHOODS AND INADEQUATE ACCOMODATIONS. IT IS OFTEN LESS EXPENSIVE, AS WELL, TO MAINTAIN A LOW INCOME INDIVIDUAL IN HIS OR HER HOME THAN TO BUILD HOUSING PROJECTS. FINALLY, A DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOOD OFTEN HAS CULTURAL ADVANTAGES WHICH IMPROVE AND ENHANCE ITS DESIRABILITY AS A PLACE TO LIVE.

THESE THREE ELEMENTS--DIVERSITY, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, AND LIVABILITY--CAN TOGETHER FORM A BASIS FOR A STRATEGY TO REVITALIZE THE CITY. THOUGH PORTLAND'S PROBLEMS ARE NOT AS SERIOUS AS THOSE SUFFERED BY LARGER METROPOLITAN AREAS, THE PROCESSES OF DECAY, OF LOSS OF DIVERSITY, AND OF THE POSSIBILITY OF PUSHING THE POOR OUT OF THE CITY AS THE AFFLUENT RETURN, ARE PROBLEMS WE FACE HERE, TOO. WE HAVE BEGUN A STRONG PROGRAM TO ENSURE PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL. THE ELEMENT WHICH HAS NOT RECEIVED MUCH ATTENTION SO FAR IS THE NEED FOR DIVERSITY

THIS, THEN, IS THE FRAMEWORK OF IDEAS WITHIN WHICH I AM WORKING. IN THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS, I WILL ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THE CURRENT EFFORTS WHICH ARE BEING MADE TO MAKE NEIGHBORHOODS BETTER PLACES TO LIVE, AND WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN HOW THESE EFFORTS RELATE BACK TO THE GENERAL STRATEGY I HAVE OUTLINED.

NEIGHBORHOOD REBUILDING EFFORTS

THIS SECTION DESCRIBES IN DETAIL THE PARTICULAR NEIGHBORHOOD REBUILDING EFFORTS WHICH MY OFFICE HAS INITIATED.

1) NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY PROJECT

EARLY IN 1977 IT BECAME APPARENT THAT PORTLAND NEEDED A TOOL TO MEASURE LIVABILITY IN NEIGHBORHOODS, A SYSTEM WHICH WOULD ANSWER THE QUESTION "ARE WE WINNING THE WAR?" IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY. THE NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY SPECIAL PROJECT IS ATTEMPTING TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, BY DESIGNING SUCH A SYSTEM AND TESTING IT IN THREE PILOT NEIGHBORHOODS.

AFTER AN INITIAL CITY-WIDE TELEPHONE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED, RATING CONDITIONS OF LIVABILITY IN ORDER OF PRIORITY, THE PROJECT BEGAN COMPILING AND TESTING THE FOUR-PRONGED INDICATOR SYSTEM, WHICH BALANCES:

1. CENSUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA.
2. RELEVANT BUREAU DATA, SUCH AS COMPLAINTS AND CITATIONS.
3. FIELD INSPECTION DATA.
4. CITIZEN ATTITUDES REGARDING SERVICE DELIVERY AND THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

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THIS INFORMATION WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO A PROFILE FOR EACH NEIGHBORHOOD, PROVIDING A PRIMARY SOURCE OF COMPARABLY DETAILED DATA. CONDITIONS INCLUDE:

FEELINGS OF SAFETY	STREETS	ABANDONED AUTOS
SANITARY CONDITIONS	YARDS	PARKING
TRAFFIC	NOISE	DOGS
SENSE OF COMMUNITY	DEBRIS	PARKS
HOUSING		

AFTER THE PILOT STUDY IS COMPLETED, THE PROJECT WILL MAKE A SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL AS TO THE NEED FOR AND FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING SUCH A SYSTEM. THIS REPORT IS EXPECTED IN JUNE OF 1978.

2) CITIZEN ACTION LINE

IN JUNE 1977, I INITIATED A STUDY OF THE RESOURCES WHICH THE CITY CURRENTLY DEVOTES TO RECEIVING CITIZEN REQUESTS FOR SERVICES AND CHANNELING THEM TO THE CORRECT AGENCY FOR PROMPT ACTION. THE STUDY, WHICH WAS COMPLETED IN NOVEMBER, FOUND THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR UPGRADING THESE RESOURCES, BOTH THROUGH IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND EQUIPMENT IN VARIOUS AGENCIES ALREADY DEVOTED TO THIS SERVICE, AND POSSIBLY THROUGH ESTABLISHING A CITY-WIDE, CENTRALLY MANAGED SERVICE, OR "CITIZEN ACTION LINE", FOR RECEIVING AND CHANNELING CITIZEN CALLS.

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A NEED FOR SUCH A SERVICE WAS EXPRESSED BOTH BY CITY AGENCIES THEMSELVES, WHICH OFTEN ARE ILL-EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THEIR CURRENT VOLUME OF CITIZEN CALLS AND TO CHANNEL THE CALLS TO THE APPROPRIATE AGENCY, AND FROM CITIZENS, WHO OFTEN EXPERIENCE FRUSTRATION IN BEING SHUNTED FROM ONE AGENCY TO ANOTHER IN ATTEMPTING TO GET THEIR CONCERNS ADDRESSED.

A CENTRALIZED ACTION LINE, OR A SERVICE WHICH WOULD PERFORM THE SAME FUNCTION, WOULD BE DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL TO THE HEALTH OF NEIGHBORHOODS. SOME FORMS OF PHYSICAL NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, MUST BE PROMPTLY HANDLED. ALSO, IF CITIZENS KNOW THAT THEY CAN GET FAST SERVICE IN RESPONSE TO THEIR PROBLEMS, AND KNOW WHOM TO CONTACT TO GET IT, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO CALL FOR HELP IN THE FIRST PLACE.

MY STAFF IS CURRENTLY STUDYING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORTS, TO DETERMINE WHICH STEPS ARE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME TO IMPROVE CITIZEN ACCESS TO CITY SERVICE AGENCIES.

3) CRIME PREVENTION PLAN

THE NEW CRIME PREVENTION PLAN WHICH I HAVE RECENTLY IMPLEMENTED HIGHLIGHTS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD BASED PLANNING IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

FIRST, CRIME PREVENTION PLANS ARE DEVELOPED FOR EACH PRECINCT BASED ON THE NEEDS OF THE CONSTITUENT NEIGHBORHOODS. THIS

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ALLOWS A GOOD DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY IN EMPLOYING THE VARIOUS CRIME PREVENTION TOOLS WHICH HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO BE RELATIVELY EFFECTIVE.

SECOND, PLANS ARE DEVELOPED WITH SUBSTANTIAL CITIZEN GUIDANCE. THE LOCAL PRECINCT COUNCILS, COMPOSED OF CITIZENS WHO RESIDE OR WORK WITHIN THE PRECINCT, ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING THE CRIME PREVENTION PLAN AND DO THE ACTUAL WORK OF DRAFTING IT. AFTER APPROVAL FROM THE PRECINCT COMMANDER, THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED BY PRECINCT CRIME PREVENTION PERSONNEL, WITH THE HELP OF VOLUNTEERS.

OTHER METHODS FOR BRINGING CRIME PREVENTION ACTIVITIES AND PLANNING CLOSER TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD INCLUDE MAKING CRIME PREVENTION TECHNIQUES AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNERS. THIS WILL BE DONE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRECINCT LEVEL CRIME PREVENTION PLANS.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT ON CRIME PREVENTION PLANNING FOR THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS CAN IMPROVE BOTH THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS, BY GETTING CITIZENS TO BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME AND TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT IT, AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, BY MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER PLACES TO BE.

4) SOCIAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

TOO OFTEN PHYSICAL PLANNING DECISIONS ARE MADE WHICH DO NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE DECISIONS. AN INSTRUCTIVE, AND PAINFUL, EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE DEMOLITION OF THE BLUE MOUSE BLOCK, WHICH DEPRIVED MANY DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS OF AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL CENTER. I DOUBT WHETHER I WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED THE DEMOLITION IF BETTER INFORMATION ON THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE MOVE HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE. THOUGHTLESS PHYSICAL PLANNING PROJECTS CAN DESTROY NEIGHBORHOODS IF THEY ARE MADE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEPING NEIGHBORHOODS HEALTHY. I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO INFORM MY OWN DECISION-MAKING ON PHYSICAL PLANNING WITH A CONSIDERATION OF SUCH IMPACTS. BUT I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE SUCH CONSIDERATIONS BE USED IN THE PLANNING FOR PHYSICAL CHANGE WHICH GOES ON IN OTHER CITY AGENCIES, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE CITY COMES TO GRIPS WITH THE PROBLEM OF PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY.

TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF THIS, I RECENTLY FORMED A SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE 1) WHAT SOCIAL IMPACTS OUGHT TO BE CONSISTENTLY CONSIDERED IN PLANNING FOR PHYSICAL CHANGE, AND 2) A MECHANISM BY WHICH SUCH IMPACTS CAN BE CONSIDERED. THE COMMITTEE HAS REPORTED BACK WITH A LIST AND DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT SOCIAL IMPACT CONSIDERATION WITH PHYSICAL PLANNING.

OBVIOUSLY, THIS IS ONLY A FIRST STEP. THE FRUITS OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK MUST BE FULLY INTEGRATED WITH THE CITY'S PHYSICAL PLANNING PROCESSES. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE THROUGH A COOPERATIVE EFFORT ON THE PART OF THOSE INVOLVED IN PHYSICAL PLANNING AND THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF PLANNING. WORK ON THIS HAS BEGUN, BUT IT IS FAR FROM COMPLETED.

5) CODE ENFORCEMENT PROJECT

THE LIVABILITY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD DEPENDS ON A CERTAIN LEVEL OF PHYSICAL AS WELL AS SOCIAL WELL-BEING. THE CITY CURRENTLY HAS A NUMBER OF CODES WHICH PROHIBIT VARIOUS FORMS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL BLIGHT, SUCH AS JUNKED AUTOS, EXCESSIVE NOISE, DEBRIS, OVERGROWN LAWNS, AND EXCESSIVE PROPERTY DETERIORATION.

THE BUREAU OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT AND THE BUREAU OF BUILDINGS ARE AMONG THE AGENCIES CHARGED WITH ENFORCING THESE CODES. THE CODE ENFORCEMENT PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST THEM IN THEIR MISSIONS. THE PROJECT WILL, IN PARTICULAR, FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- A) IMPROVING THE ABILITY OF INSPECTORS OF VARIOUS DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS TO COORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS AND TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS.

- b) DEVELOPING AN IMPROVED METHOD OF HANDLING THE LEGAL ASPECT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT, WHICH CONCERNS THE PROCESS OF ENFORCING CODE COMPLIANCE WHERE VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE HAS NOT BEEN OBTAINED. ONE IDEA THAT WILL BE LOOKED AT IN PARTICULAR IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS PROCESS FOR THE RESOLUTION OF CERTAIN KINDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN A JUST AND FAIR MANNER.
- c) IDENTIFYING PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY IN CODE ENFORCEMENT DIFFICULTIES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

6) POLICY DIRECTIONS IN NEIGHBORHOOD SERVING AGENCIES

THE NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING AGENCIES UNDER MY DIRECTION HAVE TAKEN A NUMBER OF CONCRETE STEPS TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY. THOSE STEPS, AS WILL BE OBVIOUS, EMPHASIZE THE INTERRELATION OF THESE THREE CONCEPTS.

a) BUREAU OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT (BNE)

THE BUREAU IS ATTEMPTING TO BRING NEIGHBORHOODS CLOSER TO THE CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS BY INCREASING ITS EMPHASIS ON VOLUNTARY CITIZEN COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CODES. THIS ENTAILS A PROGRAM OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND WORKING WITH LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. TO ENHANCE THIS EFFORT, BNE HAS BEGUN COLLECTING ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTION DATA BY NEIGHBORHOODS, INSTEAD OF BY LARGER GEOGRAPHICAL UNITS, AND WILL SOON INITIATE A SERIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS SESSIONS.

b) METROPOLITAN HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (MHRC)

THE MHRC HAS INSTITUTED A NEW EFFORT TO APPLY THE SKILLS OF A TRAINED MEDIATOR TO NEIGHBORHOOD CONFLICTS. AT PRESENT, CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS OFTEN PERFORMED BY POLICE OFFICERS. WHILE THIS IS USEFUL AND SOMETIMES NECESSARY, CERTAIN KINDS OF NEIGHBORHOOD CONFLICTS CAN BE BETTER HANDLED BY A MEDIATOR WHO IS PERCEIVED BY CONFLICT PARTICIPANTS AS RELATIVELY "NEUTRAL". PERSON TO PERSON QUARRELS ARE EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY AMENABLE TO NEUTRAL MEDIATORS. THE MHRC IS ALSO CONDUCTING A CITY-WIDE SURVEY OF HOUSING PRACTICES TO DETERMINE THE DEGREE OF RACIAL AND SEX DISCRIMINATION IN THE SELLING AND RENTING OF HOUSES. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IS PERHAPS THE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO BUILDING AND MAINTAINING DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS.

c) OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS (ONA)

IN THE COMING YEAR, THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS WILL ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THE DEGREE OF LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS BY ENCOURAGING AND ASSISTING LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ENGAGE IN BLOCK BY BLOCK, OR SECTION BY SECTION, GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING. THIS EFFORT IS INTENDED TO RELIEVE THE IMBALANCES WHICH OCCUR WHEN ONLY A FEW ACTIVE CITIZENS DO MOST OF THE

DECISION-MAKING IN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. THE HOPED-FOR RESULT OF GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING IS TO MAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS MORE BROADLY BASED, AND TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH WOULD BE INVALUABLE IN DEALING WITH AND SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS.

- D) RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY LICENSING BOARD (RCF)
- THE WAY IN WHICH THE RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES LICENSING PROCESS IS CONDUCTED HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF NEIGHBORHOODS. THE CURRENT PROCESS IS A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT DECISIONS. AN RCF IS SUBJECT TO NEIGHBORHOOD REVIEW, IN SEPARATE PUBLIC HEARINGS, OF BOTH THE QUALITY OF ITS PROGRAM AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF ITS SITE. THE REVIEW PROCESS IS DESIGNED TO INSURE THE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF AFFECTED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, INCLUDING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. THE POLICY GUIDANCE PROVIDED BY MY OFFICE TO THE RCF COORDINATOR ASSURES THAT THE RCF LICENSING PROCESS WORKS IN HARMONY WITH OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS.

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MISSING, HOWEVER, ARE PROGRAMS FOR THE FUTURE WHICH EXPLICITLY ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY. THE LOSS OF NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY WHICH OCCURS WHEN THE AFFLUENT RETURN TO THE CITY AND FORCE OUT THE POOR AND ELDERLY IS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON WHICH HAS YET TO STRIKE PORTLAND IN FULL FORCE. IT IS NOT TOO EARLY, HOWEVER, TO BEGIN TO PLAN FOR AVOIDING SOME OF ITS DELETERIOUS EFFECTS.

THERE ARE SEVERAL STEPS WHICH AT LEAST BEGIN TO BRING THE PROBLEM OF LOSS OF DIVERSITY INTO FOCUS. FIRST, THE MHRC PLANS TO LAUNCH A NEW EFFORT TO MAKE ITS ACTIVITIES KNOWN. BY DESCRIBING ITS WORK TO BRING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION TO LIGHT, AND RESOLVE NEIGHBORHOOD CONFLICTS USING CONCILIATORY, PERSON TO PERSON TECHNIQUES, THE CITIZENS OF PORTLAND WILL BECOME MORE AWARE THAT MAINTAINING NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY IS A PROBLEM WHICH NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.

A SECOND STEP WHICH CAN PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CORPORATIONS (CDC'S). THESE ARE CORPORATE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE CREATED, OWNED AND MANAGED BY NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS. SOME OF PORTLAND'S ASSOCIATIONS HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST STEPS BY INCORPORATING THEIR ASSOCIATIONS AS NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS. THEY HOLD CONTRACTS FOR THE PROVIDING OF SERVICES IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, AND SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY. THEY CAN BE FURTHER DEVELOPED TO PRODUCE OR PROVIDE GOODS OR OTHER SERVICES WHICH THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS IDENTIFIED AS NEEDED FOR ITS RESIDENTS.

FUTURE STEPS

THE PROGRAMS I HAVE DESCRIBED ARE INTENDED TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL QUALITY OF PORTLAND'S NEIGHBORHOODS AND TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS OF NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH INCREASING THE ABILITY OF CITIZENS TO CONTROL WHAT HAPPENS IN THE PLACES WHERE THEY LIVE. IN ADDITION, MANY OF THE POLICY DIRECTIONS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE ADDRESS THESE TWO AREAS.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE BUREAU OF NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT IS INITIATING A FEDERALLY-FUNDED CITIZEN EDUCATION PROJECT, IN ORDER TO CREATE A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CODES WHICH THE BNE ENFORCES. THE PROJECT WOULD DEVELOP BROCHURES AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ON THE TOPICS OF NOISE CONTROL, NEIGHBORHOOD UPKEEP, VEHICLE PROBLEMS, AND CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES.

THERE ALSO HAS BEEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE, AN EFFORT TO CLOSELY COORDINATE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AGENCIES UNDER MY DIRECTION. AT PRESENT THE BNE, THE RCF BOARD, THE MHRC, AND THE ONA ARE COORDINATED ON THE STAFF LEVEL FROM MY OFFICE. I WILL BE GIVING THOUGHT TO WAYS IN WHICH THESE AGENCIES CAN BE MORE CLOSELY INTEGRATED. HOWEVER, I WILL OPPOSE ANY REORGANIZATION SCHEME WHICH WOULD BLUR OR DESTROY THE DISTINCT IDENTITIES OF THESE AGENCIES, EACH OF WHICH PERFORM UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS.

SO FAR, MOST OF THE IDEAS AND PROGRAMS DISCUSSED FOCUS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS, AND ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.

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THE CDC CAN DEVELOP CREDIT UNIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, OR CAN ENGAGE IN A LOCALLY BASED PROFIT MAKING OPERATION.

A CDC PROMOTES DIVERSITY BECAUSE, AS IT GIVES A NEIGHBORHOOD AN INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC BASE, IT THEREBY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE OF ALL INCOME LEVELS TO REMAIN IN A NEIGHBORHOOD. THE CDC IS A RELATIVELY UNTRIED IDEA WHICH HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL FOR RESTORING A MEASURE OF REAL POWER TO NEIGHBORHOODS AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE. IT IS AN IDEA WHICH I WILL BE EXPLORING IN THE NEXT YEAR TO DETERMINE ITS POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO PORTLAND'S NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS.

FINALLY, A CONCERN FOR PRESERVING NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY CAN BECOME A COMPONENT OF THE PLANNING DECISIONS WHICH THE CITY MAKES EVERY DAY, IF THE NEED FOR DIVERSITY CAN BE BROUGHT TO AWARENESS. THE ENHANCEMENT OF DIVERSITY WILL BECOME PART OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT CRITERIA WHICH I WILL USE IN MY REVIEW OF ALL CITY PROJECTS WHICH AFFECT NEIGHBORHOODS. THROUGH PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND APPROPRIATE PLANNING METHODS, DIVERSITY WILL BECOME A FACTOR IN THE HEALTH OF NEIGHBORHOODS AND OF THE CITY WHICH CANNOT BE IGNORED.

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