

## **Post-Riot Redevelopment Efforts in the 14th Street Corridor of Washington, DC**

In April 1968, after the murder of Martin Luther King, several DC neighborhoods were engulfed in riots that lasted four days. A number of people were killed and hundreds of buildings, both residential and commercial, were damaged or destroyed. Three of the areas most heavily affected were centered on the commercial districts of the 14th Street and 7th Street NW corridors and the H Street NE corridor. Many promises were made by government officials in the days and months after the riots that the areas would be rebuilt swiftly. But several years later, very little progress had been made. Why is it that, despite the promises and the political will to rebuild, so little was actually accomplished in the riot-stricken areas for many years after April 1968?

While there are many factors that contributed to the lack of success in rebuilding these areas, there are a few trends that seemed to repeat themselves again and again as years went by, and the cast of characters in the federal and city governments changed from one year to the next. As with most large government funded projects, there inevitably developed competition between people and groups for decision-making power and control of resources. 14<sup>th</sup> Street renewal efforts were delayed many times as groups, both private and public, vied for funds and control of the process. Many different agencies were established or given rebuilding responsibilities in the aftermath of the riots, especially right after the Nixon administration came to power in January 1969. These agencies were often in conflict with each other, which helped delay the rebuilding process.

Community participation also had a great impact on the rebuilding efforts. Many previous urban renewal efforts had lacked any meaningful community participation at all. Planning was typically done without any input from the people whose neighborhoods were to be affected, which many times led to urban renewal really being “urban removal,” as lower income people were pushed out of their neighborhoods, and new housing was built for more affluent people to take their place. The urban renewal program in Southwest DC in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the most recent example of redevelopment that was a disaster for the existing residents, almost all of whom were pushed out and not able to return<sup>1</sup>.

With this experience fresh in the minds of most everyone involved, renewal efforts first begun in the Shaw neighborhood of DC in 1965 sought not to repeat the same mistakes. Further, new federal laws mandated citizen participation in renewal efforts, and renewal was no longer to be a method for pushing low-income residents out to make way for others.

But citizen participation, as important as it was, served to slow renewal efforts as well. It took time to adequately gather opinions from the public, and since it had not really been done much before, planners and government officials had to invent the methods for getting adequate citizen participation. On top of this, many different citizens’ groups were created in response to the post-riot urban renewal planning, and they began competing with one another and with the planning agencies for control and funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Gillette, Howard. *Between Justice and Beauty : Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. pp. 163-164.

Furthermore, while similar problems were encountered in other American cities in the 1960s and 1970s, DC had its own set of complications stemming from the lack of Home Rule. Until the early 1970s, citizens of the District had no right to elect local or federal officials, and only voted for presidential electors for the first time in 1964<sup>2</sup>. The city government was effectively a federal agency, with the mayor and city council appointed by the president and its budget controlled by Congress. So while it was hard enough to coordinate citizen participation in the process, the citizens themselves had no elected officials accountable to them to whom they could turn for help in being heard.

Urban renewal experts of that time were convinced that only large scale development was effective, so they wanted to consolidate smaller parcels into larger ones of at least one full city block, if not more. But acquiring the necessary parcels of land proved extremely difficult. Some land owners wanted to hold on to their parcels, expecting that surrounding redevelopment would increase their property values. Others wanted to reopen their businesses, but had to wait for their insurance companies to settle their claims, and then found that they could not purchase new insurance policies because the neighborhood was now considered too dangerous.

### **Inner City Planning Associates**

The first large scale, coordinated rebuilding attempt started in early 1969, just after Richard Nixon became President. It was also the first example of where the renewal and rebuilding process was slowed down by conflict between citizen groups, government agencies, and private companies.

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<sup>2</sup> US Constitution, amendment 23.

Walter Fauntroy was a powerful figure in Washington DC in the 1960s. A civil rights activist and pastor of the New Bethel Baptist Church in Shaw, he was one of the first people to have some success in bringing citizen participation to the urban renewal process. Urban renewal planning in the Shaw neighborhood had started in 1965, three years before the riots. Fauntroy created and headed an organization called the Model Inner Cities Corporation (MICCO) whose goal was to create a new model of urban renewal planning by the citizens and for the citizens. The 1968 riots tore through the 7<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, the commercial center of the Shaw Urban Renewal Area, as they did the 14<sup>th</sup> and H Street corridors. But since planning had already been underway and MICCO was already in operation at the time, Shaw had a head start on post-riot rebuilding efforts.

When Richard Nixon became president in January 1969, about 9 months after the riots, some of the rubble had not even been cleared away yet. Nixon promised that he would do something to get the rebuilding process moving. Fauntroy was having success with MICCO's work in Shaw as part of the Shaw Urban Renewal Project. MICCO was considered to have been effective at gathering input from Shaw residents. Citizen participation was required by federal law for urban renewal projects that used federal funding. Daniel Moynihan, Nixon's Assistant for Urban Affairs and a personal friend of Mayor Walter Washington<sup>3</sup>, requested Fauntroy submit a proposal to do for the 14<sup>th</sup> Street and H Street areas what he was doing in Shaw. Fauntroy was still Vice Chairman of the DC City Council at this time, but would resign on February 13, 1969, after Nixon did not reappoint him. He quickly formed a consulting firm called the Inner City Planning Associates (ICPA), drew up a proposal at Moynihan's request and submitted it

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<sup>3</sup> Asher, Robert L. "District is a Reluctant Legacy." *The Washington Post*. 20 January 1969. B10.

to the Reconstruction Development Corporation. The RDC was formed in the aftermath of the riots and charged with coordinating the rebuilding of the 14<sup>th</sup> and H Street corridors. A grant from the private Ford Foundation funded the RDC, which received no money from the federal or city government.

Thus began a complex and contentious contract negotiation that eventually ended with Fauntroy's contract falling through and with further delays in the renewal process. This serves as a good example of how competition between the various personalities and groups served to slow the rebuilding process to a near stop in the years after the riots. This is a particularly well documented example, but not the only example.

There were many theories at the time as to why Fauntroy was eventually excluded from the 14<sup>th</sup> Street planning process. Brent Oldham, Executive Director of the RDC, claimed that the city wanted to save money on consulting fees.<sup>4</sup> Newspaper accounts pointed to opposition to Fauntroy's firm from competing citizen's groups and the RDC's Board of Directors. Some also attributed it to an apparent conflict of interest. After all, Fauntroy had recently been on the DC City Council and was now seeking a government contract.

The ICPA submitted a proposal to the RDC on February 3, 1969, in the amount of \$428,000, for consulting services for the rebuilding of the 14<sup>th</sup> and H Street corridors. Ten days later, on February 13, Fauntroy sent a letter to President Nixon resigning from the City Council. In a statement released that same day, he said he was resigning, "... so that I may begin immediately to build upon the magnificent opportunity the President has

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<sup>4</sup> Jacoby, Susan. "Fauntroy Loses Riot Area Job." *The Washington Post*. 21 March 1969. A1.

afforded us in the Shaw Urban Renewal Area and along the burned-out areas of 14th and 'H' Streets, to rebuild with, by and for the people of our inner city.”<sup>5</sup>

A few weeks after the proposal was submitted, Robert Goostree and Marjorie Lawson, attorneys representing the RDC and the Inner City Planning Associates, respectively, discussed the proposal over the phone.<sup>6</sup> It was at this point that Goostree first mentioned potential problems with a conflict of interest and the source of the funds.<sup>7</sup> Because Fauntroy had been on the DC City Council, he could not be the recipient of government funds for one year after leaving his government position. Although the Ford Foundation grant to the District of Columbia was for \$600,000,<sup>8</sup> it was not yet clear if all of the money for the ICPA contract would come from those funds. Goostree inserted “a certain amount of government ‘boiler plate’ language in order to protect the RDC in the event that the funding for the Inner City contract actually came from Federal money.”<sup>9</sup> Despite the fact that the money had originally come from a private source, the Ford Foundation grant, it had since been mingled with District funds before it would be turned over to the RDC, and it was unclear as to whether there was a sufficient disconnect between government funds and the eventual payment to ICPA. Goostree’s contract changes were delivered to Lawson the next day.

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<sup>5</sup> “Statement of the Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy, Thursday, February 13, 1969,” Walter E. Fauntroy papers, Special Collections and University Archives, The George Washington University. Box 25.

<sup>6</sup> Memo of Telephone Conversation on February 26, 1969 between Robert E. Goostree of Ralph E. Becker Law Firm and Marjorie M. Lawson.” Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>7</sup> “Memo of Telephone Conversation on February 26, 1969 between Robert E. Goostree of Ralph E. Becker Law Firm and Marjorie M. Lawson.” Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>8</sup> Draft No 2. 2/27/69 Contract for Consultant Services.” Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>9</sup> “Memo of Telephone Conversation on February 26, 1969 between Robert E. Goostree of Ralph E. Becker Law Firm and Marjorie M. Lawson.” Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

In a letter to Ralph Becker, another RDC attorney, on March 5, 1969, Lawson cited the law that meant a potential conflict of interests existed.<sup>10</sup> “A Government employee may not, for one year after his Government employment has ended, represent anyone other than the United States in connection with a matter in which the United States is a party or has an interest and which was within the boundaries of his official responsibility during the year of his government service.”<sup>11</sup> If the funds came from private sources instead of from the government, however, there would be no conflict, according to Lawson.<sup>12</sup> The parties had previously agreed that Fauntroy’s contract would be paid out of the Ford Foundation grant.<sup>13</sup> Becker’s opinion was that it was the “...RDC’s problem to fund the contract and to avoid involving Reverend Fauntroy in a conflict of interest.”<sup>14</sup>

When Fauntroy’s plans and the ICPA contract became public in the first week of March, other citizen groups and even RDC board members began to oppose it. ICPA had begun work on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street and H Street plans already, based on a verbal agreement with the RDC on February 10.<sup>15</sup> By March 3, both sides were confident that the problems could be worked out and the contract would eventually be signed. Work continued and the RDC offered to execute a letter of agreement with ICPA, authorizing them to spend up to \$80,000.<sup>16</sup> Details of the deal were published in the Washington Post on March 10. On March 12, Fauntroy sent a letter to James Washington, president of the

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<sup>10</sup> Letter from Lawson to Becker. 5 March 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Lawson to Becker. 5 March 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Lawson to Goosetree. 28 February 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Lawson to Goosetree. 28 February 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Becker to Lawson. 3 March 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from James Washington to Marjorie Lawson. 27 February 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Becker to Lawson. 3 March 1969. Fauntroy papers. Box 25.

RDC, confirming that Washington would not be signing the contract with ICPA. In the letter Fauntroy said he was “surprised and saddened by the cavalier way in which you have broken your word.” He mentions that all parties had agreed to move forward during a meeting in Deputy Mayor Fletcher’s office on March 6. Fauntroy apparently had been told verbally about this decision on March 11, but he does not say what Washington’s reasons were for making it.

On March 18, The Washington Post was still reporting that Fauntroy’s firm was actively working on the project, but that “it is uncertain whether his group has received formal approval from the city for its work.” The paper mentioned a secret meeting of the RDC board, where a decision had been made. But that decision would not be made public until, as RDC Director Oldham said, “everything is in its proper place.”<sup>17</sup> Even Fauntroy, in the same Post article, was quoted as saying he “wasn’t sure when the contract would be signed.” But behind the scenes, both sides knew that the decision had already been made.

When the decision was made public a few days later, Oldham and Fletcher were fairly tight-lipped about the RDC’s reasons. They would not say whether opposition by other community groups factored into the decision,<sup>18</sup> but this may be unlikely. There is no mention of any impact of citizen group opposition in the correspondence between the RDC and ICPA attorneys through at least March 7, and that opposition was evident as

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<sup>17</sup> “Fauntroy’s Firm Pushes Renewal of Ghetto Areas.” *The Washington Post*. 18 March 1969. C2.

<sup>18</sup> Jacoby, Susan. “Fauntroy Loses Riot Area Job.” *The Washington Post*. 21 March 1969. A1.

early as March 2.<sup>19</sup> It is more likely that this was used as an excuse after the decision had already been made on some other grounds.

A statement put out by the RDC on March 20 said that the RDC felt that they could do the work themselves at less cost, and that they did not believe they should be giving work to a for-profit consulting firm.<sup>20</sup> But it was the RDC that came to Fauntroy for help in the first place, so they know they would be dealing with a for-profit consultant. It is possible that the RDC board, after seeing the proposal, decided they could better do the work themselves. But two facts make this seem unlikely. First, it was not until after a full month of contract negotiations and work under a verbal agreement with no mention by the RDC either publicly or privately that they disapproved with ICPA's approach or cost estimates, that the RDC decided they would be better off doing the work themselves. Second, once they decided not to go forward with the ICPA, they ended up hiring much of the ICPA's staff and using its plans.

A more likely, and unfortunate, explanation is that some people on the RDC board, Mayor Washington and his staff, or both, were personally opposed to Fauntroy and were worried about the additional power he might accrue by heading more rebuilding efforts. Some RDC members, speaking off the record to Washington Star reporter James Welsh, alluded to the many positions that Fauntroy held at the time, including being head of MICCO, a member of the RDC board<sup>21</sup>, and until recently vice-chairman of the City

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<sup>19</sup> "Fauntroy's Urban Plans Denounced by Citizens." *The Washington Post*. 3 March 1969. B2.

<sup>20</sup> Welsh, James. "Why Did Fauntroy Lose Out?" *The Washington Star*. 21 March 1969. D-1.

<sup>21</sup> Fauntroy's position on the RDC board did not preclude his company getting an RDC contract. I did not have access to the RDC's records, so I don't know if Fauntroy had to recuse himself from decisions on the ICPA contract. But Fauntroy remained on the board for many years after.

Council.<sup>22</sup> This is supported by the fact that the RDC went on to implement Fauntroy's plan with Fauntroy's people, but just without Fauntroy. This proved unfortunate because Fauntroy's participation, expertise and cooperation could have made a positive difference for 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor renewal efforts. It was also indicative of things to come, as at many times in the future, renewal efforts would be sabotaged as people and groups vied for control of plans, power and money.

### **RDC Efforts From 1969 to 1973**

As of March 1969, Fauntroy's ICPA was out, though Fauntroy remained a member of the RDC board. The RDC, under Brent Oldham, took over ICPA's plans and most of his personnel, and began work by concentrating on the H Street corridor. Oldham claimed the RDC was working extra hard to make up for the delays caused by the inability to work out a deal with Fauntroy.<sup>23</sup>

President Nixon wanted to see some movement and had set a deadline for construction to start by December 1969.<sup>24</sup> The RDC was eager to get moving but was stymied on several fronts. Despite modeling their plans on MICCO's success in getting community participation in Shaw and picking up on the work that the ICPA had already started in the 14<sup>th</sup> and H Street corridors, the RDC was running in to fierce opposition from local community groups as they began making their plans public. citizen opposition was vocal and fierce as early as March 22, 1969, when the RDC unveiled an interim

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<sup>22</sup> Welsh, James. "Why Did Fauntroy Lose Out?" *The Washington Star*. 21 March 1969. D-1.

<sup>23</sup> Braestrup, Peter. "Land Acquisition Slows Riot Areas Rebuilding." *The Washington Post*. 3 April 1969. p B1.

<sup>24</sup> Braestrup, Peter. "Land Acquisition Slows Riot Areas Rebuilding." *The Washington Post*. 3 April 1969. p B1.

assistance program for the 14<sup>th</sup> and H Street corridors. The main point of opposition for local community groups like the Concerned Citizens for Central Cardozo (CCCC) was that the RDC was an outside group that did not represent them.<sup>25</sup> The major difference between MICCO's work in Shaw and the RDC's work in the other areas was that MICCO was an organization that was local to Shaw, founded and led by people who lived and worked in Shaw. While the RDC was following the same plans as MICCO, the RDC was not a part of the areas it was planning. The RDC was created by the Mayor's office and the RDC director was appointed. And the Mayor himself was appointed by the President. So even though the RDC had surveyed the population to ask them what they wanted to see in the plan, they were still seen as outsiders and as a threat to the local population.

Yet citizen participation in urban renewal planning was mandated by Congress in 1964 anti-poverty legislation and was required in order to receive funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>26</sup> Local citizens groups demanded more than simply access to plans and the occasional survey. Some groups, such as the Cardozo Heights Association for Neighborhood Growth and Enrichment (CHANGE, Inc.) had already hired their own consultants to draw up renewal plans for their neighborhoods, and wanted direct control over the planning and rebuilding efforts.<sup>27</sup> City planners were at a loss as to how to handle citizen opposition. Planners were getting shouted down by angry citizens at open meetings where they were presenting their

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<sup>25</sup> Davis, George. "City Aide Explaining Riot-Area Plans Shouted Down." *The Washington Post*. 23 March 1969. p 25.

<sup>26</sup> Breastrup, Peter. "Lack of Citizen Role Snags Rebuilding." *The Washington Post*. 4 May 1969. p D1.

<sup>27</sup> Paka, Vincent. "Views of Residents Being Sought on Renewal of Riot Areas." *The Washington Post*. 4 May 1969. p 53.

plans.<sup>28</sup> The steps they had taken so far to get adequate citizen participation were obviously not enough.

A Washington Post analysis of the time gives a good summary of how Mayor Washington's attempts to get citizen participation evolved over time.<sup>29</sup> His first attempt was to contract with Fauntroy's ICPA, but that deal fell through, perhaps partly because of opposition by local citizen groups who did not want outside groups doing the planning in their neighborhoods. His second attempt was with the RDC doing the same thing the ICPA planned to do, but that ran up against the same opposition. The third attempt was the Model Cities Commission, which again was to follow a model similar to Fauntroy's work with MICCO in Shaw. Even though some of the commissioners were popularly elected, others were appointed by the Mayor, and were viewed by some as being beholden to him. Local citizens increasingly saw all of the planners as outsiders who they did not trust to represent them. This opposition was being exacerbated by the fact that, outside of a few Model Cities commissioners, residents of the riot-torn areas had no elected representation. DC had not yet been given home rule and the Mayor and the City Council was appointed by the President.

Community opposition started to become very evident in March. They opposed plans to use HUD money for interim assistance in riot-torn areas on the grounds that groups like the RDC were appointed by the (non-elected) mayor and did not represent the

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<sup>28</sup> Davis, George. "City Aide Explaining Riot-Area Plans Shouted Down." *The Washington Post*. 23 March 1969. p 25.

<sup>29</sup> Braestrup, Peter. "Lack of Citizen Role Snags Rebuilding." *The Washington Post*. 4 May 1969. p D1.

local community, and also because the HUD funds should not be used to provide basic services that the city should already be providing, like rat abatement.<sup>30</sup>

By April, the Nixon administration was complaining that citizen participation was “delaying decision-making to a point at which urban renewal has become intolerably slow.”<sup>31</sup> Deputy Mayor Fletcher said that the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor would be added to the Shaw Redevelopment Area in order to circumvent some of the planning involved with obtaining federal funds.<sup>32</sup>

The RDC was also having problems with land acquisition. RDC Director Oldham complained that there was hardly any land along the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor that already belonged to the government. Land acquisition was a problem that was hampering redevelopment efforts. “It takes time for shopkeepers to realize that they cannot return ... Only after they discover they can’t get loans or insurance ... can the City process to buy up their properties and aggregate them into the large tracts that new-style development requires.”<sup>33</sup> Rightly or wrongly, planners only wanted to work with large, city-block sized parcels, but assembling those large parcels from smaller lots owned by multiple people was proving to be nearly impossible.

The RDC was left with little progress to show for its efforts, stuck as it was between the Nixon administration’s demands to get moving quickly and the fierce opposition from community groups and the need to get citizen acceptance and approval.

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<sup>30</sup> Davis, George. “City Aide Explaining Riot-Are Plans Shouted Down.” *The Washington Post*. 23 March 1969. p 25.

<sup>31</sup> Braestrup, Peter and Carl Bernstein. *The Washington Post*. 10 April 1969. p B1, B4.

<sup>32</sup> Braestrup, Peter and Carl Bernstein. *The Washington Post*. 10 April 1969. p B1, B4.

<sup>33</sup> Braestrup, Peter. “Land Acquisition Slows Riot Areas Rebuilding.” *The Washington Post*. 3 April 1969. p B1.

### **1971 City Council Hearings**

Public hearings held by the Housing and Urban Development Committee of the DC City Council in 1971 provide a good view into the dynamics between the government and citizens groups that was driving the development process in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1971 there still was little tangible progress in rebuilding the riot-torn areas. A series of hearings were held in August to discuss amendments to the Downtown, Shaw, H Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Street urban renewal plans. Sterling Tucker, Fauntroy's successor as the DC City Council Vice Chairman, in a press release announcing the hearings said he wanted to, "... identify impediments to the renewal of those areas."<sup>34</sup>

Vice Chairman Tucker's main point in his pre-hearing statements was that the biggest impediment to development was the decentralization of the city's efforts. He felt there were too many competing planning and development groups and that scarce resources were being wasted by being split up among them. He called instead for a centralized planning office that would consolidate the available resources and coordinate planning for the entire city. The centralized planning office should also bring under city control the various planning agency resources that were currently under federal auspices.<sup>35</sup>

Tucker saw the housing shortages as a problem for the entire city, not just the areas hit hardest by the riots. He seemed frustrated by development efforts that were not taking the city's overall needs into account, and that were building housing without the

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<sup>34</sup> Tucker, Sterling. "Press Release of Sterling Tucker, Vice Chairman of the DC City Council on Third Year Urban Renewal Program." 6 August 1971. Records of the DC City Council, Special Collections and University Archives, The George Washington University. Box 22. page 1.

<sup>35</sup> Tucker, Sterling. "Press Release..." page 2.

infrastructure of schools, recreation, transportation and jobs to support it.<sup>36</sup> He saw this as the reason that so many district residents, white and black, were leaving for the suburbs. They no longer trusted the overburdened school system and they could not find adequate housing at prices they could afford.<sup>37</sup> This middle class flight to the suburbs was taking away the jobs and tax revenue that the city desperately needed.

Tucker felt that the city had the necessary resources to address the problems, but that they needed to be organized into one centralized planning office that would answer to the Mayor and the City Council. The city should not rely on the White House or Congress to provide leadership or funds, and it should not do anything that would create yet more competing planning agencies or advisory boards.<sup>38</sup>

But Tucker's ideas ran directly counter to the trend that had been pushing the development process since early 1969, that centralized planning is what led to the disenfranchisement of local citizens in the planning process and to disastrous end results like the Southwest redevelopment. He did point to the need for public input and access to the planning process, and he proposed expanding the role of local neighborhood planning councils that would act as the interface between the central planning office and city residents.<sup>39</sup> He saw this as an expansion of and improvement to the elected model cities commissioners within the urban renewal areas. His idea was perhaps the precursor to the

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<sup>36</sup> Tucker, Sterling. "Development Policy and Planning in Washington, D.C. A Statement of Sterling Tucker, Vice Chairman of the DC City Council." 6 August 1971. Records of the DC City Council, Special Collections and University Archives, The George Washington University. Box 22. page 3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, page 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, page 9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, page 12.

creation of an elected Advisory Neighborhood Commission in 1976, which functions as the interface between city government and citizens.

Tucker was calling for both centralization and decentralization at the same time, essentially to clean up what he saw as an inefficient use of resources in both planning and citizen participation. He wanted to replace, "... a hodgepodge of single-purpose, one-time, ad-hoc advisory boards [with] true neighborhood planning boards to express the wide ranging as well a parochial interests of the various localities of our city."<sup>40</sup> At the same time he wanted to combine the various planning agencies, such as the Redevelopment Land Agency and the National Capitol Planning Commission into one city-wide planning agency with a strong leader that answered to the Mayor and the City Council. It remained to be seen if this consolidation would happen over the objections of the various semi-autonomous groups and, if so, if it would lead to an acceleration in rebuilding.

Tucker spoke specifically about the renewal efforts on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in his opening statement to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street hearing on August 17, the day after he had toured the area with planning agency directors and the press.<sup>41</sup> He highlighted a number of problems that he thought were preventing progress on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. On the land acquisition problem, "One of the reasons for the limited number of parcels proposed for acquisition in NDP3 [third year neighborhood development plan] is the problem of relocation housing for large, low-income families. Our serious relocation crisis is therefore slowing the renewal

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. page 13.

<sup>41</sup> District of Columbia City Council. "News Release – Urban Renewal tour." 13 August 1971. Records of the DC City Council, Special Collections and University Archives, The George Washington University. Box 22.

process to a crawl”<sup>42</sup> He pushed Melvin Mister of the RLA to work with other agencies to address this specific issue.

Tucker also wanted Mister to address the issue of local versus large developers. Everyone seemed to agree that it would be best to use local developers that would hire local construction workers. The developers should be based in the community and preferably be black-owned. But local developers often lacked the large pools of capital needed to take on large development projects, and black developers in particular often lacked experience because they had traditionally been shut out of the development business in the past because of their race. Without striking some sort of balance between large and local developers, little development was taking place. Tucker suggested “limited dividend partnerships” between large developers and community groups, “...so that local people can share in financial benefits and subcontracts and, at the same time, the experience of large developers can be used.

And turning back to his ideas about creating a consolidated planning office, “Another major concern has been the fragmentation of our planning, housing and renewal process. There are so many agencies in the process that progress has been slowed to a halt. I realize that we cannot bring about the needed consolidation overnight. Thus, interim steps are needed, together with timetables for action.”<sup>43</sup> He suggested the Mayor appoint one person to coordinate the renewal and development efforts of various city agencies.

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<sup>42</sup> Tucker, Sterling. “Opening Statement of City Council Vice Chairman Sterling Tucker, Housing and Urban Development Committee.” 17 August 1971. Records of the DC City Council, Special Collections and University Archives, The George Washington University. Box 22. page 2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, page 4.

One major roadblock to 14<sup>th</sup> Street redevelopment was the issue of relocation, especially for large, low-income families. In April 1973, at the five year anniversary of the riots, the Washington Post published an article giving a summary of the rebuilding efforts to date, and there was little good news. Just over 600 new housing units had been built and 50 row houses renovated, but almost all of that was in the Shaw neighborhood where planning had begun three years prior to the riots, and even that work was behind schedule.<sup>44</sup> Several reasons were cited for the lack of progress. Not enough low-income housing was being constructed, yet most of those families that were to be displaced to make way for new housing were poor. With no place to relocate these poor residents, rebuilding was moving at a snail's pace.<sup>45</sup> The need for citizen participation was also slowing development. In 1969 the Redevelopment Land Agency was boasting of great progress, and indeed there was much progress in planning. But once the agencies tried to put the plans in motion, they were continually blocked by the now usual problems of obtaining the necessary citizen participation and acquiring large enough parcels of land.<sup>46</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Competing government agencies, gridlocked bureaucracies, politicians and community organizations hungry for power and control, newly empowered citizen groups unable to get their opinions heard, and poor leadership combined to limit the redevelopment of 14<sup>th</sup> street. First and foremost was the opposition from local citizen groups who did not want outsiders making planning decisions in their neighborhoods and

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<sup>44</sup> Meyer, Eugene. "5 Years Later: Riot Areas Not Rebuilt." *The Washington Post*. 8 April 1973. B1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, B2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, B2.

wanted to control redevelopment efforts, and the money associated, themselves. Some of the opposition seemed to come from frustration on the part of local residents who felt they had no say in the process, mostly because they had no opportunity to elect any of the people who were controlling the planning process.

Planners were also frustrated by logistical issues. Federal rules required that housing had to be made available to residents who were being relocated *before* their existing housing could be taken down and the land redeveloped. This was based on the results of past redevelopment efforts in DC and other cities, where low-income residents were evicted to make way for new housing, but the new housing that was built was mostly for moderate- and upper-income people. This had the effect simply of pushing low-income residents out without giving them any better place to go. Redevelopment in Southwest DC was a prime example of this. Most observers saw as a disaster for the low-income residents who used to live there. But the city could not acquire land on which to build new housing without evicting some residents. This led to a chicken and egg scenario where not enough new housing was available to relocate residents from old housing, so that the old housing could be torn down and redeveloped into new housing in which to relocate residents.

Land acquisition was further slowed because developers wanted large parcels of land, but almost all of the land in the 14<sup>th</sup> street corridor was broken into small, individually owned parcels. Land owners were holding on to land, waiting to see if redevelopment would raise property values, before they would sell to the city. Small

business owners were waiting as well, perhaps planning to rebuild and return, only to find that they could no longer get insurance.

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