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## **Newspaper Article, Community Project Interferes With Residents' Social Lives, May 14, 1968**

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# Community Project With Residents' Soc

by Bessie E. Minor  
REFLECTOR Staff Writer

In a recent survey conducted by the REFLECTOR, the general opinion of the people affected by the proposed Urban Renewal project was that it was good to have it, but that it interfered with their social lives.

In several cases where the people lived in low cost "rent houses," and held below average jobs, the usual opinion of the project was that it would break family ties and cause separations between them and their friends, their environment, and their church work.

In another instance, involving a well-established cosmotolo-

gist, who owns her home and shop, the opinion was that the enactment of the project would force many of her customers to move and in doing so, would reduce her business.

## WHAT DO WE DO?

As this survey was being carried on, I was approached by a construction worker, ragged from the chores of a day's work, who in his curiosity about the Urban Renewal Project, asked the following questions: "What do we do? We don't have any land or money. Where will we go? Isn't there something we can do?" These questions plague many of the people in this area

itches as rat holes yawn in the half-lit gloom: rat holes every-

# Interferes cial Lives

and most of them do not have any answers.

On the other hand, in the cases where people who own their own homes are involved, opinions are quite different. They, in regard to the project, said that the project is beneficial, because it gave them the opportunity to get even better homes by giving them more than enough money for their homes.

## MAJORITY UNSATISFIED

Although they and many others involved in the Urban Renewal area are satisfied, the majority are not. They do not want to leave what they have worked for; so that the community will look better. To them a community is not built on looks but on the people. According to a restaurant operator in this area, who has three children, lives in a four-room rented apartment, and whose only income is from her business, "Our community is all right as it is; why do we need to change it. It only presents more problems for us. We do not want to be dictated to, we want to do as we please and live where we want."

## GOD'S WILL?

She is not alone in this feeling toward Urban Renewal. From many conversations with these people, I have found that the usual opinion is that they want to be left alone, and by the addition of this Bible verse, one strengthened her objections, "How firm is our foundation," and further by saying, "If God wanted us to be moved somewhere else, he would have placed us there in the beginning."

## WILL NOT MOVE

Many others have also stated that if Urban Renewal places them in a rural community, they would retaliate by not moving at all. When asked why they had this attitude, most of them replied that they had just moved from the country and they had no intention of moving back, no matter what their present condition was or ever will be.

From all indications, the people are for Urban Renewal for the money involved, but are rejecting it for the separation and broken relationships it brings.

## FALLING RATS

"A week ago, part of the bathroom ceiling in the \$44.90-a-month apartment, which Weldon shares with his wife and three little girls, caved in on his toilet, washstand, and bathtub. But Weldon hasn't bothered to clean up this latest disaster. Rats might fall out of the ceiling anyway, he shrugs, 'so now we use a neighbor's john.'"

## TYPICAL

The preceding was taken from the August 28, 1967 edition of NEWSWEEK. It is a typical description of the slum areas in the United States and appears to be one of the biggest problems we face today.

But is Urban Renewal the solution to this problem? Just because you move someone from a "Dump" to a luxury apartment will he strive to keep it nice? Will he mop the floors? Will he keep the urine off the floor? Will he keep the garbage out of the front yard?

## EFFECTIVE?

I do not believe he will. Many government projects similar to Urban Renewal have been completed in New Orleans today. However, six months after these people moved back, the area looked and smelled the same way it did before the project began.

Three years ago in New York a nonprofit civic group called the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council wanted to prove that Negroes could live in decent housing. So they purchased two houses and renovated them. They were forced to raise the rent to \$60 a month. Turnover averaged 80 per cent a year and rent delinquency hit 30 per cent; maintenance costs and vandalism came to \$30 per room per year. Today the once liberal executive director Roger Starr, now admits that he believes there is nothing that can be done.

## EDUCATION?

Many people believe the failure of these projects were due to the lack of education on the part of the Negroes. But I ask you, how much education does it take to buy a fifty cent box of rat pills to kill the rats? Or how much education does it take to buy a twenty-five cent bar of soap to take a bath and clean up a little around the house?

These people just don't care about themselves, so why should we throw our money into projects to help them when they will not even try to help themselves?