

The Clarksville Gold Dollar

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Clarksville Community Development Corp.

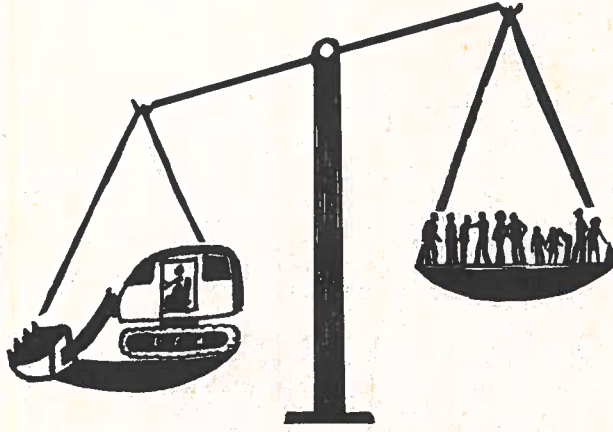
July 20, 1979

JUDGE LOWRY REACHES DECISION

Judge Pete Lowry has made up his mind and his decision reached CCDC lawyers on Wednesday, July 18. In a letter from the Judge he stated that after careful study of the case he believes that the "plaintiffs application for a permanent injunction should be denied". According to Judge Lowry "defendants complied with applicable statutes" in obtaining their permit for construction.

Because of zoning regulations TAO/ONO had to obtain a special permit to build townhouses in Clarksville. The CCDC lawsuit claimed that the permit was illegally issued because correct procedure was not followed by TAO/ONO in obtaining the permit.

While "sympathetic" with the neighborhood residents' desire to "maintain the historical integrity of Clarksville", Judge Lowry does not believe that this building project would inflict the "type of damage which would entitle the plaintiffs to an injunction".



Lawyers for the plaintiffs Alyce Guynn, Pauline Malmburg, Malcolm Greenstein and the CCDC plan to find out in detail the grounds of the decision. Residents may then decide if they wish to file an appeal.

Times of Struggle

(This is the third in a series of articles. In the last issue "The Fight Against the Highways" was described. This week: "Clarksville Looks for Aid")

With the highway issue closed, Clarksville residents turned their attention to other priorities. In December, 1974, they met to assess community needs. This was done in order to receive federal "Community Block Grant Funds" (also known as HCD funds). These funds have guidelines which require that neighborhood people play a role in deciding what improvements are needed for their area.

Residents found that improvements needed in Clarksville in 1974 were the same as had been listed by Concerned Citizens for Development of West Austin and the Clarksville Advisory Board in 1969: 1) housing 2) street, drainage, and park improvements 3) increased social services.

In 1975, the first year that funds were available, \$25,000 was set aside for a "Clarksville Study". The study was made by the City Planning Department in the latter part of 1975 and early 1976. It cost approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000. When written the "conceptual study" was presented to City Council for approval. It was never printed, but remains in rough form at the Planning Department. The plan was approved by community residents in March, 1976, and by City Council in April, 1976.

Immediate benefit from the "conceptual study" was obviously not apparent in Clarksville. The area still needed improvements and residents were actively soliciting aid from the city. It appeared that Clarksville had in the past failed to receive even simple city services. Neighborhood conditions described at that time were as follows:

All drainage is above ground. Storm sewers approach Clarksville on the north and west but stop there. Drainage under houses has caused many serious problems to the structures. Utility lines were last installed in the 1930's and are substandard. Streets are unpaved. Their narrowness and the absence of sidewalks make conditions for pedestrians dangerous. Stop signs and street lights don't exist in the area. Along West 10th the road is bordered by a ditch that can't be seen for the foliage. This hazard has resulted in cars falling into the ditch.

In 1976 the city began to respond to Clarksville's needs. Stop signs, a street light and a barricade were installed where needed. Furthermore, City Council agreed to allocate HCD (Housing and Community Development) funds for street and drainage improvements, Clarksville playground improvements, Haskell House restoration, and housing rehabilitation. Work on these projects began in 1977 and has continued with additional funding in the following years.

Clarksville was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in the summer of 1976. This historic designation by the U.S. Department of the Interior honors the cultural and social value of the neighborhood. The Haskell House is the oldest house in the area and is representative of the simple architecture used by Blacks in the years following the Civil War. HCD funds made it possible for the city to purchase the house and reconstruct it for use by the neighborhood. Dedication of the house was on Juneteenth, 1979.

When federal money was approved for improvements in Clarksville, City Council designated that \$100,000 be administered by the Urban Renewal Housing Rehabilitation Program. In an aspect unique to Clarksville, the Clarksville Advisory Board was actively involved in working with residents and Urban Renewal to bring participants into the program and to cut costs of expensive rehabilitation. 14 Clarksville houses were repaired. The final cost exceeded the original \$100,000 with between \$6,000 and \$10,000 spent on each house.

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ARE YOU A CCDC MEMBER?

There has been some confusion recently concerning the structure and membership of the Clarksville Community Development Corporation. Until this summer with the publication of the "Gold Dollar" it has been difficult to contact all Clarksville residents to explain what the CCDC is and who is involved.

The CCDC was formed from the Clarksville Neighborhood Advisory Board in July, 1978, as a non-profit organization. As stated in the by-laws the CCDC exists "for the purposes of preserving the character of the Clarksville community and engaging in community projects for the benefit and revitalization of the Clarksville community". There are 9 members on the Board of Directors: Pauline Brown, President; Freddie Strong, Vice-President; Mary Robinson, Secretary; Lena Stewart, Treasurer; Elliott Naishtat; Carey Baylor; Charles Walker; Malcolm Greenstein; and Mary Baylor.

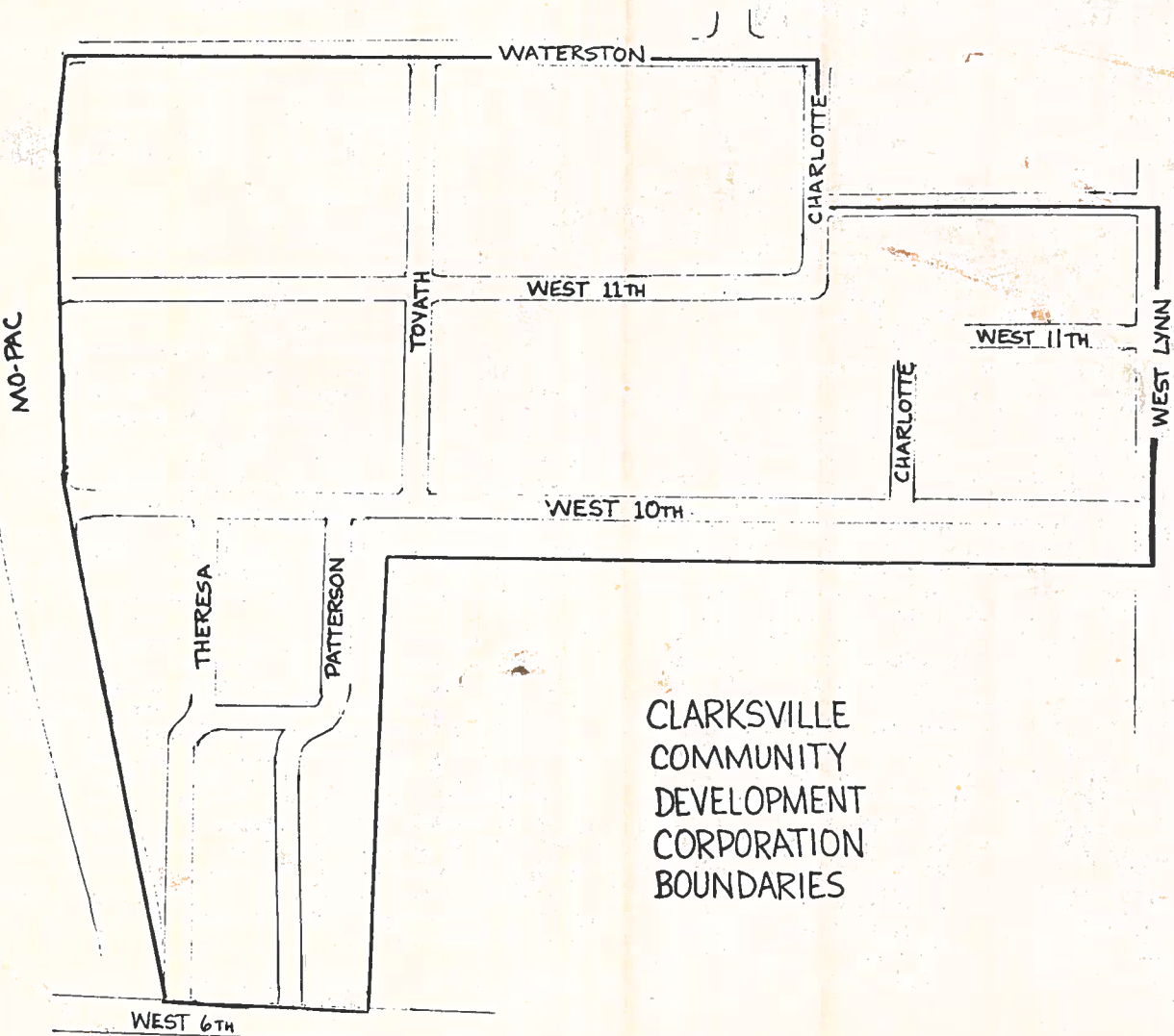
The Board of Director are the original incorporators until the next election. The Board is elected by the general member-

ship every two years at the Annual Meeting of the General Membership. Next election will be in April, 1980.

According to the by-laws of the CCDC general membership consists of voting members and non-voting members. Non-voting members are selected by the Board of Directors to advise and counsel the Corporation on various matters. They shall not vote nor hold office.

Voting members are all those residents of Clarksville (see map) who are 18 years of age or older. The by-laws stipulate that voting members must not be engaged in any action contrary to the purposes of the corporation.

In recent months the CCDC has shown in protests its opposition to development in Clarksville. To the CCDC uncontrolled development does not "benefit" or "help to preserve the Clarksville Community". Therefore those who support developers working in Clarksville are not considered members of the CCDC.



VIEWPOINT

WE REMEMBER... INTERVIEWS

TAKEN FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH PHIL CONARD, MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN AND THE AUSTIN COALITION FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

June 14, 1979, Austin City Council voted to declare part of the downtown area an urban renewal district. By this action the land from Lamar to IH 35, and from 5th Street to Riverside Drive would be entitle to federal redevelopment funds. Since City officials have declared that they do not intend to request federal aid, the most important aspect of their decision is that it gives to the city the "power of imminent domain" over the 288 buildings now standing in this district. Buildings can be condemned and removed, historic zoning can be by-passed, and residents can be displaced.

The City Council's action follows the completion of a \$130,000 marketing analysis and "model plan". The American Cities Corporation which conducted the analysis is a subsidiary of the Rouse Corporation. The Rouse Corporation built Highland and Northcross Mall, and like these malls, the American Cities plan calls for strict design criteria. Even the number, size and type of trees to be planted is established.

Approximately \$170 million would be necessary for downtown revitalization according to the "model plan". \$120 million would be city improvement money financed by a bond election. Construction planned is as follows:

- four office towers
- two hotel complexes
- a municipal complex
- three condominiums (14 stories high)
- 4000 parking spaces (within six blocks)
- garden units and townhouses
- a racket club
- two malls
- an overhead tram (covering 6-8 blocks)

The downtown plan has received criticism from many Austin residents and local groups. The Austin Historical Landmark Commission reviewed the plan this week. The Commission Vice Chairperson Blake Alexander was quoted as saying, "There's nothing to indicate that the person who made this had ever been to the city."

It does appear that the American Cities planners did not look at what exists in Austin. They also have not respected the character of the downtown area and they have tailored their plan to the upper classes.

The Austin Coalition for Downtown Revitalization is developing a counter plan. Their plan will try to remedy the flaws of the other proposal and blend new Austin with the old. In the near future the coalition will bring their ideas to various neighborhoods.

Since Clarksville also faces development, higher taxes and displacement of residents, the coalition plans may be of help to the Clarksville neighborhood. In an effort to aid residents affected by development, tax relief and tax safeguard proposals are being planned.

What happens downtown will affect Clarksville and what happens in Clarksville affects downtown. As energy costs rise people will look more and more to neighborhoods near to downtown offices. Hopefully people will be able to meet Austin's changes and profit by revitalization without losing hold of what they value.

EIGHT TOWNHOUSES PLANNED ON SITE

An Austin neighborhood group recently took action to stop over development of their area. The residents oppose the construction of eight townhomes which they fear would lead to over crowding.

That could be a description of Clarksville but this case involves residents near East 35th and Hampton Road. In an article last week in the Austin American Statesman, it was reported that this group has obtained a court order that temporarily prevents the "resubdivision" of a 1 1/2 acre lot. The owner of the land had applied to the City Planning Commission to break the lot into a nine-lot subdivision. One house and an 8 unit town-house is planned.

Of the residents named on the restraining order, one is former Austin Mayor Taylor Glass, another is James Meyer, a former judge. Glass was quoted as saying, "We don't want someone to come in and start stacking people on top of one another. This type of overcrowding is what we've been trying to prevent in Austin for years."

According to the Planning Commission Chairperson Miguel Guerrero the restraining order is the first of its kind to be enacted during his four years on the Planning Commission. A hearing will be held July 18 to determine if a permanent restraining order will be issued.

There is an obvious parallel between this group's action and the Clarksville Community Development Corporation lawsuit filed to stop TAO/ONO's townhouses. It will be interesting to follow the outcome of these two protests. Especially since one neighborhood has low-income residents and the other has upper-income, politically known home owners.

"A mighty man is Seymour Washington, mover of mountains, teller of stories and shoer of horses extraordinary." So begins a story in the Austin Statesman, July 30, 1953. At that time Seymour was 57 years old and had a reputation as "the walking blacksmith" because, as he put it, "I go all over this country shoeing horses."

Many Clarksville people can remember Seymour Washington. His home at 1615 West 12th was a gathering place for neighbors and people from all over to come and relax a little and trade tales. One such story explained how Seymour had taken to blacksmithing very early. He would say, "When I was a baby they'd put things out--a saw, a spoon, a frying pan, a claw hammer--to see what I'd go for and what I'd be. They say I always went for the hammer."

Seymour celebrated his 80th birthday July 12, 1976, at his home with his friends. Shortly after he was hospitalized for surgery. He never regained his health and he died in November, 1976. He gave so much of himself that it would be hard to say that he has left Clarksville. So many people remember him so well. I spoke with two of his many friends.

Rosie Davis
1617 West 12th

"I've been out here almost six years. I like Clarksville. It's quiet and you can leave things out and no one will bother them. Seymour lived next door to me. You couldn't have asked for a better neighbor. He was a sweet man, he treated everyone nice and everybody liked him, black and white. Nobody had any trouble with him.

He didn't do much blacksmithing as he got older. He had a place to work set up right by his house where he would shoe horses. He used to shoe a lot of horses and people all over knew him. No one could say a bad word about him.

On his birthday every year his friends would give a big party at his house with beer and bar-b-que. After his operation he needed someone to help take care of him. Seymour's friends got together and had a benefit to raise money for him. He had a lot of friends."

Phyllis Ivey
717 Patterson

"I've never met a man as open and loving and giving as he was. To me and my friends Uncle Seymour was the center of the community. Everybody loved him. He was always at his house and there was always some food on the stove, a pot of beans or some greens, he was a real good cook. People were always dropping by which gave his place sort of a party atmosphere all the time.

If someone didn't have a place to go for Thanksgiving or Christmas or 4th of July, they could go to his house and there'd be turkeys and lots to eat and drink. He had no prejudice against anybody, he accepted people so lovingly. He kind of brought us together--the blacks and the whites.

Uncle Seymour would tell me how things used to be--that a building was once something else, or what Clarksville was like when he was a boy. He said he used to go rabbit hunting on Enfield. His house was torn down after he died, but the old truck he had is still parked on his lot. He used to say, "I'm going to get that truck running one of these days. My Mama gave that to me."

THE GARDEN

I want to tell you about the garden if you don't already know. My name is Tony Switzer and I am a CETA worker for the CCDC. My job is to raise a garden at the neighborhood center for the use of the community. Also, I can loan you tools and give advice if you are preparing a garden of your own.

The vegetables I grow here are for everyone. The garden contains peppers, squash, tomatoes, lima beans, okra, and collards. If you want some you are welcome to them. Since April at least 25 neighborhood folks have benefited from this project. Please come on over for some free vegetables and conversation.

You can help me with the garden in several ways. First, if you can work in the garden I would be glad to have the help. Hopefully, the garden at the center will continue even after my job ends in November. However, for that to happen other neighborhood people will have to get involved. Everyone is welcome, especially teen-agers.

Secondly since I use compost as fertilizer for the garden, I need lots of leaves and grass clippings. If you can save yours we can use them to grow nice juicy tomatoes. Bring bags of leaves and grass by the center or call to tell me you have them.

One last thing I need is garbage - kitchen scraps (but not any meat). This garbage is "recycled" by throwing it in the same pile with leaves. After this compost pile rots we dig it into the ground. It nourishes the soil and results are the beans and squash you find in the garden. So, if you can save your garbage for me I will come and get it. We have 5-gallon plastic buckets with lids if you need a container to store the garbage in. Don't think that saving your garbage is a silly idea -Lena Stewart and Mary Baylor do!

HASKELL HOUSE GARDENS

Starting in August Clarksville residents without garden space will be able to have a small plot at the old Haskell House. This is your chance to raise fresh vegetables while cutting food bills! (food prices rose 20% in 1978) You can start planting fall crops next month.

Water will be available as will tools, and possibly some free seed. If you are interested call the center - 476-4651.

CONT.

In 1978, after homeowner rehabilitation projects were underway, residents devised the Clarksville Rent House Program. It was funded for \$17,000 of HCD funds. The program will provide landlords with cost free labor for house repairs if they are willing to provide materials. They also must agree with the tenant to keep constant rents for the following three years. This program would benefit both landlords and tenants. However, although the program was funded in 1978, no contract has been let to release the funds.

It is unclear as to why there has been no action on this project. The Rent House Program appeared on the City Council agenda for two weeks this past June, but both times it was pulled from the agenda. Residents were told that no contract would be let until guidelines for contracting with community development corporations (such as the CCDC) were developed by the Council. Presently, the CCDC is working with the Austin Tenant Council. A possible plan is that the Tenant Council administer the Rent House Program if that would facilitate action on the Program.

(Next: New Housing in Clarksville.)

