

University of North Carolina at Asheville

“The Changes May Look Good, But The Pain Will Be Hard To Erase”:
Urban Renewal and Community Response in Asheville, North Carolina

A Senior Thesis Submitted To
The Faculty of the Department of History
In Candidacy For The Degree Of
Bachelor Of Arts In History

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Asheville, North Carolina

December, 2011

There were some things that Minnie Jones would never talk about. In 1994, Jones, an African American woman who spent decades involved in the political struggles of Asheville's black community, was interviewed for an oral history project. She spoke widely about her activist work during the civil rights era and beyond. However, when asked to describe the experience of urban renewal in Asheville during the 1960s and 70s, she refused. "No, it's a time we wanna forget... T]here is a lot of us still living," she explained, "that has some bad wounds from that, so I don't want to get into that."¹

In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s federal urban renewal programs reshaped American cities. Under the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, the federal government allocated federal funds to cities for the clearance and redevelopment of "blighted" areas. The impetus behind the urban renewal was the rehabilitation of a decaying national housing stock and, in large part, to revamp urban areas in order to spur economic growth and the competitiveness of American cities. However, urban renewal came under vociferous criticism as it disproportionately impacted African Americans and the poor, uprooting vast communities and offering little reimbursement for those who lost their homes and businesses.

One of the cities targeted for urban renewal projects was Asheville, North Carolina and the predominantly African American neighborhood of East Riverside. Urban renewal altered the lives of thousands of families in these neighborhoods, uprooting and displacing countless people, scattering the community. The Asheville Housing Authority and the Redevelopment Commission gave residents little say in how the process, which had many consequences for their lives, would be carried out. Despite these challenges, East Riverside residents found ways to resist the redevelopment of their neighborhood and influence the renewal process. The city could not entirely suppress the agency of its "slum" residents.

¹ Minnie Jones, "Voices of Asheville Oral History Collection," interview by Dorothy Joynes (2 August 1994).

Historians and other scholars have extensively studied the history of urban renewal and its impact on communities. Their studies have led them to different conclusions about the legacy of the program. *Between Justice and Beauty* by historian Howard Gillette Jr., looks at urban housing policy in Washington, D.C. In Washington, as elsewhere, a desire to stem the tide of suburbanization provided the impetus for redevelopment projects. According to Gillette, "No experience better captured the hopes as well as the dashed expectations of the black community than that of urban renewal."² Urban renewal projects in the Capitol, as throughout the country, garnered the support of the local press, the local construction industry and various civic organizations. African Americans, who were the population most affected by urban renewal, were largely left out of the planning process.³

Historian Beryl Satter studied the impact of urban renewal in Chicago. She found that in Chicago, as elsewhere, African Americans bore the brunt of displacement through urban renewal. This was, she writes, due "in part because they happened to inhabit deteriorating housing in central locations. Yet even controlling for all other factors, race remained a deciding factor in the choice of urban renewal sites in Chicago."⁴ Satter shows that urban renewal was in many cases motivated by concerns other than slum clearance and that the primary sufferers under urban renewal were black communities. African Americans, according to Satter, were disproportionately burdened by urban renewal.⁵

In a 1980 essay on urban renewal, Marc A. Weiss, a strategist and federal policy adviser on issues of urban and economic development, argues that many people have failed to understand the purpose behind urban renewal and therefore misinterpret its outcomes. He argues

² Howard Gillette Jr., *Between Beauty and Justice: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995): 170

³ *Ibid.*, 151-152

⁴ Beryl Satter, *Family Properties* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 393

⁵ Satter, *Family Properties*, 48

that the biggest myth about urban renewal is that it was designed to help slum residents. On the contrary, Weiss argues, "Urban renewal owes its origins to the downtown merchants, banks, large corporations, newspaper publishers, realtors, and other institutions with substantial business and property interests in the central part of the city." According to Weiss, the basic framework for urban renewal had been constructed as early as the 1930s. The Great Depression years were worrisome for downtown property owners in American cities. After the boom years of the 1920s, property values had begun to drop, an ominous development for downtown businesses. In response, downtown property owners formed coalitions and lobbied the federal government to clear areas of blight, most importantly inner city neighborhoods housing low income families. They sought the government's support in clearing blighted areas and rebuilding them in such a way that would increase downtown property values. These powerful lobbying interests, according to Weiss, were largely successful in their efforts, and the basic framework for the Housing Act of 1949 adhered to their desires for redevelopment and was never intended to help low and moderate income families.⁶

The Housing Act of 1949 that ushered in the era of urban renewal was amended in 1954. The changes made in the 1954 Housing Act, as some scholars have noted, reshaped the goals of the program and the manner in which it was carried out, making urban renewal projects more enticing and profitable for developers while simultaneously opening the door for increased citizen participation in the process. Historian Robert Self, in his book *American Babylon* which looks at urban renewal struggles in postwar Oakland, points out the differences between the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 and how the federal government's approach to urban renewal changed after 1954. According to Self, the 1949 Act was generally geared toward improving the national housing supply. Self, unlike Weiss, argues that prior to 1954, improvement of the

⁶ Paul Mitchell, ed. *Federal Housing Policy and Programs* (New Jersey: The Center for Urban Policy Research, 1985) 254-255

national housing stock in order to ensure safe, decent, and sanitary housing for low-income families was the primary motivator behind urban renewal. The Housing Act of 1954, enacted by a conservative congress and signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower reoriented the priorities of urban renewal. The 1954 Act streamlined the urban renewal process, making it faster and easier to acquire and clear properties. It also weakened the requirement in the 1949 Housing Act that areas targeted for renewal be redeveloped for primarily residential uses. Cities were granted more leeway to redevelop "blighted" areas that housed primarily low-income residents for higher uses, allowing developers to construct commercial or institutional developments or middle- to higher-income housing. By providing city governments with increased authority to redevelop former "slum" neighborhoods for purposes other than low-cost housing, the Housing Act of 1954 weakened the social service aspect that characterized urban renewal to some degree as embodied in the Housing Act of 1949. According to historian John F. Bauman, the 1954 act "marr[ied] the city rebuilding idea more solidly to the comprehensive plan for economic revitalization," creating an urban renewal program less focused on improving housing conditions for the poor and more on shoring up downtown property values and the municipal tax base. "For developers and investment bankers," Bauman argues, "the act transferred redevelopment into an engine for profit."⁷

The Housing Act of 1954 also made possible a greater degree of citizen participation in the urban renewal process. The act mandated that each city that sought urban renewal funds institute a "Workable Program," a set of requirements intended to insure that urban renewal projects would be carried out in a comprehensive way so as to guarantee the elimination and prevention of slums. The Workable Program required municipal governments to formulate and

⁷ John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987): 139

enforce adequate housing codes, conduct a neighborhood analysis to determine the extent of blight, develop programs to assist in the relocation of displaced families, and among other requirements, to ensure citizen participation in the program.⁸ Political scientist James Q. Wilson has noted that, although the citizen participation requirement did not mandate participation of residents of the neighborhoods in which urban renewal projects were to take place and only required the participation of the broader community, in many areas, for local public agencies overseeing urban renewal projects, "the increased vigor of neighborhood opposition has made such participation expedient if not essential."⁹ In many cities the local public agency overseeing urban renewal projects sought support for urban renewal among the residents of the neighborhoods targeted for redevelopment.

Over time opposition to urban renewal among the residents of areas slated for renewal grew increasingly vociferous. By the early 1960s, urban renewal had become a notorious program, derided as "Negro Removal," that threatened to force people out of their homes and their communities. Wilson, writing in 1963, noted that, while early urban renewal projects were met primarily with resignation on the part of neighborhood residents, over time that resignation became resistance. "Somehow," Wilson wrote, "people have learned from the experience of others, and today, in cities which have been engaged in renewal for several years, the planners often find prospective renewal areas ready and waiting for them, organized to the teeth."¹⁰ Communities from Washington, D.C. to Oakland, California resisted urban renewal. In the process they won some important victories. The method and impact of neighborhood resistance to urban renewal in Asheville has not yet been thoroughly studied. Resistance to urban renewal

⁸ Scott Greer, *Urban Renewal and American Cities* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1965):10.

⁹ James Q. Wilson. "Planning and Politics: Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal," In *Urban Renewal: People, Politics, and Planning*, ed. Jewel Bellusch and Murray Hausknecht (New York: Anchor Books, 1967): 290.

¹⁰ Wilson, *Urban Renewal*, 289.

in Asheville was limited in scope and effectiveness but the residents of Asheville's South Side won some important victories in their efforts to resist urban renewal.

One of the largest urban renewal projects in the Southern United States took place in Asheville, North Carolina in the neighborhood of East Riverside. East Riverside, located southeast of downtown Asheville, consisted of about four hundred acres, containing roughly seven percent (about 4,000 people) of Asheville's total population. Thirteen percent of Asheville's low-income families lived in East Riverside in 1966. Half of the African American population of Asheville resided in East Riverside in the 1960s. The elderly made up sixteen percent of the population, a very high concentration.¹¹

The plan for redevelopment in East Riverside, according to a January, 1966 article in the *Asheville Citizen-Times* would be "almost a wholly residential renewal program." The project was originally developed and conducted by the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, which merged in 1970 with the Asheville Housing Authority. The plan, at the start of the project in 1967, called for the demolition of 60 percent of the neighborhood's 1,275 homes and businesses.¹² Public and private housing would be built in place of the cleared land. The plan developed by the Commission and the Authority called for the construction of 525 low-rent units of public housing, including a 100-unit apartment building for elderly tenants.¹³ "Much of this public housing, "according to the 1966 *Citizen-Times* article, "will be used for relocating families displaced by the urban renewal process." The neighborhood, which was overwhelmingly residential, would, according to the original redevelopment plan, remain so.¹⁴

¹¹ "Inside East Riverside", 1966, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 43, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

¹² *Asheville Citizen-Times*, "Greer Gives Redevelopment Plan Facts" 2/19/1967

¹³ Asheville Citizen-Times, vol. 29 30 B-F "Remedy for a Blighted Area" ACT 2.14.1967

¹⁴ Phillip Clark, "Asheville Revitalizing Through UR Projects," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 30 January 1966.

The plan for renewal called for some non-residential redevelopment as well. The Housing Authority planned to use an area on Southside Avenue for the development of new commercial property; in addition, the Authority and the Redevelopment Commission planned to build a new fire station, community center, and parks and recreational facilities, along with improving streets and sidewalks. "In short," according to the Asheville Citizen-Times, "the UR program is aimed at redeveloping East Riverside into a first-class neighborhood."¹⁵

While the primary goal may have been to provide better living conditions for East Riverside residents, a secondary goal described by James Greer, executive director of the Redevelopment Commission, in a 1967 interview with the Asheville Citizen-Times was "that the project will increase the city's tax base in the area." According to Greer, "'About one-third of what we buy...will go back on the tax books. And that which goes back on the tax books will return more to the city than all these parcels do now.'" The development of public housing in the neighborhood would be a boon to the city. According to Greer, payments made to the city by public housing tenants would generate more revenue "than the taxes on the property at present." Greer's remarks point to a motivation behind urban renewal project that Asheville shared with many American cities: to shore up a dwindling tax base by remaking a deteriorated neighborhood in such a way as to produce higher revenue for the city.¹⁶

In order to meet the Housing Act of 1954's requirements for a Workable Program of redevelopment, the City of Asheville, in 1966, commissioned a neighborhood study of thirty-six areas in the city. The purpose of the analysis was to provide the Asheville Redevelopment Commission with information on the extent of physical blight and social indicators of blight in the areas and to make recommendations for treatment. The study contains some important

¹⁵ *Asheville Citizen-Times*, vol. 29 30 B-F "Remedy for a Blighted Area" ACT 2.14.1967

¹⁶ *Asheville Citizen-Times*, vol. 29 30 B-F "Remedy for a Blighted Area" ACT 2.14.1967

information about the condition of life for some in East Riverside. East Riverside, also known as the South Side, was contained in what the study designated the South Central Unit. The analysis described the South Central Unit, which also contained Asheville's East End, a neighborhood that would be the site of an urban renewal project in the late 1970s, as "a severely blighted area of predominantly non-white housing...[containing] [b]lighting conditions of every type and degree... It contains a high percentage of sub-standard structures, of adverse social conditions, of land use problems, of poor property maintenance, of poorly designed streets and lots, and of general obsolescence." According to the study, "The highest incidence of social conditions reflecting blight within the Metropolitan Area is found in the South Central Unit." The South Central Unit, including East Riverside, was found to contain 38.6 percent of the City's tuberculosis cases, 24.3 percent of its infant mortality, 50.2 percent of venereal disease cases, 34 percent of public assistance cases, and 33.7 percent of the major arrests.¹⁷

Another study, initiated by the Redevelopment Commission and carried out by Ruth Mace from March to June 1966, provides a more revealing portrait of the conditions of life for those living in East Riverside prior to renewal as well as how they viewed their neighborhood and its impending redevelopment. The Mace study was remarkably comprehensive, interviewing someone from nearly all of the 1,300 households in East Riverside. The study portrays East Riverside as a neighborhood characterized by hardship, with a high concentration of families living in poverty. According to the study, "Almost two-thirds of the households reporting income in the survey take in less than \$3,000 a year" while 15 percent of the population subsists on less than \$1,200 a year. The unemployment rate for the neighborhood in 1966 was a staggering 16 percent, with women as the primary source of income in East

¹⁷ "A Program For Renewal -Neighborhood Analysis Study", 1966, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 43, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Riverside. Rates of home ownership in the neighborhood, the study found, were exceptionally and surprisingly high. Despite the high percentage of low-income families, 58 percent of families in East Riverside owned their own home.¹⁸

The study found that there was a certain degree of ambivalence about East Riverside among its residents. Most of those interviewed indicated that they were happy with the neighborhood but a significant portion also indicated that they were willing to move. The study found that "two out of three who live [in East Riverside] like the neighborhood fine, and only one in ten dislikes it." The residents' primary complaint about the neighborhood was the absence of sidewalks and adequate street lighting, which led many to feel that the neighborhood was unsafe. These complaints notwithstanding, East Riverside residents were generally found to be satisfied with their neighborhood.¹⁹

The Mace study also took the pulse of the community's attitude about urban renewal. The study found that 20 percent of those interviewed knew little about urban renewal or, in the language of the study, were "confused" about it, believing that East Riverside would be turned into a primarily commercial or industrial area. One in ten expressed a negative view of the program, holding the opinion that it would do little to improve life for East Riverside residents and would put people out of their homes. The majority of residents, according to the study, expressed an optimistic or hopeful view that urban renewal would improve the neighborhood.²⁰

In the spring of 1966, a public hearing on the East Riverside redevelopment project was held during which members of the community had a chance to comment on the proposed plans for their neighborhood. The Mace study had revealed a distaste for public housing among East Riverside residents, concluding that an "immediate and concentrated campaign to improve the

¹⁸ "Inside East Riverside", 1966.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

public housing image among the people of East Riverside is in order, if new housing projected for the neighborhood is to be well received."²¹ At the hearing, members of the Redevelopment Commission, the local agency charged with overseeing urban renewal in East Riverside, heeding the advice of the Mace study, argued strongly for the expansion of public housing in the neighborhood. The public hearing was held in order to meet the requirements the Workable Program. While this could have been an opportunity for the residents of East Riverside to express their wishes and perhaps shape the future of their neighborhood, the hearing did little to give adequate voice to the concerns of East Riverside's residents. The majority of the hearing was taken up by members and supporters of the Redevelopment Commission extolling the virtues and benefits of the proposed renewal program.²²

James Greer informed the assembled community members that public housing played a significant role in the City's plans for East Riverside. "The proposed uses in the redevelopment area", Greer said, "are all types of residential and some limited commercial use. We anticipate the construction by the Asheville Housing Authority of 500 units of low-rent public housing." Knowing that public housing had a bad reputation among the residents of East Riverside, Greer attempted to preempt their concerns, saying "This is not the type of public housing that we have in Asheville at the present time as shown by Lee Walker Heights, Pisgah View and Hillcrest. The housing units that are planned for this area are primarily one-story single family duplex or triplex units." Joseph Schandler, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the City of Asheville, offered a spirited defense of the City's plans for public housing in East Riverside, declaring that "[T]his is going to be public housing like no one in Asheville or this area has ever seen...[Y]ou can take

²¹ "Inside East Riverside", 1966.

²² "Public Hearing on the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project Given by the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, 1966", Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "Public Hearing on East Riverside Project – May 31, 1966," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville

these homes and compare them to any of the finest homes being built in Asheville today." Greer and Schadler's remarks on public housing aimed to engender a sense of optimism on the part of the residents about the proposed redevelopment of their neighborhood. Knowing that many members of the community had negative perceptions of public housing, the supporters of urban renewal used the public hearing to allay people's concerns and preempt any objection that community members might have to the Redevelopment Commission's proposal for redevelopment. Whether or not they were successful in these attempts is uncertain. The residents of East Riverside present at the public hearing said little to challenge the members of the Redevelopment Commission and their plan for the neighborhood.²³

It was not until the meeting was nearly over that Talulah Rogers of 11 Blanton Street in East Riverside came forward to voice sharp criticism of the redevelopment plan. "I want to know one thing", she said. "These homes you all are talking about, they are all for rent it seems to me, and I am not in to rent. I am going to be frank with you, I am not in to rent, because I want to save money. Somebody coming to get my rent, I don't like that...I got my own [home] right now and I ain't in for no renting." Homeownership, for Rogers, represented economic security and independence. The East Riverside redevelopment project threatened to deprive residents like Rogers of their property and their homes, offering them instead something they did not want: public housing. Public housing, renting instead of owning ones home, represented, for Rogers and possibly others, a challenge to economic status and independence.²⁴

Despite the Redevelopment Commission's efforts at the public hearing to convince the people of East Riverside that the changes being forced upon them were in their best interests, some in the community remained highly skeptical and resentful of the challenge to their agency

²³ "Public Hearing on the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project Given by the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, 1966."

²⁴ Ibid.

as citizens and homeowners that urban renewal represented. The proposed public housing, for Rogers, represented a step backward for her as a homeowner. And urban renewal, embodied in the Redevelopment Commission, represented a threat as it could deprive her of her home. Greer responded to Rogers' concerns by arguing that "There will be ample opportunity for anyone who wants to buy or own a home to do so in the East Riverside area." Rogers was not consoled by these remarks: "I already have one," she said.²⁵

As the meeting drew to a close, W.F. Algary of the Asheville City Council offered a challenge, rooted in paternalism, to the residents of East Riverside that likely galled Rogers and others who were not pleased with the proposed redevelopment of their neighborhood. "Now", Algary began, "you people have the opportunity to prove to yourselves, to the City of Asheville and the State of North Carolina, that you really can make this project worthwhile and it will be one where anyone, regardless of race, creed, or color will be damn glad to live." For those like Algary who took a paternalistic view of the residents of East Riverside, the redevelopment project was for their own good. And if the project proved to be a failure in one way or another, it would not be the fault of the Redevelopment Commission or the Housing Authority. It would be the fault of those who lived in East Riverside, whose autonomy, whose property rights, and whose ability to determine the future of their community were all challenged by the process of urban renewal. The public hearing, while it could have been an opportunity for the community to have a genuine voice in determining the future of their neighborhood was largely *pro forma*. The plans for East Riverside had already been made and there was little residents could do at the hearing to change the course of the redevelopment project.²⁶

²⁵ "Public Hearing on the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project Given by the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, 1966."

²⁶ "Public Hearing on the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project Given by the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, 1966."

The Redevelopment Commission and the Housing Authority attempted to control the means by which people learned about urban renewal, perhaps hoping to preempt any negative responses to it. As the East Riverside urban renewal project was gearing up, the Redevelopment Commission produced and distributed to East Riverside residents a monthly newsletter, "The Community Improver," that sought to educate the community about urban renewal. The Mace study found that "The Community Improver appears to be a highly successful public relations device" and recommended to the Redevelopment Commission that "It should be encouraged and nourished." The first issue of the "Improver" appeared in April of 1966. In it, the Redevelopment Commission attempted to confront some of the rumors and allay the fears of neighborhood residents: "When anything big is in the wind (and urban renewal is BIG), rumors start blowing around, too. We've heard some of them, and we know there must be others where those came from. Some people think a bulldozer will sweep away their house, leaving them to shift for themselves. Others think it is a gift from Heaven that will put them in a good house and pay all their bills." While acknowledging that the program would not be painless, the "Improver" stressed that "This program is designed to help cure the problems of bad housing in our cities."²⁷

The first issue of the "Improver" had a distinctly reassuring tone as the authors attempted to address fears among residents that someone, either real estate developers or the city itself, would make a nice profit from the redevelopment of their community:

In order to save [dilapidated] areas, many houses must be bought and demolished to provide space for modern, well-planned housing. This is not profitable. Even if private builders could afford it they could not make much profit. Urban renewal is not designed to make money, but to use it to improve our city and to help provide better housing for our citizens.²⁸

²⁷ "The Community Improver" April, 1966, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 1, folder "Pub: Community Improver 1966," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

²⁸ "The Community Improver" April, 1966.

In contrast with the reassuring and explanatory approach used in the inaugural issue, the "Improver" often took on an admonishing, paternalistic tone in addressing the residents of East Riverside. The August, 1966 issue of "The Community Improver" began by lamenting that "A report of the residents in the East Riverside Urban Renewal Area indicates that there is a need for greater concern on the part of the people of this area." The Improver, under a section entitled "Try Harder" went on to remind readers that:

The 'Rehab' office has taken great pains to keep people abreast of what is being done and planned. In spite of this, some of the people still are not taking advantage of the opportunities offered. Some are still prone to accept from people on street corners explanations about such things as methods of appraisal, what to do about fixing up property, who would be eligible for public housing, what sections will undergo demolition. How and when money may become available for repairs, whether or not tenants as well as owners get the same treatment as it relates to relocation.²⁹

The "Improver" went on to exhort people to stop bringing their concerns about urban renewal to their neighbors but, instead, to bring any questions or concerns they had to the Rehab office. "Ask those questions that are bothering you," the article read, "But we repeat: get your answers at the Rehab office instead of in the street."³⁰ This admonition by the "Improver" is indicative of growing frustration on the part of the Redevelopment Commission that, despite their efforts to forestall community objections to their urban renewal program, the community was still skeptical and concerned about urban renewal and what it would mean for them. The "Improver" article implies that, while neighborhood residents had not yet begun to articulate their objections collectively to the Redevelopment Commission, they were expressing concerns about urban renewal to one another. The Redevelopment Commission, by encouraging residents to bring

²⁹ "The Community Improver" August, 1966, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 1, folder "Pub: Community Improver 1966," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

³⁰ Ibid.

concerns to them instead of each other, aimed to mitigate the amount of community commiseration over urban renewal taking place in East Riverside.

One way that East Riverside residents were able to make their collective voice heard to potentially shape the course of urban renewal and retain a certain degree of community self-determination was through the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). In order to be in compliance with the citizen participation requirements of the Housing Act of 1954, many cities formed a citizen advisory committee made up primarily of residents of areas designated for redevelopment. The citizen advisory committees acted as a liaison between neighborhood residents and the local public authority overseeing urban renewal, in the case of Asheville the Redevelopment Commission or the Housing Authority. In many cities, those in support of urban renewal or charged with carrying it out saw the citizen's advisory committees as largely a nuisance and hindrance to progress. A member of an urban renewal agency in one city adamantly opposed the committees, saying, "We don't want one here - it would just be a divisive move, a way to organize your opposition." A member of another urban renewal agency in another city whose redevelopment project failed to get off the ground due to public opposition vented to an interviewer over the role citizen advisory committees played in the project's failure: "We've educated so damned many people I'm not sure we haven't defeated our purpose-they're all vocal. We use a Citizen's Advisory Committee, but I don't know if we should. Maybe the guys are smarty who play it cozy, with a few highly prominent people as window dressing, and do what they need to. I'm convinced you can't explain it to people-and I've worked like a dog trying to do it!"³¹

Despite these laments over the threat that citizen advisory committees posed to urban renewal, the committees were sometimes an ineffective way of furthering the interests of the

³¹ Greer, *Urban Renewal and American Cities*, 42

community. A former member of an advisory committee in one city felt that the committee was merely perfunctory and had little impact on the course that urban renewal took in that city, saying ""When I was appointed to the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal I didn't know what we were supposed to do. Then I found out that 90 percent of the decisions were already made...Then it dawned on me that we were appointed to fulfill a legal requirement and that's all...When we did give them strong advice...they overrode us." ³² Depending on the area, Citizen Advisory Committees could be either an effective way of organizing community opposition to urban renewal, or a way for agencies overseeing urban renewal to attach a window-dressing of public support to their projects.

The Asheville Housing Authority and the residents had quite different ideas from each other as to what role the PAC ought to serve in the urban renewal process. In a January, 1970 interview, Dave Jones, the Redevelopment Commission's project director, said that the scope of the PAC's power to shape the urban renewal process would be decidedly limited. He stated that "[The PAC] won't be able to change the urban renewal program...but they can assist the [Redevelopment Commission] in solving a lot of the problems we are now faced with." ³³ At a PAC meeting in December of 1974, Lawrence Holt, Executive Director of the Housing Authority urged Ray Lyles, chairman of the PAC, and the members of the committee to encourage area residents whose homes were set to be acquired to sell. At the same meeting, according to the minutes, W.C. King of the Asheville Housing Authority "said that this is what the AHA needs from the PAC, the committee's approval to use whatever means are possible to get people to move in order that the program progress steadily." In response, "Mr. Lyles expressed the opinion that residents should be made aware that progress needs to be made, but

³² Greer, *Urban Renewal and American Cities*, 41.

³³ Henry Robinson, "Big Gains Made In Slum Clearance and Low Cost Housing," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 25 January 1970.

that he could not ask an elderly homeowner to sell his home."³⁴ The PAC's purpose, from the perspective of those with the Housing Authority and the Redevelopment Commission, was to help them ensure the urban renewal process was conducted smoothly and efficiently. For the members of the committee, as evidenced by Lyles' comments, serving the wishes of the Authority meant betraying the needs of the community. When the Housing Authority's desires conflicted with PAC members own ideas about how the process of renewal should be carried out, they pushed back against the Authority.

The residents of East Riverside had a complicated relationship with the PAC, viewing it sometimes as an effective means of influencing the Redevelopment Commission and the Housing Authority, and at other times viewing it with mistrust and suspicion. The PAC's members consisted of residents of the neighborhood. Distrust of the Committee stemmed largely from the fact that prospective members of the PAC had to submit their names to the Housing Authority for approval. This process engendered suspicion about the loyalties of the Committee members among members of the community. Some of these concerns were expressed by Talulah Rogers in a heated exchange with W.C. King of the Redevelopment Commission during a 1971 meeting. Rogers, who lived on Blanton Street, complained to King that there was not a single member on the Committee from her street to advocate for her and her neighbors' interests. The exchange that followed indicates one source of concern about PAC among the community. In response to Rogers' complaints that the Committee did not contain any representatives from her street, according to the minutes from the meeting, "Mr. King replied that the Area Council composed of 27 members from East Riverside selected the Committee. Mrs. Rogers said they were handpicked by Allen Johnson [of the Housing Authority]...and said some dirty work was

³⁴ "Project Advisory Committee Meeting", December 12, 1974, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

going on somewhere." Rogers' statement indicates that some residents were concerned that members of the PAC served the interests of the Housing Authority rather than the community.³⁵

Another concern about PAC expressed at the meeting was the presence of non-homeowners on the Committee. At the 1971 meeting, Rev. Wesley Grant "stated he felt the people who were tax payers should be considered [for the Committee]. He named those on the Committee who were not home owners and said they couldn't make plans for those who did own homes." Grant went on to insist that only owners be eligible for membership on the Committee. This sentiment was affirmed by Roy Rogers, who "stated that the people from Erskine Apartments had no business making decisions for home-owners." These sentiments point to a source of internal strife among the members of the East Riverside community. Some East Riverside homeowners felt that their status as homeowners and property tax payers entitled them to a larger degree of input into how the neighborhood would be shaped through urban renewal. There was a feeling that their status granted them, in effect, a higher status as citizens than their neighbors who rented. They did not feel that they deserved a say in the future of their neighborhood simply because they lived there but because, as homeowners, they were invested in the neighborhood. Renters were not invested in the neighborhood to the same extent and therefore did not have the authority to speak for the community. The concerns expressed by Grant and Rogers suggest that there was a feeling in the neighborhood, among homeowners, that their right to determine the future of East Riverside was being threatened not only by the City but by their non-home owning neighbors as well.³⁶ This rift between homeowners and renters militated against the community's ability to form a united front in response to urban renewal.

³⁵ Project Advisory Committee Meeting", October 8, 1971, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

³⁶ Project Advisory Committee Meeting", October 8, 1971.

Some East Riverside residents attempted to retain their property and their autonomy by steadfastly refusing to cooperate with the city. Sam and Estelle Anderson had owned their home at 36 Beech Street since 1921. Another couple, the Youngs, lived next door at 40 Beech Street. The two couples were close friends and, in their response to urban renewal, they acted as a unit. By the late 1960s when urban renewal first touched their lives, the Andersons and the Youngs were in their eighties. The Andersons' home, while old, was well tended, consisting of seven rooms, a garage, and two chicken sheds out back. When the City came to appraise the Anderson's property in 1965, 67, and 68, they accommodated the appraisers, inviting them into their home despite any suspicions they may have had of the appraisers and what their visit meant. However, by the mid-1970s, the Andersons had grown hostile to the Housing Authority and its plans for their property. The Andersons had no intention of giving up their home. They ignored letters from the Redevelopment Commission and the Housing Authority that urged them to sign an option on the property, agreeing to the price offered by the City. The Housing Authority pushed the Andersons and Youngs for a response to the City's offer, but still the families stonewalled. When an appraiser showed up in October of '74 to reassess the value of their property, the Andersons refused him permission to inspect.³⁷

The Andersons' obstinacy did little to endear them to the Housing Authority. After failing to have the Andersons property reappraised, the City quickly initiated condemnation proceedings against them. On December 31, 1974, a local court granted the Housing Authority possession of the Andersons property, awarding them \$12,500 in compensation for it, which the Andersons refused to accept.³⁸

³⁷ Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 69, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville

³⁸ Ibid.

The Project Advisory Committee, although initially viewed with suspicion by East Riverside residents, eventually became a valuable venue for residents to express their concerns about urban renewal and to influence the course of redevelopment in their neighborhood. By 1974, Talulah Rogers, who had been so critical of the Project Advisory Committee years earlier had become a member of the Committee. She and other members of the PAC forcefully challenged the Housing Authority on its attempts to displace the Andersons and Youngs and other elderly East Riverside residents. Committee members and neighborhood residents used PAC meetings to confront members of the Housing Authority. At a meeting on February 14, 1973, members of the Committee complained to representatives of the Housing Authority that "homeowners being relocated are being left in debt with no real means of paying off these debts." Ray Lyles, Chairman of the Committee, vented his frustration that "houses in which people are being relocated are substandard and that the rehabilitation of some homes has been inadequate." A representative of the Housing Authority responded by merely stating that urban renewal and eminent domain were national law and it did not matter whether the PAC accepted it or not. At the same meeting, Larry Holt, Deputy Executive Director of the Housing Authority, perhaps growing frustrated at the efforts of PAC to influence the process of redevelopment, declared that "the planning [for the project] has already been completed...that there was a public hearing, that the City Council approved the plan, that HUD had approved the plan and that contracts had been signed." His remarks are indicative of the degree to which the Housing Authority disdained public involvement in the ongoing process of redevelopment and desired to limit the influence of the Committee. Talulah Rogers refused to accept that the project was set in stone, saying that "things can be changed."³⁹ Rogers, perhaps more than anyone else in East

³⁹ "Project Advisory Committee Meeting", 14 February 1973, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of

Riverside, believed in the collective power of the community to effect change in the way the East Riverside urban renewal project was carried out. The community, she felt, could act as a unit to protect its own interests against any policies made by the Housing Authority that were perceived as a threat to those interests.⁴⁰

In East Riverside, residents occasionally came together to protect the property of some of the neighborhoods most vulnerable, elderly residents, including the Andersons and the Youngs. Talulah Rogers was especially forceful in PAC meetings on issues concerning the elderly and how urban renewal affected them. At a December 1974 meeting, perhaps with the Andersons and Youngs in mind, Rogers "stated that old people have nowhere to go but to projects. She said that they want houses and asked the Committee to consider the needs of the elderly." The elderly, she pleaded, "need houses built in the area which they can purchase." After the Andersons and Youngs' properties had been seized by the Housing Authority through eminent domain, Rogers took up their cause, urging the Committee to petition the Housing Authority to leave the Andersons and Youngs alone and allow them to live out their remaining years in their homes on Beech Street.⁴¹ In November of 1976, the PAC drew up a letter which they sent out to the Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners, the Asheville City Council, and to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, asking that the Andersons and Youngs be left alone. The letter they drafted read in part, "The prospect of relocation and its effect on these elderly citizens (85 and 86 years old) is of great concern to the PAC Committee and this community for the obvious reasons of age, physical and mental health and the inability to find relocation properties suitable and acceptable to these families." The letter went on to request that the Andersons and

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⁴⁰ Talulah Rogers, for all her work on behalf of the East Riverside community during the urban renewal project, was recognized by the community with a street named in her honor.

⁴¹ "Project Advisory Committee Meeting", December 12, 1974.

Youngs be given "lifetime rights to the property acquired from them by the Asheville Housing Authority through the process of eminent domain." The work of the PAC on behalf of the Andersons and Youngs paid off. In December of 1976 the City Council resolved that the two elderly families were not to be "coerced or intimidated in any way to move." The PAC proved to be one of the most effective tools the residents of East Riverside had to help them to shape their fate under urban renewal.⁴²

While some residents of East Riverside engaged in activity with the PAC to protest urban renewal and its consequences, others took to penning letters to city, state, and federal officials to protest redevelopment projects in their community. In November of 1970, Mary P. Williams received a letter from the Redevelopment Commission, stating that her home at 60 Blanton Street was slated for acquisition as part of the East Riverside Redevelopment Project. This was the second such letter she had received from the Commission. Earlier in the year, the neighborhood grocery store she owned was acquired by the city. The impending loss of her home in addition to her business was too much for Williams to take. She appealed to the Project Advisory Committee for help. "Dear Sirs," she wrote, "I am a widow with no help and they have taken my store and I have to try and find something els and know (sic) they want my home. I don't want to give my home up and street. That all I have."⁴³

Williams was only one of many residents of East Riverside who put pen to paper to protest the upheaval of their lives and their community. In November of 1971, a year after Blanton Street resident Mary Williams wrote her heartfelt plea to the PAC, the residents of

⁴² "Project Advisory Committee Meeting", Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

⁴³ Letter from Mary Williams to the Project Advisory Committee, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Blanton Street, which, according to longtime resident Lawrence Gilliam was an area that housed the more affluent African Americans in the neighborhood, collectively wrote a letter of protest to the Redevelopment Commission.⁴⁴ In this joint letter, they criticized the current plans for redevelopment in their neighborhood, writing "We do not like any part of the original plan which did not consider or consult with the people of our neighborhood." Specifically, the residents of Blanton Street took issue with the plan to expand Asheland Avenue, a plan that would have necessitated taking homes that were in standard condition and might not otherwise have been acquired: "We do not want a major road cutting through our neighborhood...destroying what has been left of our community identity." To the residents of Blanton Street the proposed expansion of Asheland as part of the urban renewal project amounted to a plan for "taking our property for people with cars." The letter further criticized the plan for East Riverside because it did not appear to provide enough new housing to accommodate the existing population of the neighborhood. The Redevelopment Commission's plans for East Riverside would shrink the number of houses in the area. Many families and individuals, as the Blanton Street coalition observed, would be forced to relocate due to a lack of housing post-renewal. The proposed plan, the residents protested, "facilitates the usual Negro removal."⁴⁵

Having offered their critique of the Redevelopment Commission's plan for remaking East Riverside, the residents of Blanton Street detailed their own plan for renewal:

- A. Proper and better municipal, county and state services provided horizontally to help the low and moderate income residents.
- B. Income maintenance programs.
- C. Strict code enforcement on rental properties.

⁴⁴ Lawrence Gilliam, "Asheville Urban Renewal, Karen VanEman Collection," interview by Karen VanEman (6 November 2007).

⁴⁵ Letter from the residents of Blanton Street to the Asheville Redevelopment Commission, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 43, folder "Changes to be considered for amendment to East Riverside Project," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

- D. Policies...encouraging the developers to provide for low and moderate income housing in the new developments especially for the minority groups.
- E. Effective counseling, legal assistance and social services to the project area residents.⁴⁶

As these members of the East Riverside community saw it, if urban renewal was truly intended to empower their community and improve the conditions of life for them and their neighbors, the Redevelopment Commission would focus on these five issues. As evidenced by their list of the services the neighborhood needed, they shared the Redevelopment Commission's view that East Riverside was, in many ways, an ailing neighborhood. But the response they proposed, as these residents saw it, did little to address the causes of what ailed the area. The Commission's proposals for renewal, according to Blanton Street residents, would hurt rather than help the neighborhood. The residents that penned this letter had no intention of passively accepting the uprooting of their community. They implored the Redevelopment Commission to "See us as partners to a successful project completion and not as possible left over properties that have to be carried to court." The residents of Blanton Street were determined to maintain some sense of community self-determination, and did not shy away from demanding the Redevelopment Commission take their desires for their own community into account.⁴⁷

Conaria Booker looked beyond the immediate area for assistance in dealing with the repercussions of urban renewal on her life. In 1976, the Housing Authority acquired Booker's home on Dewitt Street. Despite having lived in the house on Dewitt her entire life, Booker and her family did not own the property. They were renters. The Housing Authority gave them ninety days to vacate. She tried to purchase the home from the Housing Authority, planning to have it moved to a vacant lot but the Authority refused. In April of the following year, she appealed to

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Letter from the residents of Blanton Street to the Asheville Redevelopment Commission.

the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Consumer Department in Washington D.C., writing "I saw a commercial on TV, w[h]ere the lady complains about not being consulted on the changes in her neighborhood, which is similar to what has happened to me." According to Booker, the community had been given a set of promises by the Housing Authority that urban renewal would improve the quality of life in East Riverside and that people would be able to continue living in the area. In reality, as she saw it, people had been pressured by the Authority to sell and vacate their property before they had found suitable replacement housing. According to Booker Pressure from the Authority to move forced people to settle for whatever they could find which caused them to end up in housing worse than that which was taken from them in the name of slum removal. Booker further identified and criticized the paternalism of the Redevelopment Commission, writing that "I hope some record has been kept of the results of forcing people into 'what is good for' them...The changes may look good, but the pain will be hard to erase."⁴⁸

While some worked tirelessly to resist or to shape the process of urban renewal in East Riverside, many neighborhood residents felt powerless to influence the process of urban renewal and responded to it with apathy. In 1970, a commission overseeing urban renewal in East Riverside and other neighborhoods in Asheville took note of the feelings of powerlessness expressed by residents of East Riverside to shape the fate of their communities. Residents of areas targeted for renewal, including East Riverside, the report said, "do not believe participation in community activities, in public programs, in the election process, and dealing with agency heads is meaningful. The feeling expressed is: 'The decisions will be made apart from me, I don't

⁴⁸ Letter from Conaria Booker to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 103, folder "Block 15 Parcel 2 Conaria Booker," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

count I don't participate.'"⁴⁹ Feelings of inefficacy were also evident in the 1966 study conducted by Ruth Mace. East Riverside residents were asked whether or not they would be willing to move away from their neighborhood. "According to interviewers," the study said, "many respondents found it hard to understand that they were being offered a choice in this question. A typical response was, 'If we have to move, we'll move.'"⁵⁰ While some in East Riverside acted forcefully to maintain some degree of autonomy and role in shaping the future of their community, many clearly did not feel they had any power to control their circumstances. Many felt they had no choice. Despite the feelings of apathy among some members of these communities, others refused to remain silent in the face of urban renewal.

Residents of Asheville's East Riverside neighborhood responded to urban renewal in a multitude of ways. Members of the community defied the Redevelopment Commission and other proponents of renewal through public protest, penning heartfelt letters of complaint and protest, joining neighborhood committees to further community interests, and coming together to protect particularly vulnerable members of the community from the consequences of redevelopment. Residents did not passively accept urban renewal but rather worked as individuals and as a community to shape the process of redevelopment, seeking to maintain a sense of community self-determination.

⁴⁹ "Asheville Model Cities Mid-Year Planning Statement", 1970, "Community Valuation", 1971, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 25, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

⁵⁰ "Inside East Riverside", 1966, Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

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This document consists of the Asheville Model Cities Program’s progress in the Model Neighborhood, which contained East Riverside. It details the types of assistance the Model Cities Program planned to offer for residents of the neighborhood as well as feelings of neighborhood residents about the Model Cities.

Clark, Phillip. “Asheville Revitalizing Through UR Projects.” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 30 January 1966.

This article praises the Redevelopment Commission’s plans for redevelopment in East Riverside. It argues that the neighborhood was in drastic need of an overhaul and that the plan for urban renewal in the area would remake East Riverside in a positive way.

“The Community Improver” April, 1966 and August 1966, *Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records*, Box 1, folder “Pub: Community Improver 1966,” D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

The documents in this collection consist of newsletters produced by the Redevelopment Commission for the residents of East Riverside. The newsletter contains information about the program for urban renewal in the neighborhood.

Gilliam, Lawrence. Interview with Karen VanEman, 6 November 2007.

In this interview, Gilliam discusses the urban renewal projects in East Riverside, Stumptown, and the East End. He describes East Riverside before, during, and after renewal in great detail and provides ample information on how the neighborhood was shaped through urban renewal.

“Greer Gives Redevelopment Plan Facts.” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 19 February 1967.

This source is an interview conducted by an unnamed reporter with the *Asheville Citizen-Times* with James Greer of the Asheville Redevelopment Commission. In the interview Greer discusses the Redevelopment Commission’s reasons for initiating an urban renewal program in East Riverside and their plans for redevelopment in the area.

Holt, Lawrence D. Interview with Sarah Judson, 18 March 2009.

Larry Holt, the head of the Redevelopment Commission that oversaw urban renewal projects in Asheville discusses the goals, policies, methods and mistakes of the Redevelopment Commission.

Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 69, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This box contains documents relating to the Anderson and Young families. The documents detail their struggles with the Redevelopment Commission over the course of many years.

“Inside East Riverside”, 1966, *Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records*, Box 43, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document describes in great detail the neighborhood of East Riverside. The document is a result of interviews with nearly every household in East Riverside and it contains information on the neighborhood residents' impression of their neighborhood and of urban renewal. It also contains advice for the Redevelopment Commission on how the best way to conduct their urban renewal program in the area.

Jones, Minnie. Interview with Dorothy Joynes, 2 August 1994.

In this interview, Jones discusses at length her political activism in Asheville. She had worked for years as a civil rights activist in the city and she shares her experience and unique perspective on Asheville politics and history.

“Letter from the residents of Blanton Street to the Asheville Redevelopment Commission.”

Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 43, folder “Changes to be considered for amendment to East Riverside Project,” D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document is a letter written collectively by the residents of Blanton Street in East Riverside to the Redevelopment Commission. In it they protest the Commission's plans for redevelopment in the neighborhood and offer suggestions for types of assistance that would better serve the neighborhood.

“Letter from Conaria Booker to the Department of Housing and Urban Development”,

Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 103, folder “Block 15 Parcel 2 Conaria Booker,” D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document is a letter sent from East Riverside resident Conaria Booker to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C. In the letter she asks for help in dealing with the Redevelopment Commission, which she feels has unjustly deprived her of her home.

“Letter from Mary Williams to the Project Advisory Committee.” *Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records*, Box 44, folder “PAC Minutes and Related Information,” D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document is a letter from East Riverside resident Mary Williams to the Project Advisory Committee. In it she asks the Committee for help in retaining her home on Blanton Street which had been slated for acquisition by the Redevelopment Commission.

“A Program For Renewal -Neighborhood Analysis Study,” 1966. *Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records*, Box 43, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document is a study of Asheville’s neighborhoods in 1966. It provides a detailed description of the neighborhoods, their demographics, and indicators of blight in each neighborhood. The analysis was commissioned by the city to meet the requirement of the Housing Act of 1954.

"Public Hearing on the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project Given by the Asheville

Redevelopment Commission, 1966", *Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records*, Box 44, folder "Public Hearing on East Riverside Project – May 31, 1966," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

This document contains minutes from the 1966 public hearing on urban renewal in East Riverside. It features members of the Redevelopment Commission, Asheville City Council, and the residents of East Riverside expressing their hopes and opinions on the urban renewal project.

"Project Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes." Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Records, Box 44, folder "PAC Minutes and Related Information," D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

The document in this collection contain the minutes from various meetings of the Project Advisory Committee. The minutes contained in this folder document meetings of the Committee from 1970 through 1976 and feature the various debates over urban renewal conducted by the Committee.

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This article discusses the Asheville Redevelopment Commission's plan for redevelopment in East Riverside. It describes the projected costs of the plan, the method by which it will be carried out, and the Commission's plans for the area after the completion of the project.

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Foard, Ashley A. and Hlibert Fefferman. "Federal Urban Renewal Legislation." *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn, 1960): 635-684. JSTOR. Univ. of North Carolina Asheville. <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/1190625> (accessed 28 March 2011).

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Root Shock, by Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, published in 2004, explores the impact of urban renewal in the United States from a psychological perspective. The author describes in great detail how low-income African American neighborhoods functioned prior to urban renewal, illuminating what was lost in the process of redevelopment. In the most important section of the book, Fullilove, a psychiatrist, explores the legacy of urban renewal and how it affected African American communities. Fullilove argues that the loss of community deeply traumatized and crippled African Americans, leaving them ill-equipped to confront future problems and accelerating a cycle of communal decline that had far reaching consequences that reverberate to this day.

Gillette, Howard Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington D.C.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995

Gillette's book looks at federal housing and planning policies in Washington D.C. from the founding of the American republic to the 1990s. He argues that D.C. served as a testing ground for federal urban policies throughout its history. Urban renewal efforts, along with other urban planning policies has, according to Gillette, placed beautification of the urban landscape

above social justice and the improvement of living conditions for low-income African American communities in Washington D.C.

Greer, Scott. *Urban Renewal and American Cities*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965.

Greer's book details the changes in urban renewal policies between the 1940s to through the 1960s. Greer analyzes how urban renewal projects were carried out in various cities. He argues that urban renewal policies shifted overtime in such a way as to deemphasize the improvement of housing conditions in favor of more profitable redevelopment. He also argues that Local Public Agencies charged with overseeing urban renewal projects worked hand in glove with the real estate industry to choose areas for redevelopment that were most desirable for from the perspective of real estate profitability.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, first published in 1961, Jacobs argued that urban renewal devastated the vital street life of cities, and inhibited cities from functioning the way they were meant to function. She condemns urban renewal because city planners designed rebuilding efforts to remake cities in the image of suburbs, with long blocks, wide streets, parks, highways, single use zoning designations, sidewalks empty of people, buildings devoid of character. Urban redevelopment, she argues, was doomed to be a failure, in the sense that it would make cities less attractive and functional. Jacobs argues that urban renewal was not only uprooting neighborhoods, it was stripping whole cities of their vitality.

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Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Sugrue's book describes the various struggles, rooted in racial inequality, over housing and labor issues in Detroit following the Second World War. He describes the ways in which housing segregation and white backlash against any efforts on the part of African Americans to challenge it, seriously limited the housing options for blacks. Migration of blacks to Detroit from the South, coupled with limited housing options, lead to a severe housing shortage for Detroit's black population. Urban renewal, Sugrue argues, exacerbated the problem by clearing large swaths of African American housing.

Teaford, Jon C. *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in American, 1940-1985*.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

In his book, Teaford analyzes the decline of urban centers in the post-war era, looking at twelve cities and how they reacted to decline. Teaford focuses on the policies local governments implemented to stem the tide of population loss, deteriorating housing stock, and shrinking property values. Urban renewal, Teaford argues, was just one method by which cities sought to adapt to changing conditions in housing and transportation. In the post-war era, cities tried to stem the loss of population and industry to the suburbs by remaking themselves in the image of the suburbs. While cities did not progress along a linear trajectory towards renewed vitality, urban renewal projects helped cities along the way to renaissance.

Thompson, Heather. *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*.

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Thompson's book, like Sugrue's, looks at political struggles over housing, labor, and other issues in Postwar Detroit. Thompson notes the ways in which racial inequality adversely affected the lives of Detroit African Americans, leading to anger, resentment, and eventually rebellion in the riots of 1967. Urban renewal policies, she argues, were part of the policy apparatus that negatively impacted black communities. However, she argues that it forced people to challenge the system of residential segregation as it left blacks with few other options for housing.