

Urban Issues

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The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.

THE CITIZEN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

On Thursday August 10, the Institute held a press conference to announce the publication of a collection of working papers on planning with people in the inner city. The volume is intended to initiate thought on how to plan with people, and is based on the Institute's experience over the last two years with the inner city communities of Winnipeg. Its title is The Citizen and Neighbourhood Renewal.

Traditional city government structures are not designed to respond to the rapid changes occurring in our cities; they were devised in the nineteenth century to provide caretaker services. The reaction on the part of local government to the increasing demands put on it as the result of rapid urbanization, and technological and social change has all too often led to the development of an elitist mentality. This solution disenfranchises the urban citizen, and often has led to inappropriate solutions because renewal is only partly physical. What is most often forgotten in the rush for efficiency is that renewal is a question of both physical and psychological change. Where one occurs without the other, alienation results.

The aim of the Institute, then, has been to investigate urban problems and develop ways in which the planning and implementation of improvements in this area could be more effective and more democratic. This has involved the Institute in the actual development, growth and operation of citizen run organizations, combined with recording and evaluating the process that took place.

This new volume is the record of this endeavor. The first section considers the issues of redevelopment in the inner city and planning and participation. The next section provides short studies of the different projects. The third section includes propositions and policy ideas that have emerged from this work such as the use of resource people, the role of professional advisors, and the techniques of community research. A final section

provides recommendations on ways in which planning and implementing improvement and change in the inner city can become both more effective and, hopefully, more democratic.

The book is intended as a guide, a manual, a catalogue on how to better plan and design city neighbourhoods and should be of assistance to politicians, civic administrators, professional advisors, community organizers, or the ordinary citizen.

A Table of Contents Follows:

- Introduction
- Planning and Participation
- The Inner City -- A Winnipeg Example
- Roosevelt Park Redevelopment
- A Paper on Kinew Housing Incorporated
- The In-Fill Experimental Housing Project -- Phase 1
- Experiments in Community Communications Systems
- The University as Innovator in the Urban Community
- Research Perspectives in Participation and Planning
- The Role of the Resource Group in Citizen Planning
- The Role of the Professional in Dealing with Residents
- The Neighbourhood Development Corporation
- A Physical Planning Approach to Inner City Renewal
- The Necessity of Information Systems
- Technology as Process
- Neighbourhood Renewal -- Suggestions for Implementation
- Maps
- Bibliography

Available from the Institute of Urban Studies for \$2.50, 328pp.

PEOPLE'S HOUSING REHABILITATION
AND REPAIR INC.

In its continuing efforts to define the problems of inner-city residents, Institute staff studied the question of repair and rehabilitation of older homes in the inner-city. The result was a report on some of the approaches that might be used (see "A Report on the Rehabilitation of Older Houses in a Lower-Income Inner City District"). In fact, area residents were already involved in small-scale rehabilitation of older dwellings. Meetings with the citizens elicited interest in developing this approach further, but the question of a proper vehicle remained unanswered.

In August 1971, the feasibility of establishing a local repair company was examined, and in September, it became apparent that winter works grants would be available for this purpose. The Institute of Urban Studies applied for a grant to cover the salaries of men doing limited repairs. After a confusing period of negotiation and waiting, the original application was finally withdrawn and a new one submitted by men with building and administrative skills working in the community. Although the Institute initiated the project, its continuing role developed into one of support, in organizing the men, in helping with the final submission, and in agreeing to act as advisor and monitor of the project.

Final approval, then, went to the People's Housing Rehabilitation and Repair, Inc. for \$40,000 of Federal Local Initiatives Project money and \$5,200 of Provincial P.E.P. money. The project began operations on March 1, 1972 and planned to continue for three months until May 31, but was extended under an additional grant of \$47,000 until September 30, 1972.

Now, in August 1972, the project has been operating for five months. Initially, eighteen trainees has recently been increased to twenty. Staff includes a co-ordinator, three supervisors, a recorder, an office clerk, and a bookkeeper.

People's Housing has rehabilitated or repaired forty-seven houses, and the enthusiastic response of the community is evident in numerous thank-you letters and in a current backlog of 130 applications for repair work. Although applications came in slowly in the beginning, by early May the project could not keep up with the demand for its services. Normally, an application is screened by the staff to determine whether the request is within their competence--that is,

limited repairs such as painting, patching, flooring, rough carpentry and cabinet making. An assessment is made of material costs which must be paid by the landlord/tenant, since the project grants cover only wages and operating expenses. An attempt is made to determine the need of the person making submission: priority is given to those houses most in need of repair that would not otherwise be repaired. If the applicant can afford to have the work done by a private firm, the application is denied. The overriding consideration here is to select houses in poor condition, to improve the immediate living environment without displacing residents and to insure that this is done for residents who could not ordinarily afford these repairs.

The basis for these criteria has been the "limited repair concept," as evolved by Institute staff. Its basic thesis is that a resident's satisfaction with his living environment is affected more by those things with which he deals everyday in his home--doors, stairs, floors, windows, walls, counters, etc.-- than by the larger problems of foundation, wiring, etc. which are more critical to the life of the house but which he cannot see. By limiting its activity to these small visible improvements, People's Housing has provided a sample from which this concept can be evaluated. Resident satisfaction has been quite high, and the number of homes improved has been substantially higher than would be possible if more thorough renovation had been attempted.

A further object of the project has been training unskilled men to better equip them to compete in the job market. Men now on the project have, on average, a grade 9 education; two-thirds of the trainees are single and one-third are married; the average age is 26.5.

Before working on the project, most of the men were either unemployed or migrants. Those who were employed held either part-time or unskilled jobs. Most of these men, then, could not compete on the job market or qualify for vocational training. On the project, however, skilled supervisors monitor the work of the crews, and provide instruction in basic trade skills such as the use of hand tools, painting, rough carpentry, dry wall application and taping, and flooring. In addition to basic skills, trainees have learned administrative skills such as estimating, and anticipating time and material needed to accomplish tasks.

In addition to training skills, the project has offered these men an alternative to an unstable life style. The work crews meet weekly with their supervisors to discuss the job and problems associated with it. More emphasis is put on doing the job well than on speed. As a result, men come to understand the necessity of co-operation, and soon develop teamwork. The process teaches another important and subtle lesson: work becomes a habit. Institute staff recognize that if this alternative is to be real, then the project could not simply be allowed to terminate on September 31.

In June and July, it began to be apparent that the project was fulfilling its objectives of assisting a large number of people to improve their environment, of testing the "limited repair concept," and of training unskilled men; the Institute recognized that in order to establish the project on a more secure basis--thereby eliminating the uncertainties of employment under short-term grants--an alternate form of funding would have to be found. Most importantly, the new funding should allow enough scope to implement the final phase of the program: the establishment of a fullcost repair company to employ project graduates -- that is, men who had acquired enough skill to be competitive on the labour market.

These problems were discussed with staff members of the Neighbourhood Service Center which had sponsored a project similar to People's Housing, and it was agreed that a continuing solution should be sought. As this search developed, it became apparent that monies from the Canada Assistance Plan, Work Activities Project might be available. Staff and trainees of the two home repair projects quickly became enthusiastically involved, and a series of negotiations with government officials ensued. The result was a draft submission for the Winnipeg Home Improvement Project (WHIP).

Under WHIP, scheduled to begin October 1, 1972, the two groups will continue to operate semi-independently. Although final approval has not yet been granted, every indication is that the submission will be approved. Project emphasis will be on vocational rehabilitation. This will be affected using most of the same methods outlined above, but, in addition, counseling and the active support of governmental and private services will be available. Canada Manpower can furnish contract instructors and refer trainees to traditional vocational training; City Welfare will supplement incomes where there is a need and furnish family services; representa-

tives of business and labour will be available for consultation in establishing a new home repair industry; I.U.S. and Neighbourhood Services Center can act as liaison with other community groups and help define problems; the Department of Health and Social Development will furnish guidance and financial accountability through the Director, Work Activities Project. All of these agencies or interests will be represented on the Board of Directors along with two trainees elected from each group to represent the project.

Each group will have a Project Operations Committee responsible for the day-to-day operation of the project. Each staff will include a co-ordinator, counsellor, training foremen, secretary, and bookkeeper. The organizational structure has evolved and been designed to give trainees a strong voice in the operation of the project, and to help them develop decision-making skills.

Although the current projects' names will change, the work done will remain the same. The effort will be substantially enlarged to include 50 men in each group by the fall of 1973, and may grow even larger. This means that an even greater number of houses will be improved, and a much larger number of men employed and given a chance to define their vocational goals. Funding will be federal-provincial cost shared, and the project is scheduled to continue for a total of three years. The IUS will have a representative on the Board of Directors and continue to operate in a supportive role. It has also been charged with undertaking an evaluation of the project and staff after the initial year.

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THE HEALTH PROJECT

The Institute of Urban Studies has now been working on its study of inner city health and social services for fifteen months. We have been working with the Health Action Committee (HAC), which was initiated in October 1971 by a group of concerned inner city residents who were willing to work toward the improvement of medical services for the central city. Throughout the winter, spring and summer of 1971-72, HAC members conducted a community self survey on health and social services, and sponsored a series of public community meetings on various health issues. Through the self survey it was found that few low-income people had good access to medical and social services, and that more information on what is available and a referral service to link people to services was required. At the same time as the survey was being conducted, HAC members had frequent requests for help. In response to this demonstrated need to connect people to services, HAC established a community based information and referral service at 153 Isabel, and has been serving the community throughout the summer seven days a week from 9:30 in the morning to 8:00 at night.

In its attempt to improve medical services, HAC members have been meeting with various providers of such services. The Health Action Committee's proposal to the City of Winnipeg Public Health Department recommends a decentralization of services from the City Administration Building to a community based location. The group has also been working with the Congregation of St. Andrews Church on planning a community complex that would include a medical clinic. Although the provincial government was noncommittal on HAC's proposal for a health services facility, the group will continue to meet with various levels of government for the funding that would provide preventive medical services. A fourth area of involvement for members of HAC is their informal role as neighbourhood health workers. With background in operating the information and referral service, and an orientation program on services conducted by the General Hospital, the group is now ready to become involved in a training program for serving as neighbourhood health workers. The Institute of Urban Studies has been holding exploratory meetings with various departments of the General Hospital, and some departments of the provincial government, on the preparation of a training package.

Finally, the Health Action Committee is interested in becoming involved in the planning of health services, and has been

offered representation on the General Hospital's Planning Group for Ambulatory Care. It is hoped that their small contribution to the planning of improved health services will be appreciated, and that a Central Area Health and Social Services Planning Council can emerge to identify health problems and needs and discuss ways in which services can be reorganized and resources redirected. This will permit an improvement in the health of the inner city community and lead to a more rational organization of health and social services.

The Institute of Urban Studies will soon complete its report of the study of inner city health and social services. We have already established an informal set of contacts with individuals in the various agencies providing health services who are interested in improving community health services. We look forward in the fall to sponsoring another conference on Improving Health and Social Services to the Inner City Community, and to establishing a Planning Council referred to earlier.