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Managing Urban Decline: An Urban Conservation Report from Dayton

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Pictured on the front cover and this page is a sign on the old Gibbons Arcade in downtown Dayton. Plans are in progress to renovate the Arcade like the Cannery in San Francisco, leaving its exterior intact and filling it with boutiques, restaurants, and offices.

With this issue, Nation's Cities begins exploring the realities of Urban Conservation as it is being practiced in cities in this country and abroad. In words and pictures, we hope to present case studies of Urban Conservation efforts and to analyze what actions—at the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal levels and in both the public and private sectors—encourage or discourage the conservation of cities.

We hope to answer some questions about the nature of Urban Conservation and how it works in the real world. But, we recognize that, for the immediate future, we surely will raise more questions than we can answer. For Urban Conservation is a work in progress. None of us in NLC—our leaders, our policy committees, our member cities, our staff—can say with certainty, "This program is a *bona fide* example of Urban Conservation." Or, "This bill is pro-Urban Conservation." Or, "That regulation is clearly anti-Urban Conservation."

All of us are involved in the hard work of trying to increase our understanding of Urban Conservation; of building criteria for what is and is not Urban Conservation; of defining the means of achieving it; of sharing what we know about it with each other.

That is what the Dayton story is all about and how it came to be. Nation's Cities staff met with staff of the NLC Office of Policy Analysis and Development and compiled a list of cities where we thought Urban Conservation is going on. We found out more about each of the entries on our list and decided—for reasons only we can make sense of—that we should begin with Dayton. A member of each of the staffs, R. Leo Penne of policy analysis, and Sharon Ryan of communications, were dispatched to Dayton as a team to ask questions, look, gather information, think, ask more questions, and, finally, write the Dayton story. Having shared our knowledge with each other, we now share it with you. In succeeding months, we will visit other Urban Conservation sites.

The Dayton story is *not* a complete or definitive story of Urban Conservation. It does not fully encompass both the physical and human sides of this concept. It is not *the* model of Urban Conservation at the municipal level. Nor does it explore all the state and federal policy ramifications of what is going on in Dayton. (On page 26, Nancy Mitchell Petersen reflects on the implications of the Dayton story for federal and state action.)

Rather, it is an important—and, we hope, interesting—addition to our growing knowledge of Urban Conservation.—*F.J.*

Reprinted from **NATION'S CITIES**, the magazine of the National League of Cities

"Population Loss 'Problem' Can Be a Boon for Dayton"

"Dayton Development Plan Emphasizes City Advantages"

"Housing Programs To Fight Flight"

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES like these suggest that there is something worth investigating in Dayton, Ohio. NATION'S CITIES' quick, on-the-spot look shows Dayton to be a city determined to conserve itself, with an approach to urban conservation that may be a model of action for other cities that must find ways to manage decline.

A list of problems, taken from the city's 1976 Community Development Block Grant proposal, could apply to many cities:

- The population of Dayton has decreased 41,400 since 1970.
- Overall, the city has a housing vacancy rate of 11.4 per cent.
- Professional and manager occupation groups are leaving Dayton at twice the expected rate.
- 38 per cent of Dayton's housing is not "up to code."
- 4,700 housing units were vacant in two consecutive years.
- 27 per cent of Dayton's households are headed by retired persons.
- 2,100 families are waiting for Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority housing.
- Only 3 per cent of Dayton's families had incomes in excess of $25,000 per year.
- It is difficult to arrange financing for all types of housing within the city.

Dayton is neither ignoring population decline nor accepting it and related problems as a sign of permanent and certain deterioration in the city's condition. Instead it is blending attitude, organization, techniques, programs, and politics to carry out strategies of urban conservation.

Urban problems are often represented by averages and trends. But it is individual unique events that tell Dayton's history.

The Past

Two widely separated crises have precipitated major changes in the city's quality of life over the past 63 years. The first came in the spring of 1913, when the swollen Miami, Mad, and Stillwater rivers swept over Dayton, killing 400 people and leaving behind $100 million damage. The shock of the city's devastation aroused the surviving citizenry to work together to create a comprehensive flood-control system for Dayton and Montgomery County. The Miami Conservancy District was formed, and money was raised from private sources to finance the construction of five dams.

Yet something besides a good flood-control program was born out of Dayton's disaster. Sickened by the widespread corruption that had gradually infested the city's government since Dayton's incorporation in 1805, the citizens equated the destruction of the flood with public immorality.

To wipe out the decay of their city government structure, Daytonians organized a brand-new kind of government — the commission-mayor-manager form of government. Dayton was one of the first cities in the nation to institute such a government, under which the commissioners, mayor, and manager are all held accountable to each other.

The second crisis that changed the lives of people in Dayton—and in its surrounding suburbs—occurred in 1970-1971. National Cash Register (NCR) Corp., whose headquarters are in Dayton, shifted its production from mechanical to electronic cash registers. Because this shift required less labor, NCR laid off approximately 16,000 workers in the Dayton area, and announced it would relocate its production plant in the South. NCR currently employs only 6,000 people in Dayton, according to Dudley P. Kircher, president of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce and director of the Dayton Development Council.

Photo by Sharon Ryan

The Gibbons Arcade

Then came warnings from Frigidaire and McCall Printing Co. that they might have to leave Dayton. Frigidaire, the largest of the four General Motors Corporation divisions in Dayton, said it would move its factory overseas to avoid paying higher wages than other American appliance manufacturers. Frigidaire employees (who are members of the United Auto Workers union) voted to forfeit $1.35 an hour in pay increases and convinced Frigidare to stay. Labor union concessions also persuaded McCalls to remain in Dayton.

As they had in 1913, the citizens of Dayton had rallied to fight decline and decay in their city. But this time they had allies in the suburbs.

Kircher, a native of Dayton who had moved away, came back to his hometown in 1969, and was startled by the deterioration: "I saw that there had been no substantial development in the city; there were no signs of reinvestment. Buildings were being leveled and replaced by one-level parking lots. Downtown Dayton looked like it had been rejected. Then something psychological happened—it began scaring people when they saw the city was deteriorating. The attitude in the suburbs turned around. Suddenly there was a recognition that a successful suburb depends on a successful city."

The way Mayor Charles Horn of the neighboring city of Kettering (pop. 78,000) put it: "We have a strong commitment to the realities of regional impact, here in the Miami Valley, and recognize that if Dayton continues to suffer from urban decline, that suffering will affect the health of the entire area."

The Present

Today Dayton's urban conservation attitude is obvious and strong. It rests on the premise that the city is a resource that requires careful management. A report presented to the city commission in January of this year made the point in terms of housing:

"The City of Dayton," said the report, "has an extremely valuable asset in the form of 48,204 good structures which are selling far below their true replacement value. . . It may be conservatively estimated that Dayton's good housing assets are currently underrated by one-half billions of dollars." The full replacement value would, of course, be much greater.

Another recent report recommended that the city capitalize "on a uniquely City resource, its historically interesting housing."

A handbook written by William Schneider, executive director, and Gary Conley, assistant director, of Dayton's City-Wide Development Corporation, states:[1]

"Seemingly, obsolete buildings can be converted with a little imagination and entrepreneurship into attractive retailing or commercial centers of industrial employment."

"Cities," they continued, "have almost without exception, sufficient capacity in existing sewer and water systems, streets, and other such improvements referred to as the city's infrastructure, to readily provide the basis for more employment."

Or, as Dayton's Mayor James J. McGee put it, "The role of economic development is to exert a positive influence on private investment so that the quality of life in the community is enhanced."

Resting on this approach, the Dayton attitude is realistic, optimistic, and aggressive.

The facts of decline are acknowledged. Schneider, one of the bright, young doers in the city, said "We can't reverse the trends."

Nearly everybody goes on to say, as did Schneider, "Some of the trends appear to be moving in our favor, so we want to help by pushing them along."

Can they?

In 1972, a report, "Operation—'Recycle the City' " asserted confidently, "Few of America's cities are mobilized as the Dayton community now is to deliver a national model for the 'reforestation' of the central city and its metropolitan environs."

The problems of decline, said the Schneider-Conley handbook, may be seen as "unfulfilled opportunities."

For example, "Maybe we don't need all of the housing we have at this time," said Department of Housing and Neighborhood Affairs Director Charles Jones. "Population decline gives us an opportunity to pick and choose because a different kind of opportunity is presented to us."

This feeling is widespread in Dayton. The Dayton *Daily News* headline in November 1974, "Population Loss 'Problem' Can Be a Boon for Dayton," headed an article which said that although Dayton was "for the moment the victim of a population drain," this opened the possibility of "replacing lost-cause housing with attractive new housing." The population loss, the article said, "is one 'problem' that the city can benefit from. . ."

In the same vein, the city manager's Middle-Income Task Force foresaw that "the prospect of renewed consumer interest in existing city neighborhoods, housing in special districts, and new housing units in the downtown, will be great."

Photo from City of Dayton

An Urban Homestead in Dayton

An example of the aggressiveness of the Dayton approach is City-Wide Development Corp.'s Urban Living, Inc., project.

Its bumper stickers declare, "City Living IS Living . . . in Dayton."

In newspaper display ads, Urban Living invites "free spirited individuals who believe in our city to explore our Homesteading program," and admonishes potential residents to "Save money, save time and discover a whole new, exciting way of living, right in your own city."

The coordinator of the Urban Living project is Barry Strum, a Brooklyn transplant who is now Dayton's official urban zealot. "It is important," said Strum, "to know why people are moving if you are going to figure out how to hold and attract them. The Urban Living strategy is to tout the advantages of living in the city of Dayton—economic and otherwise—and to facilitate decisions to live there."

A local newspaper said of this strategy, ". . . the city clearly has a good case to make . . . The advantages of city living—convenience, economy, cultural resources and so on—are lost sight of in the attention paid to an 'urban crisis' that applies mainly to a few overwhelmed cities"

What about the success of the Dayton approach? According to Don Crawford, executive assistant to the city commission, "City living is becoming the 'in thing' to do." Crawford is as renowned for his political acumen as for his resplendent wardrobe.

The Dayton attitude might in other places or other times be discounted as boosterism or bravado. However, it rests on a record of municipal governance that has yielded organization and techniques that are well-suited to carrying out an urban conservation policy.

How is the job being done? One of the country's first city-manager cities; a pioneer in information systems, program budgeting, and citizen participation; a frequent test site for federal discretionary programs and innovations; and a veteran of Model Cities, Planned Variations, and the full range of federal categorical programs, Dayton is now turning its accumulated experience to new uses in a new era.

City Manager James Alloway has just completed a reorganization that he said will improve policymaking by combining clusters of complementary responsibilities under assistant city managers for administrative services, community services, and development services—or, as Alloway put it, the "bureaucracy," the "citizenry," and the "economy."

The task force reports mentioned above are an extension of an earlier administrative innovation, a system of task force management introduced five years ago by then-city manager, Jim Kunde.

"As we looked around," said Kunde in an October 1973 NATION'S CITIES interview, "we found that private industry had been highly successful in utilizing team management on short-term problem solutions, particularly those problems which required interdisciplinary approaches. In looking at our problems, it was quickly apparent that interdisciplinary approaches were the only ones which would work."

Today, the city is also increasing its support of the part-time city commission. "What we want to do," said Administrative Assistant to the City Commission, Joe Wine, "is provide what is needed to build the capacity of the commission to frame policies."

Alloway emphasized not only the statics of organization but also the dynamics of operation, and in particular a system of *management by objectives*, in which he signs contracts with his department directors. They

1 **A Guide to Economic Development Planning and Implementation,** National Model Cities Community Development Directors Association, 1620 Eye St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20006; $5.

set down their year-long objectives in these contracts and agree to carry them out. "It is not enough," said Alloway, "to say to someone, 'Run the police department,' or 'Run the fire department.' That is too nebulous." One can imagine the imperturbable Dayton manager making this demanding system of responsibilities work.

Much about the Dayton way of doing business—and its potential for doing urban conservation—can be seen in its system of citizen involvement, and in its program strategies as outlined in the city budget.

Citizen Participation

The tradition of citizen participation in Dayton dates back to 1967, when it was chosen to be a Model City. In 1970, the city expanded its citizen participation program by establishing six neighborhood planning councils, or *priority boards.* Each priority board represents one of Dayton's six "natural communities": Fair River Oaks Council (FROC), Northeast, Southeast, Inner-West, Southwest, and Northwest. A seventh area, the business district, is represented by the Downtown Dayton Association.

In June 1975, the city commission adopted legislation declaring the priority boards and the Downtown Dayton Association to be the official citizen participation vehicle for Dayton. The priority boards meet the requirements of the federally funded Community Development Block Grant program, which requires the city government to work closely with its citizens.

The people in each of the six neighborhoods elect from 25 to 35 representatives to serve on their community's priority board. Each board, in turn, elects a chairman.

All priority board chairmen meet every month with the Dayton city manager. The boards, through their chairmen, act as the official spokesmen for their respective neighborhoods. The priority boards' relationship to the city government is *advisory;* their purpose is to influence policy decisions of the city commission, which has the ultimate authority and responsibility for decisionmaking.

Identification of the priority needs and goals of neighborhoods is a major responsibility of the priority boards. At the neighborhood level, the boards provide the opportunity for more citizens to become actively involved in influencing governmental policy.

The flow of influence is in both directions. City government uses the boards to inform the neighborhoods of government policies and actions. The boards also help the city determine how to improve the quality of city services according to the needs of each neighborhood.

There is a neighborhood site office located in each priority board area. Qualified staff are available in each office to serve the people there.

Specific contributions of the priority boards to the betterment of life in Dayton are numerous, among them the *Neighborhood Assistance Officers (NAO) Program.* The program began in 1970, when the police found themselves overburdened with work and realized they could use citizens' help to maintain security in the neighborhoods. The priority boards worked closely with the police department in organizing the program. Each board directs NAO activities in its area.

Any citizen over 18 who volunteers to be an NAO receives 200 hours of mandatory training at the city police academy. NAOs are not permitted to carry weapons or enforce laws. Serving 16 hours a month, NAOs direct traffic and, equipped with two-way radios in their cars, patrol neighborhoods and parks in their priority board areas. This surveillance has helped restore or maintain residents' confidence in the safety and stability of their communities.

The priority boards also helped create the *Minority Enterprises Small Business Investment Corp. (MESBIC).* MESBIC provides counseling and management, technical, and financial assistance to small minority businesses.

In May 1975, the commissioners decentralized administration of basic city services by setting up an *administrative council* for each priority board neighborhood. Administrative councils are composed of middle managers from the service departments of the city government. Noncity service providers, such as the board of education, also are represented.

Restoration in Oregon Village

Photo from Dayton City Plan Board

The administrative councils serve two purposes. First, they connect citizens' demands for services with the service providers. Second, the councils are sounding boards for citizen complaints and questions. The administrative councils meet monthly.

The priority boards and the related institutions are not just satellites of the city government, but have a place in the core organization.

The Division of Neighborhood Affairs of the City of Dayton's Department of Housing and Neighborhood Affairs was established in January 1975. Neighborhood Affairs is responsible for involving citizens in the governmental process.

Its director and the overall manager of the priority boards is Charles Jones, a burly, soft-spoken veteran of the participation campaigns, who believes the boards have given citizens greater confidence in government than they had in the past.

"Working with citizens is exciting to me and presents a challenge," he said. "There is a lot of turbulence that does exist between the administration, the legislature, and the citizens. And the priority boards are difficult to manage and are expensive. But I have a commitment to the system I manage."

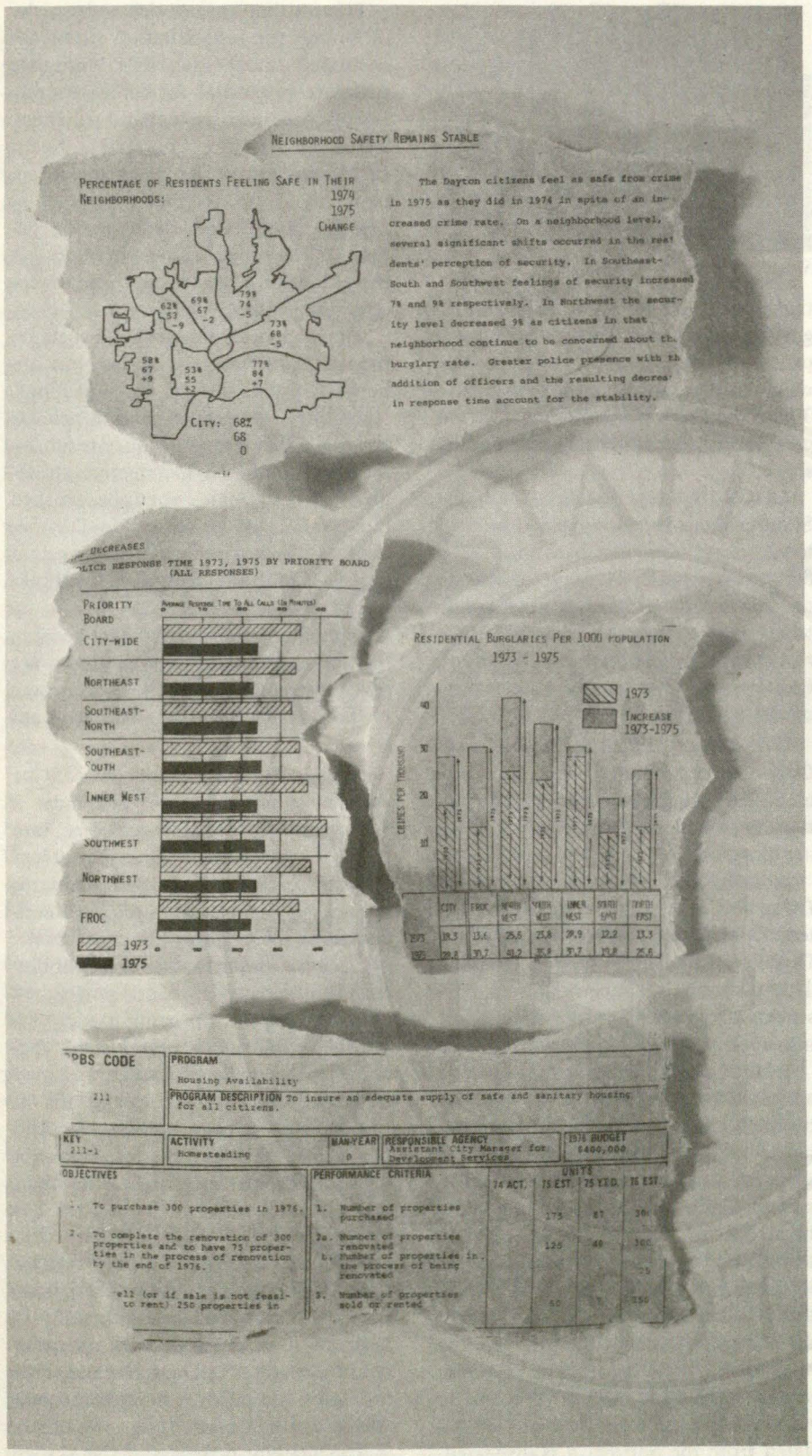
Program Strategies

Priority boards, opinion polling, and ombudsmen are all used to help develop Dayton's budget, or *Program Strategies,* as it is formally titled.

"Last year," said City Manager Alloway, "we had one of the most unique budget sessions in the United States. Dollars and cents were not mentioned once. Policy issues and priorities were the substance of the discussion."

The director of Dayton's Office of Management and Budget, Paul R. Woodie, described the program strategies (budget) as an attempt at "translating philosophy down to day-to-day activities."

In a dramatic presentation he obviously relished and for which he is well-known throughout the city administration, the enthusiastic Woodie drew a simple flowchart showing the questions to be answered: "What is?," "What ought to be?," and the connector, "How to?" In form and con-



tent, Dayton's program strategies respond to those questions.

To take one area, "security," and within that, "crime," the presentation opened with a goal statement: "To protect the life and property of all citizens from criminal behavior by preventing the occurrence and minimizing the effects of crime."

Following that, information was presented on three aspects of "What is?" First, a map (reproduced here) and text explaining the citizens' perceptions of the problem in the different areas of the city. Second, a graph and text presenting a performance measure of services, in this case police response time. Then, a graph displaying trends in the condition to be addressed—residential burglaries. (See both graphs at left.)

In other words, prior to proposing the allocation of resources, the problem—perceived and actual—was assessed and efforts to solve it were measured. Woodie emphasized the importance of perceptions. In the case of a crime, a feeling of insecurity may have serious consequences but require different action than an actual condition of insecurity.

The document went on to state objectives and performance criteria in measurable units. The example (see table below) is the Homesteading Program, taken from the housing area.

Only when all three questions have been answered are separate programs given a budget figure.

This is not an entirely orthodox way of doing municipal business and one which requires competence. One of the reasons Dayton can handle it is because it has been doing such things for the last 63 years. As a result of that experience, Dayton has a basic organization and management techniques that can be turned to achieving its current goals.

Urban conservation is not simply a separate program in today's Dayton. It is embedded in the organization and activities of the city government. Policies, however, are carried out in programs; and Dayton has a number of them.

Some examples are the Oregon Village Historic District, urban homesteading, downtown development, and geographic housing inspection.

Oregon Village—Formerly called Burns/Jackson, the Oregon Village Historic District was in the past inhabited mostly by low-income, low-skilled, transient people who rented the run-down houses in the neighborhood, most of which date back to the 1820s and 1830s or the Civil War era. Several years ago an ad hoc citizens' group recognized the Burns/Jackson neighborhood's potential as a historic district. The group asked the city to rezone the neighborhood and call it by its original name, Oregon.

Eventually the city declared Oregon Village a historic district, and City-Wide Development Corp. (CWDC) stepped in to help get financing for development. City officials and CWDC saw that successful development of the Oregon District could attract middle- and upper-income people back into the city and close to downtown.

In partnership with Winters National Bank, City-Wide established the Oregon Restoration Loan Program to provide low-interest, low-down-payment loans to people who want to buy and restore a house in the Oregon District. CWDC funds the program, and the bank processes the applications and services the loans. Applicants must prepare plans for restoration and obtain bids from contractors.

The city plan board must examine the applicants' plans and certify that they are consistent with Dayton's historic district zoning codes. After getting financing, applicants must have their final plans approved by the city's historic architecture committee.

CWDC's Assistant Director Gary Conley said the corporation "has accomplished $1.9 million in restoration of the Oregon District so far." He added that City-Wide has "attracted suburban developers for commercial development." The first restaurant in the Oregon District will open this month, and the district soon will have several commercial shops.

Urban Homesteading—Another of Dayton's housing projects, an Urban Homestead Program, has been moderately successful. Homesteading began in 1974 as an experiment, when CWDC purchased four foreclosed houses from the Federal Housing Administration.

Out of 78 properties purchased in 1975, CWDC sold 20 (only 50 were ready to be sold). Homesteads are sold on a first-come, first-served basis at 85 per cent of the appraised market value after CWDC has done all the major rehabilitation work: wiring, plumbing, repairing of structural damage, etc. The average price for a homestead property is $15,000. Many of these have been sold to moderate-income families.

"The homestead program helps control blight and upgrade certain neighborhoods," CWDC Executive Director Schneider believes.

Downtown Development — Downtown Dayton also is an urban conservation target. In July 1976, a 16-story, 300-room hotel with a rooftop restaurant—the Stouffer's Dayton Plaza—will open across the street from the Dayton Convention and Exhibition Center. A corporation affiliated with City-Wide purchased and leased urban renewal land for the hotel. Another City-Wide affiliate is the general partner of the local partnership that built

Photo by Sharon Ryan

Stouffer's Dayton Plaza

the hotel. CWDC or its affiliates also guaranteed to pay some start-up expenses, made guarantees for the sale of investment units, and loaned $125,000 to the Dayton Development Council (DDC) to purchase outstanding shares.

DDC's Dudley Kircher said that Stouffer's was urgently needed in Dayton because the city has not had a first-quality hotel to draw people to the convention center. "You've got to have 'people generators' in the city—restaurants, hotels, high-quality shops, theaters—to give people a reason to come to Dayton."

Geographic Housing Inspection—City Commissioner Mike Schierloh identified geographic housing inspection as one of Dayton's most promising programs.

Housing and Neighborhood Affairs Director Charles Jones manages Dayton's 35 housing inspectors, under the Division of Housing Conservation. This division is concerned with conserving and improving the city's housing stock through inspection.

In the past, housing inspectors took an engineering approach to their job by methodically going down a row of houses. Today, Dayton's housing inspectors use a geographically based system. Each priority board neighborhood has housing inspectors assigned to it. Jones described three criteria for inspecting a house: (1) "the worst first"—what looks like the worst house on a street is inspected; (2) on the basis of citizens' complaints, a house is inspected; and (3) for cosmetic reasons, because a house looks dilapidated from the outside, it is inspected.

"We now have a sociological approach, rather than an engineering approach, to housing inspection," Jones said. "We are concerned with how a house affects a neighborhood. People have different priorities. As long as they don't infringe on the health and safety of others, we let some things pass that once we would have complained about."

Houses that are not deemed worthy of saving for rehabilitation often are destroyed under the city's "nuisance structure program." Under a recently revised nuisance abatement ordinance, Jones can also direct his staff to board up certain houses that might be saved, paint them up to blend with their neighborhoods, and clean up the debris in the yards. Jones tries to get these houses reoccupied through cooperation with CWDC.

The geographic housing inspection program illustrates an elusive but important point. Goals, organizations, techniques, programs, and *esprit de corps*—if they are to produce results—must be combined in effective strategies. The strategies may be worked out in a variety of forms. In Dayton, they are being pursued in ways that suggest important changes in the thinking of city governments.

Implicit in the geographic housing inspection program, for example, are several strategies that show elsewhere in the Dayton approach. The program is

- *flexible* because solutions can be adapted as circumstances demand;
- *contextual* because actions are taken to meet the existing problem and not to meet an abstract standard;
- *focused* because resources are concentrated for greatest effect;
- *selective* because the susceptibility of a problem to solution is weighed before resources are committed;
- *integrated* and *comprehensive* because, functionally, services are related both to each other and to the mix of problems in a geographic area; and the needs of one type of area are balanced against the needs of another.

Government and Business

Pursuing these kinds of strategies successfully requires more than good sense and good luck—it depends in large part on good politics. At present, the conflicts in Dayton—and there are some—appear to be taking place within a broad consensus.

The priority boards and the system of citizen participation help weave a fabric of agreement.

The other consensus maker in Dayton is cooperation between government and business. Here the point is well illustrated by the case of the City-Wide Development Corp., as is the importance of well-conceived strategies, such as an investment approach to stimulating development.

City-Wide Development Corp.—The City-Wide Development Corp. is a nonprofit development corporation created in 1972 by the City of Dayton to promote commercial and residential projects that will benefit the city. The corporation started operating in April 1973.

A 28-member City-Wide board of trustees, led by Chairman George E. Walter, an architect and former city commissioner, makes policy for the corporation. The mayor and city commission appoint 22 of the board members, and the six neighborhood priority boards each appoint one. William J. Schneider heads up CWDC's four-person staff as executive director.

Real estate development is City-Wide's major interest. The corporation uses its capital to finance projects crucial to the enhancement of Dayton as a business and residential community. CWDC specializes in high-risk investments because it is not expecting as high a rate of return as a private investor would, though CWDC does operate as a business.

CWDC is more concerned with how its investments—such as a neighborhood rehabilitation project—benefit Dayton. According to executive director Schneider, City-Wide invested $3 million last year.

Schneider, working with his staff and the six neighborhood priority boards, implements Dayton's housing strategy, which was approved last year by the city commission. The program is financed by federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

The housing strategy program divides the city into three types of neighborhoods, based on data gathered by the city's Office of Management and Budget.

They are (1) *stable* areas, where housing is in good condition and there are few vacancies and little overcrowding; (2) *strategic* areas, where there are 15 per cent vacancies, and houses in good enough condition to rehabilitate; and (3) *transitional* areas, those most depressed and deteriorating and having a housing vacancy rate of 18 per cent. Transitional neighborhoods, generally near the center of the city, "need the most drastic treatment," Schneider said.

Investment—The intent of the city's bundle of housing and development programs is to tailor them to the needs and possibilities of different types of neighborhoods. The tactics are numerous. Some were mentioned above; others include different forms of direct subsidies, loans, leases, financing guarantees, bonds. All are guided by a philosophy of long-term impact through short-term investment, which multiplies the influence of public funds and gives them the greatest leverage possible.

"City-Wide takes an *investment* rather than a *grant* approach to stimulating development," said Mayor McGee. CWDC has not given one dollar of the $6 million it has had under its control, to any local business as a grant. "Rather," said McGee, "City-Wide has invested these dollars to achieve the same results but with added advantage that the dollars will return and be able to be used again and again to create additional benefits for the city."

According to Schneider, of the $23,359,779 in projects under implementation in which CWDC is involved, only $4,073,079 is actually City-Wide funds. "I expect," said Schneider, "that this ratio is better than most cities have done in the past."

City-Wide is a hub of public and private investment cooperation, but there are other points where business and government combine energies. Kircher's Dayton Development Council is one on the business side; and John Smith, the city's administrator for commerce, is one on the government's.

Smith, a gray-haired veteran of business and government, is an ombudsman for business. His position signifies the city's commitment to maintaining a firm economic base. It is his job to see that the city government does what it legitimately can to see that businesses operate successfully in Dayton, and especially to see that the city government does not inadvertently create obstacles to their successful operation. Smith's activities include such things as facilitating revision of a parking ordinance to keep a store in business, to consolidating the inspection requirements for a historic renovation.

Oregon Village Shops

Photo from City of Dayton

The contrast between the goals of Kircher the promoter and Smith the facilitator, suggests a broad approach to the problem. Kircher's energies are devoted primarily to attracting businesses and industry; Smith's to holding them and aiding their expansion.

Human Resources

Although Dayton's urban conservation initiatives clearly emphasize physical and economic development, the conservation of human resources has found a place as well. Questions concerning the relocation of those displaced through redevelopment, lateral and upward residential mobility, and impact of physical development programs on current residents, are high on the Dayton urban conservation agenda.

Among the many social service programs operated by the city are Project Cure, Inc., a drug and alcohol abuse prevention program; the Charles R. Drew Comprehensive Health Center, which provides low-income families with medical and dental care on an ability-to-pay basis; and the Inter-Faith Task Force Child Care Center, where children of working mothers in the Northwest priority board area can receive day care.

Young people can participate in a citywide 4-H program, through which they can learn business skills and management in classes and in money-making projects. The elderly are served by a Senior Citizens' Center, where they can join in recreation and classes and receive social security and medical service counseling.

The Inner-West priority board area, where there is a high incidence of poverty and unemployment, is served by a Comprehensive Manpower Center. At the center, unemployed and unskilled workers can get job training, counseling, and placement services.

Regional Planning

Internal cooperation is important in Dayton, but so is the cooperation of other governments. As in all metropolitan areas, there are interjurisdictional conflicts; but in the Miami Valley they appear to be muted.

Montgomery County, for example, recently located its courthouse and administrative building on downtown Dayton urban renewal land. "The

county," said Dale Bertsch, director of the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, "has a long history of recognizing the vitality of the city."

Bertsch, a solid, intense, nationally known professional, cited the area's "controlled growth line of urban services" as evidence of the region's intent to restrict sprawl and to encourage fill-in development. The controlled growth line prevents public services from being extended beyond a point judged to be adequate for the area's development needs.

Further, the Miami Valley Region's fair-share housing program, the first adopted in the nation and recently honored by inclusion in the Bicentennial Horizons on Display, has been a step toward reducing the central city concentration of problems.

Kettering's Mayor Horn:

"When you consider that our country is entering an era of resource scarcity, it makes good economic sense for every city to take advantage of conservation efforts to encourage reuse of their facilities, housing, and utility systems.

"It equally makes sense for a region to support core city effort. We are not just giving lip service to Dayton's conservation and economic development efforts, but are proffering hard cash in support of activities, such as transportation (the Dayton Area Light Rail Program), resource recovery, and criminal justice to effect that objective.

"The suburbs are also actually promoting and sponsoring intercity programs in cooperation with the core city to reduce duplicative efforts and better utilize our common resources for our individual and collective benefits."

State Laws

Several matters under the control of the state are important to Dayton's urban conservation policy, and they emphasize the complexity of the problems and the limitations of strictly local action. The state annexation law and considerable unincorporated land surrounding the city make annexation a feasible means for expanding Dayton's physical and fiscal bases.

Further, the availability of the income tax to municipalities takes considerable destructive pressure off real property in the city and reduces the regressiveness of the local tax burden. Dayton citizens voted to increase their income tax in 1974. For urban conservation, the tax abatement provisions of the state of Ohio's 1974 Impacted Cities law are especially important.

The Ohio Municipal League called this law "one of the most important measures adopted in the last decade." "It provides," said the league's analysis, "the needed economic incentive, in the form of limited tax abatement, to stimulate the use of private funds to redevelop deteriorated commercial areas." Dayton officials who championed this legislation at the state level are now using it locally.

Photo by Sharon Ryan

Conclusions

This NATION'S CITIES survey of Dayton's urban conservation policy clearly suggests that Dayton is embarked on an ambitious course of action. Can other cities do what Dayton is doing? The question is best answered by looking at the several parts of the Dayton approach:

- *Attitude*—Cities *can* realistically assess their situations, inventory their resources, and seek to maximize their possibilities. But they must be willing to admit unpleasant truths, and they must have the capacity to define their problems accurately.
- *Organization and management techniques*—Cities *can* develop strong and flexible tools that can be used for urban conservation, but it requires a long and heavy investment.
- *Programs*—Cities *can* initiate urban conservation programs of many varieties; but they must be integrated with each other, directed by accurate definitions of the problems, and based on strong organization and management.
- *Consensus*—Cities *can* build a bedrock of consensus for urban conservation, but only if all parties are willing to both give and take.
- *Context*—Cities *can* maintain a delicate balance of interests in a metropolitan area, but only with great care and skill on their part and understanding by suburban jurisdictions that the metropolitan fate is a shared one.
- *Strategies*—Cities *can* form their resources into effective patterns of activity, but only if they adapt them well to local circumstances.

So, the answer to whether or not cities can do what Dayton is doing is "yes, but . . ."

Ultimately, Dayton's success and the success of other cities attempting to manage decline depends on matters beyond their control.

The 1972 Dayton report, "Operation—Recycle the City," referred to "the recognized national lack of a coherent strategy for revitalizing the cities."

"Ideally," said the report, "the haphazard sprawl of development that has been occurring for the last thirty years must be brought up short, while at the same time, steps are taken to draw development into the center city. The suburban *explosion* must be supplanted by an urban *implosion*."

Little has changed in the intervening years. Too often and in too many ways national policies and national trends continue to overpower local programs of redevelopment as well as growth control.

The Schneider-Conley handbook, previously mentioned, observes that "the forces which produce these problems (of decline) are extremely powerful and have been set in motion by factors beyond the control of local government." In conversation, Schneider offered the $2,000 tax credit that was available last year for the purchase of a new home, as a recent discouraging example of a subsidy for urban development that worked against efforts to redevelop in central cities.

Dayton's optimism is strong. "I really think," declared Commissioner Pat Roach, the only woman on the city commission, "that people think we are moving in the right direction."

The signs of that motion abound. Buildings rise. Houses are renovated. Businesses expand. People are finding more to make living in Dayton worthwhile.

Whether Dayton will be permanently successful in its urban conservation policy remains to be seen. There is enough evidence, however, to conclude that cities with similar problems can look to Dayton as a promising example of a city that may defeat decline by managing it well. ■