

Testimony on Thursday, January 8, 2015

from Helen Douglas, resident at the Arthur Capper Seniors Building

The purpose of the HOPE VI Projects is to bring together diverse economic, racial and cultural populations into one community. Experience has proven that isolating specific groups from the rest of society creates discordant and depressed neighborhoods and sets into motion social problems that extend far beyond just the one challenged neighborhood.

To prevent such a disaster, Hope VI is dedicated to creating viable diverse neighborhoods but not without its share of challenges. Basically, the process requires overcoming programmed fears around personal home values being jeopardized. Nevertheless, there are still folks who would like to live and raise their families in a diverse community reflecting the whole society... taking on the issues as they arise.

EVERYONE basically **WANTS MANY OF THE SAME THINGS**: A peaceful, lively, aesthetic, safe and healthy environment that includes good schools, parks, access to public transportation and essential shopping nearby. Last year, the CSX freight train expansion proposal became a catalyst that quicken a cohesion in the community once the homeowners fully recognized that the proposal would have a great impact on the environment of the entire community and it was essential for the renters and seniors and business owners to be actively involved as well. And this effort with inclusion has made a huge difference in dealing with CSX and set in motion more community cohesion when addressing other issues.

Currently, the new Community Center construction is due to be completed by October, 2015. And the highest priority in developing an operation plan for the Center will be how to meet the needs and requests already expressed from groups of all ages and varied interests? and how will the plan be financed? Clearly, it is imperative that these questions to be successfully addressed.

Now, looming over the horizon are plans for construction of two high rise buildings on lot 767. The current plan would differentiate the market price units in one building and isolating affordable units in a second building...possibly being

located outside the perimeters for the Hope VI project. Such a plan defeats the premise of diversity. Quality construction and maintenance are far more likely for the affordable quarters if they are integrated with market price housing and assures good will among all residents.

Diversity demands that financial and administrative supporters, management personnel and occupants must all understand the diligence required and are willing to actively work at implementing the community's goals.

The zoning office can support this position by fostering a continuation of the principles established in the Hope VI Housing Development Projects and not allow flexibility regarding the location and distribution of the remaining units promised to displaced residents.

Helen Douglas