

Your Home and Skokie's Future



A Message from
**Skokie Human
Relations Commission**

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YOUR HOME AND SKOKIE'S FUTURE-

A MESSAGE TO RESIDENTS
FROM THE SKOKIE
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

SECOND PRINTING

JUNE, 1966

PREFACE

At the time of publication of this pamphlet (February 1966) it appears unlikely that there will be widespread racial change in Skokie in the near future. It seems certain, however, that continuous slow growth of the non-white population will occur throughout the suburbs, including Skokie. The Commission believes that such in-migration of non-whites can be sustained in an orderly, peaceful manner, with preservation of local property values and with advantage to the entire metropolitan area, if suburbanities are properly prepared to receive the newcomers.

The issuance of this pamphlet is the first step of a community-wide program of preparation having a three-fold objective:

- (1) to acquaint residents with the advantages of a policy of non-discriminatory sale of homes—a policy formally endorsed by the Village Board of Trustees—and of the undesirable consequences of restrictive sales;
- (2) to secure broad voluntary acceptance and practice of the policy that every home offered for sale is automatically to be considered available to buyers of any race, creed or national origin, unless the owner specifically instructs the broker otherwise in writing; and
- (3) to place the decision as to the manner of sale with the home-owner and minimize the influence of the broker, so that the latter can serve truly and solely as the agent of the seller.

This pamphlet will be supplemented by a series of talks with groups of real estate brokers and of residents — meeting as church, neighborhood, PTA, home-owner groups, and the like—to solicit their cooperation and voluntary compliance with the principle of equal housing opportunity. The Commission believes that success in this program of our Village government to educate its citizenry in a sensitive area can do much to ensure a stable future for Skokie, and can have far-reaching consequences for other suburban areas.

The Commission wishes to acknowledge its tremendous debt to Prof. Paul Mundy of Loyola University for his guidance throughout the studies and discussions which led to this program, as well as for his authorship of much of the pamphlet; to

Village Manager Bernard L. Marsh for his sound advice and able assistance in every phase of its work; and to Mayor Albert J. Smith and the Village Trustees for their vigorous support of the entire project.

SKOKIE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

In the summer and autumn of 1965, the Skokie Board of Trustees, on recommendation of the Human Relations Commission, took two steps relating to minority-group housing which are of profound importance to every Skokie resident.

In July, it adopted a resolution declaring that equal housing opportunity for people of all races, creeds, colors, and national origins is the official policy of the village.

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In November, it authorized the Commission to undertake a program of community education designed to make this policy a working reality.

This pamphlet, which is a step in that program, explains why the Commission believes that such a policy is necessary for Skokie and its sister suburbs. We urge you to read it and discuss it with your neighbors.

Skokie has in the past successfully absorbed many minority groups. The problem now confronting us is the extent to which we, and other suburban areas, are prepared to absorb larger numbers of non-white citizens, and the manner in which we accept them. The problem has become acute because of the increasing pressure of Negroes—particularly well-educated and financially qualified Negroes—to break out of the urban ghetto, and because of the increasing numbers of non-whites employed by suburban commercial and industrial organizations. These factors make it evident that such citizens will continue to move into Skokie and other Chicago suburbs.

It is clear that the “ghettoization” of Negroes which has taken place in Chicago and some of its suburbs is a result of the denial

**THE PROBLEM
AND
THE ANSWER**

of equal housing opportunity in these communities. If members of minority groups are able to buy suburban homes in a free market and with full equality of housing opportunity, they can be easily absorbed, and in the normal course of events

will find homes throughout suburbia in a pattern which approaches uniform dispersion. On the other hand, if their influx into the suburbs is resisted, particularly in widespread, organized fashion, their movement to the suburbs, while perhaps initially slower, will eventually form suburban ghettos, with all their accompanying problems.

The Commission believes that the acceptance of Negro families into full and equal participation in community life in all parts of Skokie and its sister suburbs is necessary for the healthy development of these suburbs and of the metropolitan area. The suburbs can no longer hide their heads in the sand; the Negro will not disappear. He must be accepted as an equal American into the fabric of our suburban communities. Such acceptance is not only morally and legally right; it is dictated by national self-interest: for only when all Americans enjoy equal opportunity will we be able to face our country's grave problems as a unified nation.

At this point in the history of race relations and in developing interrelationship of cities with suburbs, we suburbanites must play a key role in hastening the day on which our country will cease to be divided by problems of race, religion, color or national

origin. Each suburban American must make a sober appraisal of his attitudes in the light of reason, justice and civic responsibility; he must apply the common sense and common decency which are traditionally ours.

Since the first Negro family moved into Skokie in 1961, our village has set an example of moral leadership in accepting the principle of equal housing opportunity for all. This attitude was reaffirmed by adoption of the following resolution on July 12, 1965, by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Village of Skokie is a community which proudly proclaims as its citizens members of all races, creeds and national origin; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Skokie has been in the forefront of suburban communities seeking effective solution to problems in the field of racial and minority relations by peaceful and lawful means;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Skokie that we believe it is morally wrong to deny equal housing opportunity when based on race, creed, color or national origin whether by express or tacit agreement, silence or custom.

WE welcome to our Village of Skokie and as our next door neighbors all people, irrespective of their race, creed, color or national origin.

The Commission believes that the above policy offers the best promise of racial diversification of the suburbs in an orderly, peaceful manner, with preservation of property values; and that it offers also the best hope of creating a healthy, viable metropolitan area, in which city and suburbs enjoy a friendly and cooperative relationship. The reasons for these conclusions by the Commission are developed more fully below.

The selling of a house—a home—is much more than a mere financial transaction between the two families who sell and who buy. In a larger sense, the entire community is party to what occurs, especially since families are diverse and symbolic at times of larger groups—racial, religious, nationality-descent. Particularly is this true when it happens that qualified buyers trying to purchase homes they can afford in suburban communities are excluded because of race, color, creed or national origin. Any such humiliation—any such denial of freedom to own, to rent, to move—is a human affront. Any widespread pattern of such denial is a glaring contradiction of what we claim to be: a free society of free men.

A man's right to own property has genuine meaning only if he has the right *to acquire* as well as to dispose of it; *to buy* as well as to sell; *to inherit* as well as to bequeath. The right to property is a personal right; it is ours because we are persons; it does not simply reside in one who happens to own property at any given moment. The right to own property is personal and inalienable, but it is not absolute, for the use of property is governed by the common good—of each of us and all of us. Zoning restrictions and speed laws are cases in point.

The Constitution, it should be remembered, does not state that *no property owner* shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, it states that *no citizen* shall be so deprived. And it should be further recognized that deprivation can be achieved through unjust seizure of what one already possesses or by a quaconspiratorial effort to deny one access to property.

Our Constitutional guarantees are *personal* and they are *present*. Those rights are ours as *individual citizens*, not as members of any group. Those freedoms are in existence *now*, not a promise for delivery at some future day. There is one-class citizenship in America and that is why it is so valued: it is first-class citizenship for all our people and this is why we are "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The *right to buy*, regardless of the race, color, religion, or national origin of the buyer, is now recognized by law as it pertains to certain areas of public accommodation (under Title II of the

Civil Rights Act of 1964). The Civil Rights Act does not specifically extend this right to the purchase of homes, but the moral principle is clearly the same. Where the requirements of law lag behind the requirements of the moral standards of the community, the individual citizen must voluntarily comply with prevailing moral standards if community harmony is to prevail. In the present situation, such compliance requires the extension of the *right to buy* to provide equal housing opportunity for all.

In the Chicagoland community we are about seven million neighbors in the six northeast counties of Illinois. We are about six-sevenths white, about one-seventh non-white. With few exceptions, the non-white population is concentrated in Chicago. There are some people (and they often style themselves as "practical") who believe that the suburban areas can and should be maintained almost exclusively for whites. Chicago, they assert, should be kept exclusively for Negroes, except for the towering

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Loop buildings, the business-professional concentrations, together with some receding residential neighborhoods. They seem to envision a kind of suburban secession from Chicago and "its" problems. They seem unaware that the social unity of Chicagoland will not respect political boundaries; "its" problems and achievements are "our" problems and achievements. To

grasp this fact is to pave the way to permit enlightened self-interest to show the direction and goal of the future.

A generation ago, some persons who thought of themselves as "practical" adopted the folkways of segregation and suggested restrictive covenants as "the answer" to "the problem." Between 1920 and 1930, these persons covered 75 per cent of all the residential property in Chicago with restrictive covenants, intending to pen up Negroes in the areas they then occupied. In 1920, there were about 120,000 non-whites in Chicago; in 1950, there were 509,000; in 1960 there were 838,000. Although the covenants were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1948, they produced bone-crushing congestion, misery, frustration, and hostility in the Negro ghetto. Chicago's overall density in 1950 was 18,000 persons per square mile; in the ghetto, rates of 40,000 to 80,000 persons per square mile existed. The restricted, forced-housing ghetto spawned and aggravated social problems of enormous proportions and built up a crushing pressure on the white residential areas that fringed the Negro area. Discriminatory housing produced its inevitable harvest: frustration, fear, hostility, tension, sporadic clashes. The "practical" men have come dangerously close to designing a disaster for all of us.

We are all involved, whether we realize it or not, whether we will it or not, in what has happened in the blundering real estate practices of the past. The past patterns of humiliation imposed on Negroes in Chicago show their result in the current turmoil that seeks to redress old wrongs. And we are all involved, for better or worse, in what the real estate practices in the suburbs are today and will be tomorrow. This is no time for emotion; this is a time for reason. Let's turn to the facts at hand.

The Northeastern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission in its recent *A Social Geography of Metropolitan Chicago* (p. 73) states: "From the evidence of the last decade, it is abundantly clear that the destinies of Chicago and its suburbs are inextricably linked. . . . The destinies of each will become the destinies of all. How successful (they) can move their common destinies together may depend on their comprehension of the metropolitanization process, on their cooperative action in dealing with the host of problems attending rapid growth and on their acceptance of the emerging 'metropolitan interest.' "

Industrial expansion, employment opportunities, labor force, education, water supply, drainage, flood control, assessments and taxes, refuse disposal, recreation, health conditions and medical care, delinquency, crime, police and fire protection, transportation, race relations, economic well-being, housing—these are some of the areas of metropolitan concern. These realities breach the wall of assumed isolation of Chicago and surrounding suburbs. We will ignore our interdependence at our peril.

In 1960, Chicago had 57 per cent of the Chicago Metropolitan Area population but 75 per cent of the employment opportunities. The "suburban ring" (the rest of the six northeastern Illinois counties) held 43 per cent of the population but only 25 per cent of the employment opportunities.

By 1980, it is estimated by the Planning Commission quoted above, Chicago will have about 40 per cent of the total metropolitan population but 60 percent of the jobs; the suburbs will have about 60 per cent of the population but 40 per cent of the jobs.

The chances are therefore 3 in 5 that as a suburbanite, your son or daughter will have to earn his or her living in Chicago.

Chicago is—and will continue to be—the commercial, industrial, professional, educational, artistic, and recreational heart of this metropolitan area.

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One-third of Chicago's Negroes are now middle class in terms of education, income, and occupation, according to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, "The Growing Negro Middle Class in Chicago", *Human Relations News*, October, 1962. If middle-class Negroes continue to be denied access to the suburban housing market because of race and for no other reason, then the estimates that Negroes will make up over half of the Chicago population between 1975 and 1985 are likely to prove accurate. (Negroes were 2 per cent of Chicago's population in 1900; 14 per cent in 1950; 24 per cent in 1960.) Moreover, they will be increasingly embittered, frustrated, and hostile to the sealed-off suburbanites. If these things occur, it will be well to remember that any white setting foot in Chicago will be a minority-group member in a less-than-friendly city of his own making. It seems logical to suppose that he will develop some new interest in the rights of minorities for fairly personal reasons. Is this the Chicagoland that we wish for our children? Do we wish to assure the compromised freedoms of the future for our suburban children as the price to be paid for the compromised freedoms of the present for non-whites? The choice is ours: it is freedom or fear. There

are no "privileged sanctuaries" in which the self-appointed "practical" men of the past and present can hide forever.

Enlightened self-interest dictates that this must not happen. It is not that we must merely end the wrong of housing discrimination for Negroes; we must do this to liberate ourselves. We must give our children the hope of peace and order in a community that has enough intelligence and reason to be fair to all men, women, and children. The price of peace and a good conscience in our community is justice for all. The price of being an American is the small but vital coin of respect for the human person.

Single copies of this pamphlet may be obtained at no charge by writing to Bernard L. Marsh, Village Manager, Village of Skokie, 5127 Oakton St., Skokie, Illinois 60078. Multiple copies are available at ten cents per copy.

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