

BALTIMORE NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.
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(243-6007)

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PURPOSE: (A) To help preserve neighborhoods which are in transition to a bi-racial status; (B) To help establish an open housing market in the metropolitan Baltimore area.

BACKGROUND: Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. was formed in 1959 by the Greater Baltimore Committee and other civic, neighborhood and religious groups. On its Board of Directors are prominent representatives from the religious community, labor, higher education, City government, the housing industry manufacturing, and the finance and insurance community.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY:

The recent passage of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1968 and the sustaining by the Supreme Court of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 has by no means solved the open housing problem or has made the services of BNI unnecessary. Rather tools have been provided that can help make BNI more effective than ever before. These two Civil Rights Bills will need public acceptance and obedience by the housing industry. A major function of BNI will be to help in this process.

There can be wide-spread evasion, as has happened with the other Civil Rights Laws. If this should occur, then we may expect an increase of cynicism, bitterness and unrest within the Negro community.

OPERATIONS:

- A. Working to help stabilize racially changing neighborhoods - which can be subject to panic or unrest and to the operations of real estate speculators.

When asked for help by members of a troubled neighborhood:

- Church, civic, business and neighborhood groups are contacted. Their leaders are invited to a joint meeting to discuss the particular problem and to determine what course of action should be taken.
- Clergymen are asked to make home visits to calm their parishioners.
- Real estate companies are asked to temporarily cease soliciting and to remove signs if necessary.
- Home meetings are held throughout the area to dispel rumors, convey facts and to help create a spirit of acceptance.
- Personal assistance in the form of support and encouragement is given to the new family. BNI works with them until the situation normalizes.

Areas that have required weeks of work within the last twelve months are:

- Belair-Erdman: A Negro family moved in on July 6, 1967. They were met with hostilities ranging from broken windows to gun shots, abusive language, demonstrations and isolation by the general community. Clergymen made home visits, neighborhood meetings were held and persons informed about the facts. The police gave 24 hours protection. Members of a local church social action committee spent many hours with the mother and children while the father worked nights. After many weeks of meetings, behind the scenes activity and personal assistance to the family, the tensions began to recede, people became friendly and today the situation is one of peace, calm and general acceptance.
- Stadium Area: An elderly, white woman was pressured by an unscrupulous broker into selling her house to him for \$6,900 (she originally asked \$9,000 for it and was told that she was lucky to get what was offered). The house was immediately resold to a Negro family for \$12,900. A complaint was filed with the Real Estate Commission of Maryland but unfortunately the buyer and seller then backed down and withdrew the complaint because of fear. BNI called the attention of the SUN to such practices and newspaper coverage was given. This incident precipitated a community survey to determine the amount of exploitation going on. Neighborhood meetings were held to inform the residents what to do should they be solicited. Churches intensified their community involvement and have recently formed a joint cooperative parish action program group. This group will act as a community watchdog. In addition to Baltimore Neighborhoods' involvement in the foregoing activities some twenty-five individual requests for help were attended to.
- Reisterstown Road at Manchester: A report of eviction notices to whites and increasing rental rates for Negroes touched off discussion (the holding of 12 parlor meetings) and resulted in the realization of the need to form a community improvement association to protect both white and Negro residents. The Northwest Baltimore Development Corp. has agreed to supply a community organizer to work full time in this area.
- Other situations, not requiring as extensive assistance, that were aided in a similar manner within the last twelve months were located in Upper Northwood, Hunting Ridge, Woodlawn, Pikesville, Northwood Proper, Kimberly, Lochearn, etc.
- Communities in racial transition could be greatly helped by having full time community organization staff available to the area who will help the people: create a harmonious inter-racial community, see that City services are maintained at proper levels, and to see that the people themselves keep up the neighborhood, etc. Some areas now have such community organization services. Other areas need help. BNI has been

instrumental, in cooperation with the School of Social Work of the University of Maryland, in forming an ad-hoc committee to investigate the possibility of a community resource center being created at the City Campus of the University. Dean Thursz has submitted to the committee the proposition that the resource center should include: (a) research; (b) training courses for community leaders and (c) most important a small pool of professionals who could be assigned to troubled communities for an extended period of time. Through BNI and Archdiocesan initiative the University graciously ran an eight week pilot leadership training course for 40 leaders of troubled neighborhoods in January-February 1968.

B. The establishment and servicing of fair housing councils in the suburban areas surrounding the City of Baltimore:

- Towson Area Fair Housing Council
- Lutherville Timonium Fair Housing Council
- Loch Raven-Joppa Fair Housing Council
- Parkville-Carney Fair Housing Council
- Catonsville Fair Housing Council (in partnership with West Baltimore Interfaith Interracial Co.)
- Dundalk Fair Housing Council (actually established by the Greater Dundalk Human Relations Committee but BNI will support its activities).

The Councils are:

- Working to arouse the religious/democratic conscience of their area as to the need for: open housing, the building of moderate cost housing, city-suburban cooperation.
- Urging individuals to sell open occupancy, to list with a Realtor who will handle open occupancy listings in good faith, to also list with BNI. Council members tour areas with Negro families to help them find homes.
- Ready to welcome Negro families to their area and to help them adjust to the community.
- Holding various public educational programs to gain understanding for open housing and to clear away prejudice. Programs have been held on: how Negroes are being forced out of Baltimore County and into Baltimore City; the difficulties Negroes have in finding housing in Baltimore County; the depth of prejudice that exists in our society, stereotypes held by whites about Negroes, property values and race, etc.

- Have called on local Realtors urging them to stand for open housing. Some 174 Realtors in the suburban area north of the City were sent a joint letter, with specifics of discriminating practices, and were asked as a group to see that such practices are discontinued. On July 2nd representatives from all Councils will meet with a committee of the Board of Real Estate to discuss the present situation, especially in light of the Federal Civil Rights Laws of 1866 and 1968.
- The Towson Area Fair Housing Council, earlier this year made a confrontation survey of 18 large apartment complexes in its area and found that 6 would rent to Negroes, 5 probably would, 3 undecided and 4 would not. The Dundalk Fair Housing Council has been involved with the staff of Fort Holabird in seeing that housing in the area was made available for Negro military personnel.
- The Councils will be working on a major project of neighborhood house meetings in order to try to reach those people who will not come to public meetings. Youth groups are being organized and will have their own projects and programs.
- A number of these activities have been publicized in the press thus drawing general attention to the need for open housing in the suburbs.
- The above activities have called for extensive services from BNI in organizing the Councils, suggesting projects and programs and helping these be accomplished, etc.

C. A Better Housing Opportunities Program has been undertaken:

- To inform the Negro community of the work of the suburban Fair Housing Councils.
- To inform the Negro community of its rights under the Federal Civil Rights legislation.
- To provide a listing service of houses and apartments which are available on an open basis.
- To warn of the damaging effects of unscrupulous real estate persons.
- To convey technical as well as general information on home buying.
- To assist Negroes who feel that they are discriminated against.

An Advisory Council is being created to help in the formation of policy, provide program suggestions and facilitate communication. Organizations such as: the Urban League, Prince Hall Masons, Woman Power, Inc., Negro business, professional and church groups, Fair Housing Councils, etc. are being invited to have representation on the Advisory Council.

Projects Underway:

- A monthly publication of homes in all sections of the metropolitan area which are available on a non-discriminatory basis. The publication is distributed to some 700 individuals churches, fraternal groups, etc. (Such may not be necessary in the months ahead because of recent civil rights legislation but this remains to be seen). In addition some 2500 Negro families were sent a notice of the listing service.

At least twenty telephone calls per day are being received in connection with the listing service and house seeking.

- Public information series: - On April 25th the first program was held. It was attended by representatives from a broad spectrum of community groups. Entitled "Inner-City Financing, Home Buying At Low Interest Rates". The program informed those present of existing government programs and the significance of the recent billion dollar commitment for inner-city home financing by the insurance industry. The program suggested ways that Baltimore could get its share such funds. Additional programs are planned for the Fall.

D. The establishment and the servicing of the Leadership Council For Fair Housing In Maryland.

The Council was formed on April 29, 1967 to coordinate and promote fair housing activities on a Statewide basis (on the premise that the Baltimore area needs help at the State level as well as the local level). The Council includes 72 organizations: religious denominations, human relations commissions, fair housing groups, civil rights groups, Leagues of Women Voters, etc.

The Council:

- Has had a Conference to discuss means of implementing the critical findings of the American Friends Service Committee as to FHA and VA activities which hinder the struggle for open housing.
- Had an extensive discussion with General Ekman, former head of the Defense Department's Program on finding off-base housing for Negro military personnel, on how the Program was being implemented, and of the Council's concern for and support of the Program.
- Made plans for, and composed an instruction manual, to sustain the State Open Housing Law in the November Referendum (now made unnecessary by the unexpected passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and the Supreme Court decision validating the Civil Rights Act of 1866).
- Met with Governor Agnew to urge that he take a stronger stand for open housing.

- Worked with the State Human Relations Commission in recruiting business, labor, Federal Government witnesses, as well as civil rights, church and housing groups to testify on behalf of stronger open housing legislation as proposed by Senate Bill #161 in the 1967-68 State Legislature. The conduct of the Hearing and prominence of witnesses received favorable editorial comment in the SUN.
- Made extensive efforts to have each member group contact Senators and Congressmen on behalf of the recently passed Federal Civil Rights Bill.
- Kept member groups informed as to what was going on in the fair housing field and passed on significant pieces of literature.

Future Activity:

- Working on a program, hopefully in cooperation with the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, for the implementation of the Federal Housing Laws in Maryland.
- Working on a program with the Community Relations Division of the Justice Department for two Fall all day workshops that will concern themselves with ways to strengthen our State Human Relations Commission and our local Commissions.
- Will ask for a meeting with the State Real Estate Commission to urge revision of the Real Estate Code of Ethics to bring the Code in line with the Civil Rights Laws of 1866 and 1968.

The major portion of the work of the Leadership Council is done by BNI staff.

E. The Irvington Project:

In partnership with the West Baltimore Interfaith Interracial Council, BNI has established the Irvington Project. Irvington is an old community in Southwest Baltimore with a predominately white section, a predominately Negro section and an area in transition.

House by house surveys were conducted in December 1967 - January 1968 and the following area-wide problems were determined:

- Housing-- Speculators are active in the area. Mortgages are difficult to obtain. Rental property is neglected or deteriorating.
- Crime--The incidence of crime is increasing. The type of crime is becoming more serious.
- Sanitation-- Public services are inadequate, especially in the Negro area, and gross private negligence is increasing. A serious rat problem is developing.

- Youth-- Teenagers do not have jobs. Recreation facilities are inadequate and beset with racial friction.
- Resources-- Programs needed in this area are for the most part focused on the inner-city. The churches in the area have, for the most part, absentee pastors and absentee congregations. The older commercial section of the area is deteriorating. The community groups which have developed within the past ten years have disbanded because of repeated failures and no successes.

Program:

- . Organization efforts have two goals:
 - Developing a leadership cadre of men who are residents, who plan to stay in the neighborhood, and who are willing to engage in the kind of activity necessary to realize concrete results.
 - Through this cadre, to develop projects which will engage a large number of the residents in action, rather than meetings, on specific problems. Considerable contact was made with the people of the community, leadership developed and the Irvington Neighborhood Association was formed.

Projects:

- Crime--Through repeated contacts with the Southwestern District Police substantial improvement in better police protection has been realized.
- Sanitation--Through repeated contacts with the Department of Sanitation some improvement in street cleaning has been realized but thus far no help has been received on the rat problem. Efforts are continuing with the Sanitation Department as well as to gain the cooperation of the whole neighborhood on these problems.
- Jobs for Teenagers--Thirty-five teenagers were organized to seek summer jobs. Considerable contact was made with employment groups and the Youth Opportunity Center but to no avail. Efforts are continuing but the young people are becoming disillusioned.
- Housing - The object is to bring home buyers rather than renters into the area. Those who want to sell are being urged to list with the housing committee. The committee in turn is seeking buyers from among the renters in the area and among outside groups.
- Recreation-- With the help of St. Joseph's Monastery and sixty neighborhood volunteers the Irvington Neighborhood Association is conducting its own summer recreation program from June 25 to August 16. \$1200 has been raised from the community for the program.

Staff and Financing:

A mature and very capable community organization student from the School of Social Work, University of Maryland is doing his field work in the Irvington area under the supervision of BNI and the University. Mr. Waldman has worked on the Project on a free basis while in school from September 1967 to May 31, 1968. He will be employed full time during the summer and be replaced by another student during the next school year. \$1700 of an \$1800 summer budget has been raised (separate from BNI).

F. Literature and information center for open housing and problems of stabilizing neighborhoods.

- Over 80 different pieces of literature including reprints, pamphlets and books are maintained in stock. These are distributed mainly through fair housing councils and neighborhood groups. Schools, churches and synagogue, government agencies, civil rights groups, and individuals are constantly coming in for literature. BNI distributed to the Baltimore community 1400 copies of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.
- Work with Enoch Pratt Library Film Department to preview and publicize educational films in the area of human relations.
- Constantly telephoned for information on open housing, problems of integration, and for program suggestions.
- Staff has numerous speaking engagements: civic groups, churches, and synagogues, college classes, etc.

G. Miscellaneous:

- Sponsors a Human Relations Luncheon each month to which are invited: civil rights people, human relations personnel, labor representatives, GBC staff, urban affairs men of the religious community, etc. The Luncheons afford an opportunity for people primarily concerned with human relations to get to know one another and to hear significant people speak off-the-record on key issues. Guest speakers have included: Mayor D'Alesandro; Police Commissioner Pomerleau; John Hopkins (Baltimore School system); General Gelston; Rev. William Rutherford (Executive Director of S.C.L.C. re: Poor People's March) Mr. Yusef Karino (Associate Director of Baltimore CORE).
- Helped establish a local chapter of the Panel of American Women. This remarkable organization operates in more than thirty cities and consists of panels of housewives: Negro, white, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant who speak on religious and racial prejudice from their point of view. The local Panel has had numerous speaking engagements. BNI invited and paid the expenses for the National President of the Panel to come to Baltimore to help in setting up the local Panel, helped

recruit local women, provided literature, etc. and aids in an informal way when ever called upon. But BNI has no further connection with the Panel, which of necessity, is to be independent of any other group. By being so the Panel is able to speak before groups that would never invite BNI.

- Works in various ways to make the real estate and housing industry more amenable to open occupancy.
- Occasional special projects such as mediating between landlord and tenants. An integrated apartment house in the Windsor Hills area was sold. The tenants felt that the new landlord was letting the condition of the apartment house decline in order to discourage present tenants, mostly white, and turn the apartment house into an all Negro project. BNI succeeded in bringing landlord and tenant association into fairly reasonable agreement.

G. Staff and Funding of BNI:

The challenge of open housing and racially changing neighborhoods is America's most difficult and most "controversial" social problem. Yet in spite of this, groups such as BNI have always been grossly understaffed and grossly underfinanced. The government, business, foundations and the religious community are concentrating most of their funds available for social concerns into the problems of the ghetto. Yet unless some attention is given to changing neighborhoods and to suburban attitudes, efforts to solve ghetto problems will be greatly hindered. In the coming years America will become more and more a divided nation with Black people in the inner-city and white people in the suburbs. Surely more than a small fraction of 1% of total social concern money should be spent on the creation of an open housing market, and upon stabilization of neighborhoods.

The work of BNI is carried on primarily by two professional staff and one secretary. The secretary's responsibility includes not only general secretarial duties but that of receptionist (the telephone rings constantly) and bookkeeper. This necessitates that the professional staff also do some secretarial work. The Executive Director has the major burden of fund raising. The work load of BNI indicates that an additional professional and an additional secretary is a reasonable goal for the near future.

The 1968 budget of \$36,000 is a minimal budget. A 1969 budget of \$50,000 would allow for addition to staff of a professional and a secretary, and rising cost of operations. This would still be a minimal budget with a modest salary for a beginning secretary and professional whose experience and educational background is not extensive.

Every possible effort is being made to continue a very economical operation and to gain as wide and diversified financial support base as is possible. Investigation is being made to see if Federal assistance in some form might be available (but this will not be an easy accomplishment and will take considerable time).