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Urban
Planning

A STUDY OF COLLABORATIVE
EFFORT BETWEEN TWO FORMAL
ORGANIZATIONS.

An outline history of the collaborative
effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council
and the Urban Renewal Division of the City
of Edmonton Planning Department.

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INTRODUCTION

The following study attempts to highlight the collaborative efforts of two formal organizations to plan a co-operative program of study into the social-human problems of an evolving skid row area.

The area concerned is commonly referred to as the Boyle Street Area and all subsequent references to this area will respect this designation. The Boyle Street area consists of approximately 70 acres. As described by Mr. Bell, it is essentially a transitional or buffer zone between the C.B.D. to the west and a medium density apartment development to the east, contained north and south by railway tracks and a major traffic artery respectively.

The possibility of a collaborative approach to the social-human problems of Boyle Street arose when the Urban Renewal study conducted by the City of Edmonton Planning Department undertook to formulate definite proposals to remedy the blighted areas of the city. One of the proposals suggested by the Urban Renewal Study was as follows:

A collaborative approach with the Edmonton Welfare Council in liaison with all local Welfare Organizations, to investigate the social-human problems that are characteristic of this district and to develop a treatment program for "reaching out" to these families and for rehabilitating them within our community.

From the point of view of collaborative efforts into the investigation of the problems of Boyle Street, the initial starting point for effective planning and the formulation of programs lies not within the Boyle Street area itself but upon the relationship between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division of the City Planning Department. This point of view has been well expressed by Mr. Wheeler in his draft letter of January 1967 entitled Social Projection on the Social Aspects of Low-Income Housing, A Proposal for a Program of Research, P.6.

"A frequently noted problem in the implementation of housing and Urban Renewal programs is their failure to give sufficient attention to the human and social implications. There are a number of possible reasons for this neglect, ranging from those situations where there is an actual paucity of validated knowledge

on the probable consequences of intervention, to a lack of appropriate institutional arrangements for the systematic collection and analysis of social data and their incorporation in program policy and development. No less important than continuing program evaluation is an agency's preparedness to make use of the finding of research. Related to this is the question of the type of administrative structure and machinery best adapted to secure effective collaboration between the skills of the physical and social planner."

The Edmonton Welfare Council is a voluntary organization representing individual and private organizations who have major concern in the areas of health, welfare and recreation. Its primary purpose is to encourage and facilitate co-ordination of the work of the various social welfare organizations. It is financed by the United Appeal of Edmonton.

The Urban Renewal Division is one division, among others, of the City Planning Department. Because of the nature of its work, the Division enjoys greater autonomy than is usually permitted under the organization of this Department. The Urban Renewal Division is a public organization that has co-ordinating functions but whose primary task is to undertake and prepare urban renewal schemes and studies that involve all levels of government, - federal, provincial and municipal. The tri-level governmental involvement is chiefly financial with highly standardized relationships established through legislation and legal agreements. Thus both organizations have an independence based upon different sources of financial backing and upon different representation - one private, the other public. The decision - making capacity of the two organizations differ as does the capacity to employ the resources available to each. There exists also an inherent source of conflict between the two organizations that have their origins in the objectives each organization seeks to reach as well as in the professional groups the two organizations employ. Yet there are many areas of common interest where collaborative effort is recognized, and considered both necessary and desirable.

The collaborative effort is desirable and necessary because the implementation of urban renewal is going to physically

change areas where social networks and relationships exist without possessing either the knowledge or the legislative authority to provide appropriate services that might possibly permit less disruptive impact upon the social milieu of an urban renewal area. The Edmonton Welfare Council, on the other hand, possesses the authority to go beyond legislative requirements as well as possessing greater sensitivity about social networks and relationships existing in a community. Moreover, it is in a position to mobilize the resources (social agencies) to attack some of the social-human problems.

THE PRESENT STATE OF COLLABORATIVE
EFFORT AND FUTURE REQUIREMENTS.

As the outline will illustrate, the present organizational base for collaborative effort is an informal one in which a dialogue is being established, but which, to date, neither the Urban Renewal Division nor the Edmonton Welfare Council has had to take concrete steps to conduct a program of research or service into the social-human problems of Boyle Street. An agreement has been signed between the City of Edmonton and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation which the City, and only the City, has agreed to conduct a preliminary study and evaluation of the Boyle Street Area and in conducting this study, set up the scope and methods of future studies and the arrangement for financial contributions to the nature of such studies once determined.

It is possible, indeed very likely, that future studies are going to involve the research facilities of the Edmonton Welfare Council and various social agencies that might be considered as forming part of the resources available to the Edmonton Welfare Council. It is at this point that a co-ordinating agency may become necessary since both conflict and co-operation are present yet a formal authority structure is lacking. The co-ordinating agency would have the tasks of:

- (a) Communicating information.
- (b) Adjudicating areas of dispute.
- (c) Promoting areas of common interest.

OUTLINE OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORT.

- . December 1962 - An agreement was signed to undertake an Urban Renewal Study within the corporate boundaries of the City and such fringe areas adjacent to the City limits as may be deemed appropriate.

Comment

Very early in the conducting of the Urban Renewal Study, the Edmonton Welfare Council became involved. One aspect was the drafting of a survey form for the investigation of socio-economic conditions within Edmonton and the other aspect was participation in a series of public meetings which discussed the progress of the urban renewal study.

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- . May 1964 - A letter from the Senior Planner - Urban Renewal to the Ford Foundation, Re: Urban Renewal and Socio-Economic Problems.

Comment

The socio-economic study undertaken by the Urban Renewal Study with the assistance of the Edmonton Welfare Council identified the Boyle Street Area as the "poorest district which contains many characteristics associated skidrow." The senior planner was concerned that redevelopment would result in the movement of the skidrow inhabitants to an adjacent district and thereby create the same blighting conditions as formerly characterized the redevelopment area. In the letter he suggests that the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council and himself are of the opinion that an alternative approach to the problem would be rehabilitation of the problem prior to redevelopment. The letter requested a grant from the Ford Foundation which was eventually refused.

While there is no specific reference to a collaborative

approach in this letter, there is the implicit assumption that the Edmonton Welfare Council would be involved.

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March 30, 1965 -- Resolution of City Council to approve a collaborative approach on Boyle Street.

Comment

The resolution authorized the preparation of applications to carry out four schemes; viz,

1. Federal-Provincial participation in the development of the Coliseum complex.
2. Neighbourhood Improvement in the North-Central Sector -- bounded by 125 Avenue, 97 Street and C.N.R.
3. Redevelopment in those portions of the River Valley, M.E.T.S. freeway alignments, . . .
4. A collaborative approach with the Edmonton Welfare Council to investigate the social-human problems characteristic of the Boyle Street (Alex Taylor) district, to be designated a special study area.

This is the first definite advocacy of a collaborative approach and it is suggested that redevelopment be confined to the Coliseum complex. The Boyle Street Area was not to be redeveloped but investigated.

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July 28, 1965 - A letter from the senior planner - Urban Renewal to Mr. Max Cross, C.M.H.C; Re: Application for Urban Renewal Schemes.

Comment

There had obviously been some concern on the part of C.M.H.C. in Ottawa about the City's capacity to handle all of the work it had recently assigned itself. The senior planner of Urban Renewal mentions that the Urban Renewal Staff is expected to be increased to nine members and that the work of the Division will be supplemented by surveys undertaken by the Edmonton Welfare

Council in respect of the Boyle Street Scheme. Obviously the major portion of the research into the social-human problems was to be undertaken by the Edmonton Welfare Council.

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August 5, 1965 - Communication from the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Committee; Re: Urban Renewal Applications.

Comment

The provincial committee was less than enthusiastic about the four applications submitted by the City of Edmonton. The Boyle Street scheme was rejected with the recommendation that it be studied in depth and that further study should be encouraged on the following basis.

1. The Study should be orientated toward the investigation of needed social rehabilitation and to the problem of providing adequate shelter for the inhabitants of such an area.
2. The Study should be undertaken by the City of Edmonton under the direction of the City Planner, or alternatively, by the Edmonton Welfare Council, or both.
3. In addition, consultants experienced in such problems should be engaged to undertake specialist aspects of the study. Such consultants being chosen with regard to their knowledge of other skid-row areas - Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal - in order that the study can examine the local problem in the light of the broader implications of the problems existing in similar areas throughout Canada.

This directive had major shifts of emphasis with respect to the collaborative effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division. While it still maintained the possibility of the Study being undertaken by the Edmonton Welfare Council, it clearly placed the initiative upon the public organization and directed how the study should be carried out. As we shall see the major outline of this directive remained essentially unchanged in the agreement between the City of Edmonton and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The

spirit of the directive and the original proposal made by the Urban Renewal Study ought to be compared to fully appreciate the change in emphasis. Clearly, the Alberta Housing & Urban Renewal Committee did not feel any obligation to involve the Edmonton Welfare Council in its decision about the manner in which the Study was to be conducted.

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August 12, 1965 - Memorandum to Mr. Stirton C.M.H.C. Edmonton Office from Max Cross C.M.H.C. - Ottawa. Re: Urban Renewal Program. City of Edmonton "Skid Row" Proposed.

Comment

The memorandum states that Mr. Cross of C.M.H.C. had discussed the proposals with Mr. Woodsworth of the Canadian Welfare Council and learned that there would be no conflict with any research that they might be doing. The memorandum repeats how this study is to be conducted. It suggests exactly the same outline as first indicated by the directive from the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Committee.

This memorandum is interesting in that the assumption of a hierarchy is illustrated. Mr. Cross, a federal representative of Urban Renewal talks to Mr. Woodsworth of the Canadian Welfare Council - a national organization. But there is little indication of collaborative effort. Mr. Cross had already decided how the study is going to be conducted.

"I suggest, therefore, that you encourage the City of Edmonton to consider an application to the Corporation for a Part V study along the lines discussed"

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August 17, 1965 - Letter from the senior planner - Urban Renewal to Mr. Bishop, Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council. Re: Urban Renewal Program - Proposed Part V Study of Boyle Street.

Comment

The contents of this letter suggest that the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division make a joint effort to regain

some of the initiative regarding the study. The collaborative effort is illustrated in the statement regarding a joint approach. The apparent assumption of the province and C.M.H.C. that this study should be undertaken by the City is ignored. Thus, we have a situation where two organizations on a local level are collaborating on a joint enterprise but are not able to influence the decisions sufficiently for this collaboration to become effective.

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September 1, 1965 - Memorandum from Senior Planner of Urban Renewal to City Commissioners Re: Boyle Street Rehabilitation Scheme.

Comment

In this communication the Senior Planner of Urban Renewal advised the City Commissioners of the Boyle Street Study and the suggested method of conducting the study. He also advises that he and the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council had recently discussed the possibility of preparing a joint approach to Mr. Woodsworth of the National Welfare Council to explore the most appropriate method of undertaking this study. The Senior Planner made it known to the City Commissioners that the social study would be best undertaken by the Edmonton Welfare Council, in liaison with the City Planning Department and the Municipal Planning Commission. The Senior Planner ends his communication by recommending that a joint application for the study be made to the Federal and Provincial governments for 100 per cent assistance.

As this communication illustrates the initiative shown previously was carried out and a definite proposal for collaborative effort recommended. This communication also outlines definite reasons why this collaborative effort was required and implies that the bulk of the work load of future studies would be borne by the Edmonton Welfare Council. This communication was approved by the City Commissioners.

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October 18, 1965 - Letter from Mr. Eisonp, Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council to the Chief Planner, City Planning Department. Re: Boyle Street Rehabilitation Study.

Comment

This letter states that the Edmonton Welfare Council has agreed to undertake responsibility for a social study of the Boyle Street Area and that initial discussions for a specific proposal have taken place. The letter indicates that the Edmonton Welfare Council has hired a research director for this purpose.

It is important to note that definite steps have been taken on the basis of decisions made between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division of the City Planning Department, via: the hiring of a research director and the preliminary drafting of a joint resolution. Yet it must be observed that the proposed joint resolution differs in substance to that proposed by the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Committee on August 5, 1965 and by Mr. Cross in his memorandum to Mr. Stinton on August 12, 1965.

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October 22, 1965 - Memorandum from the Senior Planner of Urban Renewal to the Chief Planner: Re: Boyle Street Rehabilitation Scheme.

Comment

In this memorandum the Senior Planner states that the requirements relating to the preparation of two urban renewal schemes and the existing complement of staff preclude the possibility of devoting sufficient time or effort to ensure satisfactory appraisal of the Boyle Street Area. The Senior Planner recognized that this decision might adversely affect the current negotiations with the Edmonton Welfare Council but there appeared no alternative course of action under the current frame of reference.

At this point in outline, reference should be made to a rather unusual sequence of events that had a severe impact upon the collaborative effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division.

1. Resignation of the entire staff of the Urban Renewal Division consisting of the Senior Planner, Assistant Planner and Draftsman. This occurred at a time between the completion of the Urban Renewal Study and prior to the preparation of Urban Renewal Schemes. This meant that one of the principals dealing with the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council had departed.
2. Resignation of the Chief Planner, City of Edmonton. This occurred in December 1965, with the result that the Planning Department was pre-occupied with internal organization and had little time for the fledgling beginning of the new Urban Renewal staff.
3. Resignation of the City Commissioner concerned with planning matters - April, 1966. The effect of this resignation was felt long before his departure. An Urban Renewal program depends upon effective communication of the municipality vis-à-vis the Provincial and Federal governments. More and more of the burden of carrying the entire Urban Renewal program fell upon the Senior Planner.
4. Resignation of the Research Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council - June 1966. While the resignation of the research director was some time after the undertaking of specific proposals for an Urban Renewal Study of Boyle Street, the Senior Planner was aware of the forthcoming resignation for months before its actual submission to the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council.

The combined effect of these events led to a tendency for the Urban Renewal Division to devote itself to survival as an organizational division. Concern about collaborative effort became quite secondary.

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March 7, 1966 - Memorandum from the Senior Planner - Urban Renewal
to City Commissioners Re: Urban Renewal Program.

Comment

This memorandum concerns the contents of a meeting between the Senior Planner (the City Commissioner concerned with planning matters did not feel compelled to join this meeting despite the fact that it involved federal and provincial decisions that had direct bearing on the future of city planning) and representatives of the Federal and Provincial governments. The senior government representatives expressed grave concern over the number of schemes before them and advised the City that it could expect government approval for only one scheme. The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation was very anxious to have a quick start made on the Boyle Street Study and would be agreeable to this study being carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the chosen Urban Renewal Scheme.

With regard to the collaborative effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division this meeting had several consequences. First, the initiative as to the conduct of the Boyle Street Study was passed to the senior levels of government who had never established a corresponding dialogue of collaborative effort with the National Welfare Council. Second, neither the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council or a suitable representative of the Council was present at the meeting to advise and possibly modify the suggested frame of reference for the study.

Thus the preparation of a joint proposal concerning a study on Boyle Street whereby the Edmonton Welfare Council would undertake the bulk of the work of a study was changed to a virtual directive by the senior levels of government whereby the City would assume responsibility for the study. Accordingly, an application entitled Boyle Street Urban Renewal Study was prepared for submission.

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REVIEW.

The outline of collaborative effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division has been concluded with the submission by the City of an Application for a study under Part V of the National Housing Act. In the outline a number of significant points are illustrated that have a direct bearing upon the collaborative effort between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division. It would be well to review these points with respect to the introductory statement that effective planning and the formulation of programs lies not within the Boyle Street area itself but upon the relationship between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division of the City Planning Department.

Point One - Decision-Making

It is evident that this crucial element had a rough time of it in the collaboration between the two organizations. When it appeared within the scope of legitimate authority of these two organizations, collaboration on issues were discussed and decisions made. An example of this was the decision to prepare a joint approach to Mr. Woodsworth and to explore the most appropriate method of undertaking this study. Unfortunately, what appeared to be within the legitimate realm of their authority and what actually did lie within their authority was not clear. Equally confusing was the relative position of the Edmonton Welfare Council vis-à-vis the Urban Renewal Division. This confusion is exemplified by the directive of the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Committee which outlined how the proposed study was to be conducted and the subsequent joint decision by the Director of the Edmonton Welfare Council and Senior Planner to prepare a joint approach. The method of conducting the study eventually followed the lines suggested by the Alberta directive but it is not certain that this would have been the case had not a number of other variables intervened. This brings us to the second point.

Point Two - Communication

Effective collaboration depends upon both parties having a knowledge of what the other is doing relative to the area of common interest. Within an organization, definite lines of communication are established with the offices containing the most authority having the greatest access to information. But lines of communication between the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division were undefined and informal. Information was provided when it seemed pertinent to do so. Moreover, the lines of communication that extended throughout the public organizations from federal to provincial to municipal did not extend to the Edmonton Welfare Council.

Point Three - Perception of the Problem

Whereas the Edmonton Welfare Council and the Urban Renewal Division recognized a problem where there existed an area of common interest and one in which combined resources were necessary, the same did not appear to be the case with the Ottawa Office of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the National Welfare Council. In his memorandum to the local office of C.M.H.C., Mr. Cross simply states that he cleared the project with Mr. Woodsworth of the National Welfare Council and then proceeded to suggest that the study be conducted as outlined in the directive from the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Committee. Thus, at the national level, there apparently did not exist a need for collaborative effort since neither the area of common interest or the need for combined resources were present.

The problem appears to break down to this: That the point where the collaborative effort occurs does not possess full decision making capacity. There is another point where decision making capacity exists and at this point there appears to be no need for collaborative effort.