389

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

ON THE

RENEWAL OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE

PROVIDENCE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

410 HOWARD BUILDING • PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
TELEPHONE 831-6550

April 19, 1965

The Honorable City Council
City of Providence
City Hall
Providence, Rhode Island

Gentlemen:

In accordance with Resolution No. 598 of the City Council, the enclosed report is transmitted indicating "...programs which may be carried out by the Agency for the redevelopment and renewal of the area" (South Providence).

Very truly yours,

James F. Reynolds
Executive Director

JFR/mas

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

Date : April 22, 1965

To : Vincent Vespia, City Clerk

From : Melvin L. Feldman, Principal Planner in Charge of Research

Re : Report to City Council on the Renewal of South Providence

---

Enclosed herewith are 30 copies of the above-captioned report.

The Agency desires to have said report placed on the docket for the City Council meeting of April 29, 1965.

The cooperation of the City Clerk in this matter is appreciated.

FILED

APR 23 9 38 AM '65

DEPT. OF CITY CLERK
PROVIDENCE, R.I.

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

ON THE

RENEWAL OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE

April 16, 1965

The Providence Redevelopment Agency
Edmund M. Mauro, Chairman
Timothy A. Purcell, Vice-Chairman
Charles Morris Smith, Secretary
Joseph E. Adelson, Member
Albert Harkness, Member

James F. Reynolds
Executive Director

IN CITY COUNCIL

MAY 6 - 1965

FIRST READING
DEFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON
Urban Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning
Vincent Vespia CLERK

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 20, 1965
READ:
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

William H Mathews
ACTING CLERK

SUMMARY OF REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL
ON RENEWAL OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE

1. The successful undertaking of any renewal project requires: a) compliance with renewal priorities set by the Mayor; b) approval of the operation by the City Council; and c) conformity of the physical proposals in the project plan with the local general ("master") plan.

2. Because the social and economic costs of effectuating the local general (master) plan's proposals are often unknown, pre-renewal studies frequently are necessary. In the last three major local projects, such pre-renewal work was accomplished by means of "Demonstration Grant Projects".

3. The size and complexity of renewal in South Providence will require at least as much pre-renewal study as was provided for the East Side, Railroad Relocation or Weybosset Hill Projects. To maximize local credits in this federally financed renewal undertaking, an appropriate pre-renewal study mechanism would seem to be the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (GNRP). A GNRP itself would consume a three year period. Because the South Providence situation is so critical and complex, it may also be necessary to undertake one or more Feasibility Surveys. To save time, those Feasibility Surveys could accompany (or be made a part of) the South Providence General Neighborhood Renewal Plan. As the attached schedule for renewal action indicates, a so-called simple Title I Project for South Providence may easily consume more than 80 months prior to land condemnation. A 36 month pre-renewal GNRP or a GNRP and Feasibility Survey will probably increase the project planning time but may well be essential for a reasoned and reasonable

renewal of South Providence.

Provided the renewal of South Providence complies with renewal priorities set by the Mayor, the following procedure is recommended: a filing of an application for a GNRP (plus or including Feasibility Surveys) by the Agency; the GNRP to be undertaken by selected staff of the Providence Redevelopment Agency and City Plan Commission; the expansion of those staffs as necessary to develop the GNRP; the use of outside consultants only for specified parts of task; a filing of a Survey and Planning Application for a project in South Providence during the final phases of GNRP preparation. It is estimated that about 8 years will be expended from date of filing an application for a GNRP to the date of land condemnation. (Even without a GNRP, it is estimated that almost 8 years will be required from the date of filing a Survey and Planning Application to the date of land condemnation.)

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL ON RENEWAL OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE
RE: COUNCIL RESOLUTION # 598

The Providence City Plan Commission in its General ("Master") Plan designates in a generalized fashion the land uses for the various parts of the city, indicates the general routes of major roadways in the city and defines the general type and distribution of community facilities necessary for the municipality. On the basis of that General Plan and in accordance with the priorities set by the Mayor, the Providence Redevelopment Agency serves as this locality's Local Public Agency ("LPA") and 1) specifies, within the general redevelopment section it has been assigned, the exact boundaries of a project area which will comply with state and federal statutory requirements as well as with federal administrative regulations; 2) prepares a project plan for that specific area; and 3) executes a redevelopment project. However, after the preparation of the locality's General Plan and after the Mayor has determined his renewal program - but before the Providence Redevelopment Agency begins its formal operation with federal financial assistance - it is necessary for the City Council to approve the filing of an application for federal financial assistance in that renewal undertaking. It must be understood, moreover, that the locality's request for federal assistance in the survey and planning of a project places on the locality, implicitly, the responsibility for the execution of a properly developed project unless extraordinary circumstances intervene.

The filing of a Survey and Planning Application assumes, furthermore, that a community can satisfy all major conditions set by statute or by administrative

regulation. Two of those requirements are: 1) that renewal proposals will conform to the locality's General Plan; and 2) that the locality can afford and will obligate itself to provide what the General Plan demands. ("Before a Survey and Planning Application is approved, the HHFA Regional Office will ascertain the locality's ability to meet the General Plan").

The filing of a Survey and Planning Application for a South Providence Project would assume, therefore, that all necessary general ("master") plan elements were clearly and adequately described with respect to South Providence, and that enough was already known to establish reasonable estimates concerning: 1) the general economic and social costs of renewal in South Providence; and 2) this City's capacity and willingness to pay those costs.

It is, however, not unusual for a community to lack much of the data necessary for the estimates required. Accordingly, studies have often been undertaken which, in addition to indicating some of the requisite information, also provide the outlines, if not the specifications, of the physical design to be achieved by the renewal of the given area. Prior to the inception of either the Weybosset Hill or the Railroad Project, for example, the completion of the Downtown Master Plan served to provide some of the necessary information. The College Hill Master Plan supplied generally comparable material for the East Side Project.

Both the Downtown Master Plan and the College Hill Plan were made possible by Federal grants under the "314" Demonstration Program authorized by the Housing Act of 1954. Even with such studies undertaken prior to the formal Survey and Plan-

ning operation, considerable time was necessarily spent in detailing the respective Survey and Planning Applications. Some three months were required to prepare a Survey and Planning Application for Weybosset Hill. Six more months were consumed by Federal review until Federal approval could be obtained. Following that approval, seventeen months were devoted to the preparation of an urban renewal plan for Weybosset Hill. Ten more months were expended on Federal review of that plan until approval was received. Nine additional months were taken up by formal City Council action (approval) of the plan and execution of a Loan and Grant Contract with the Federal Government. By virtue of their complexity, the East Side and Railroad Relocation Projects have taken more than double the project-planning time used for Weybosset Hill. It should be noted, moreover, that much of the data provided by the "314" Demonstration Projects was not usuable for the renewal project work which followed. But the "314" Demonstration Program is not the only mechanism or device available for "tooling up" in preparation for a Survey and Planning Application.

Another approach or mechanism is the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan. Normally initiated prior to the inception of planning for a single project, the GNRP has been fashioned for use in the renewal of a substantial section of the city where activities may have to be staged over a ten year period. From the standpoint of a locality, a GNRP is attractive where either or both of two conditions prevail: 1) the extensive size of the potential project deters the community from a single operation; 2) the community intends to obtain the maximum local credit in the renewal program for massive investments in needed public facilities over an extended area. If, for

example, a series of expenditures were to be made for public facilities in and near the South Providence area, it would be prudent to examine the possibility of extending the boundaries of any South Providence project to include the sections containing the new public facilities so that the City's expenses in developing the new facilities could be credited to the fullest degree possible toward its renewal account. But such an extension of project boundaries might well make impossible or excessively costly a single project undertaking. The GNRP device might then be employed to stage renewal operations over a 10 year period in order to maximize City credits. The decision as to whether or not to use a GNRP or even as to the exact size and area to be included in a GNRP is not simple; nor is all or most of the evidence readily available to make such a decision in the case of South Providence.

A third mechanism may be especially worth considering for the South Providence situation. Called the Feasibility Survey, this third mechanism is authorized "... only where there are special problems which need to be studied before determination can be made that a contemplated urban renewal project can reasonably be expected to be carried out to a successful conclusion." An example given in the Urban Renewal Administration Manual of one such problem justifying a Feasibility study is: "There are special questions as to the type or size of project it would be financially feasible for the locality to support." Another example of a problem warranting a Feasibility study is: "There are special relocation problems with regard to the area".

Both examples indicate the propriety and even suggest the necessity of considering a Feasibility Survey for South Providence prior to undertaking a Survey and Planning

Application. First, there is a real question and a serious problem in determining the type or size of project for South Providence. Should that project include only "Upper South Providence" or should it contain also "Lower South Providence" to prevent the latter from becoming as deteriorated as the former? Or should South Providence be part of a GNRP for the Central Planning District or for some other major section of the City?

Certainly the Relocation Problem in South Providence constitutes a special and major problem. The area which in 1950 included in its population of 18,449 some 594 non-white persons declined by 1960 in total population to 10,318 of which 1,790 were non-white. The recent Providence Youth Progress Board Report and the Social Foundation Study undertaken by the R. I. Council of Community Services both underscore the many serious social problems of the area. The propriety of a Feasibility Survey would seem justified solely on the basis of the relocation and related social problems complicating renewal of South Providence. It is not inappropriate to note that such a Feasibility Survey could reasonably be expected to examine the role to be played by the operations of Progress for Providence, Inc. in this area as well as the continued, perhaps expanded, function of the URI extension program work in South Providence. A South Providence Feasibility Survey could address itself in an orderly and comprehensive manner to the basic problem Mayor Doorley has emphasized, that of providing better housing for the City's low-income residents. Until this community concentrates its energies on the resolution of that problem, the renewal not only of South Providence but of any distressed residential area in Providence will be less than successful.

From what has been noted above, it becomes apparent that the schedule for renewing South Providence depends on the degree and quality of pre-renewal consideration to be given that area. The economic, social and political success of that renewal will also be directly dependent on the pre-renewal consideration. Although the extra time expended in pre-renewal examination will not guarantee either the undertaking or the satisfactory renewal of South Providence, the lack of such examination would seem to assure the community that the preparation of the formal Urban Renewal Plan for South Providence would far exceed a so-called normal 18 month period and could well consume 2-4 years. Moreover, a South Providence project undertaken as a single endeavor, divorced from a series of renewal projects in that general area, might well lose for the community credits potentially available from the investment in needed public facilities. But a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan, undertaken in the absence of knowledge or resources for the resolution of major problems, particularly those concerned with the relocation of non-whites and more particularly those concerned with low-income families--a GNRP undertaken without a clear development or at least a definition of the necessary tools to work on those problems cannot be expected to produce desired results.

The Feasibility Survey route is certainly no short cut to the renewal of South Providence. But to travel through the maze of social, economic, political and physical problems which are South Providence, a long route may be the only reasonable way.

Below are estimates of schedules for formal renewal action in South Providence. In the first column, an estimate is provided of the time to be consumed if a so-called

simple Title I project is to be undertaken in South Providence. In the second column, an estimate is provided of the time consumed by "normal" projects. In the third column an estimate is made of the time required for a Title I project subsequent to a GNRP for the area. And the fourth column suggests the time necessary for a Title I project after both a GNRP and a Feasibility Survey have been completed.

Subsequent to the determinations made by the Mayor concerning priorities for the City's renewal activities, renewal of South Providence may be effected by:

1) an immediate filing of a Survey and Planning Application for a project; or

2) the filing of a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan Application (plus, or including, Feasibility Surveys); during the closing stages of the GNRP, a Survey and Planning Application for a project in that area must be filed (the formal city council resolution approving the GNRP must include the commitment "...to undertake with Federal financial assistance one or more renewal projects in the above-described renewal area").

The initiation of renewal in South Providence by an immediate filing of a Survey and Planning Application is not recommended.

Recommended, instead, is the second approach - if South Providence renewal is in accord with the renewal program of Mayor Doorley. A General Neighborhood Renewal Plan and related Feasibility Survey work will require that: 1) this Agency file a GNRP application; and 2) the Agency contract with the City Plan Commission for review and development of Master Plan elements pertaining to South Providence and for such Feasibility Surveys as are relevant to the general planning of South Providence. It should clearly be noted that the magnitude of the task will require not only the

concerted efforts of key personnel of the staff of the Agency and the Plan Commission, but it will also necessitate some staff expansion of the Agency and perhaps, also, of the Plan Commission. Such staff expansion is, however, much less expensive and more productive than assigning any significant share of the work to outside, highly paid private consultants. Where private consultants are needed, it is suggested that they be called in only for specified tasks.

It is estimated that about 8 years will be expended from the date of filing an application for a GNRP to the date of land condemnation. (Even without a GNRP, it is estimated that almost 8 years will be required from the date of filing a Survey and Planning Application to the date of land condemnation.)

SCHEDULE FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF RENEWAL OPERATIONS IN SOUTH PROVIDENCE

Type A As a Title I Project	This Project (in months)	Normal Time (in months)	Type B After GNRP x/	Type C After GNRP and Feasibility Survey y/
1. Preparation of Survey & Planning Application.....	+ 3	+ 3	2	1
2. Federal Review of S & P Application to Approval.....	+ 6	+ 6	5	4
3. Preparation of Urban Renewal Project Plan.....	+50	+16 to +50	40	30
4. Federal Review of UR Project Plan to Approval.....	+ 9	+ 5 to + 9	7	5
5. Submission of Plan to City Council to 2nd Pass.....	+ 4	+ 2 to + 4	3	2
6. Fed. Review of Local Approval to Execution of..... Loan & Grant Contract	+ 6	+ 2 to + 6	5	4
7. Execution of L & G Contract to Date of Condemnation...	+ 3	+ 1 to + 3	2	2
Subtotal	81	35 to 81	64	48
8. Condemnation Date to Date of Relocation of Last Site Occupant.....	+60	+15 to +60		
9. Relocation of Last Site Occupant to Demolition of Last Structure*.....	+12 to + 24	+12 to +32		
Subtotal	153 to 165	62 to 173	91 to 156	75 to 140
10. Demolition of Last Structure to Completion of Site Improvements**.....	-12 to 0	-12 to +29		
11. Completion of Site Improvements to Sale of Last Disposal Site ***.....	0 to + 24	0 to +31		
12. Sale of Last Disposal Site to Completion of Rehabilitation.....	0 to + 12	0 to +12		
Total Project Time	141 to 201	50 to 245	79 to 228	63 to 212

* Award of Demolition Contract - Dem. last Structure
** Execution of Engineer. Contract - Completion Site Improvements
*** URA Approval of Disposition Program-Sale of Last Disposal Site

x/ Estimated minimum time for completion of GNRP : 36 months

y/ Assume necessary Feasibility Survey is completed within time of GNRP work