

Councilmen Say Poor Ignored in Housing

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City Council President John Gibson and Vice President Billy Mills charge the city is following planning policies that ignore housing for the poor and will result in larger inner-city ghettos.

Councilman Marvin Braude claims lengthy criticism made by Gibson to the council was unfair and exaggerated.

Gibson put the council on notice this week when it approved a community plan for West Los Angeles that he "is not going to vote for another plan unless you pay some attention to the problems that exist in ghetto parts of the city."

So far in approving 15 community plans that will become part of the general city plan the council is forging a policy that makes housing mobility financially impossible because of planning's impact on the price of land, Gibson said.

Another seven community plans are pending before the council and four more are scheduled for early hearings before the Planning Commission.

"What you are doing exactly, and I think you knows it, Gibson told the council, "is instead of giving people a chance to move around the city and be able to buy a single residential lot, you've decided the house has to be on a larger

lot and therefore is more expensive. You've put industry, too, off where it can't exist.

"You have made it impossible to do anything but just make the ghetto larger. That's exactly what you've done."

Mills was applauded by the audience when he told the council he wants the same kind of consideration the West Los Angeles plan received when community plans for South Central Los Angeles and Southwest communities he represents come before the council.

Among those in the standing-room-only audience in the council chamber which seats 380 were representatives of Chicano communities and

Please Turn to Pg. 15, Col. 1

POOR IGNORED

Continued from 14th Page

the Watts area represented by Gibson. They were waiting to protest cut-backs in school educational programs for the Model Cities programs in the Greater Watts area and East-Northeast Los Angeles.

Mills said population densities are being cut back in community plans being approved for the Valley and West Los Angeles. He added that he would resist crowding heavy apartment developments "in communities that already tend to be overimpacted. I don't think it's fair to force all the people who want to live in multiple housing into one section of the city. You know what the obvious results of that would be."

Gibson told the council, "In looking at these future plans I hope you will be concerned with the problems that exist right here (in inner city).

"Councilmen get up on the floor and say these plans are good for all the people. They must know if they've ever been in my district or Mr. Mills district that just isn't so.

"These people can't expect, no matter how much education you give them and everything else, to be able to get out and pay the prices that you are creating by this type of planning.

"Now you say the CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) is the solution to the problem. All I've seen the CRA do to date is destroy what was there that might be possible for people to live in a while longer and then break ground followed by no construction whatever.

"There are many CRA projects that should have been built by now, and it's been eight years since we had the problems in the ghetto districts, as you call them, where there's some mighty nice people.

"All you seem to want to do in these master plans is to make it impossible for the people to go any place else if they wanted to. You are zoning so that it's getting to be that only a wealthy man can buy the property and build a home on it.

"The way we are doing it, with building and safety (department) too, we've increased the cost of housing immensely. That's my problem. So you can see me jumping up in the future.

"I understand that this West Los Angeles plan has no provision whatsoever for low-cost housing. All right, what you are saying is stay over there in the ghetto. Don't get out of there. And everybody else that hasn't got any money that comes here from the South or someplace else,

why they'll join up with you.

"The same way with your high-rise apartments. You're getting everything so the rent is \$300, \$400, \$500 a month. Where are these people going to live that are in my district want to better themselves a little?

"They can't go out into the Santa Monica Mountains where you say they can't build a house unless you have two acres. If you're around Griffith Park you pay \$60,000 for a small lot.

"I think you are creating a worse problem than the city has ever had. I just want to warn you I don't intend to vote again for these community plans no matter what part of the city it is in.

"I'm afraid to let the Planning Department come in my district for fear of what they will do. I tell them to stay out.

"We have in my district lots 40 or 50 feet wide by 100 deep that are excellent to build houses. People that are even on a 25x100-foot lot with their own private dwelling become much better citizens than when you stick up these apartments where you try to crowd eight and ten families in together then—as little as two years from the time they were built—they have to be torn down by the conservation department of the city."

Councilman Marvin Braude, who represents part of the area included in the West Los Angeles plan, in replying to Gibson's criticism said, "No community plan can solve all of our social ills.

"It is unfair to suggest that such planning is discriminatory against the poor. I just do not think that is so. To get better housing for the poor, the first thing you have to have is public transportation.

"Does this plan (West Los Angeles) move us in that direction? The answer is yes.

"You heard Mr. Mills say he wants the same kind of planning and the same kind of amenities in his district and I agree wholeheartedly.

"How do you solve the cost of low-cost housing? You do it by income distribution in this country. You are not going to get better housing unless you provide better income for the poor."

Braude then noted that the council had continued another item on the Monday agenda before them that would require inclusion of low and moderate income dwelling units in some developments of five or more units.

"You continued it," he told his colleagues. "I was

prepared to support it six months ago but we pushed that under the table.

"To say that the effort the city is making in its whole planning process—the goals that it has been seeking for 25 years are wasted and discriminatory against the poor—I don't think that's valid, Mr. Gibson.

"Let's go ahead and do those things that will aid low-cost housing. I'll support all of them."

The agenda item Braude criticized the council for continuing to Feb. 28, 1974, was initiated by Councilman Ernani Bernardi in July, 1971, to require at least 15% of low and moderate income housing in all new developments of five units or more. It has been kicked back and forth between the Planning Commission and the City Council several times since then.

Planning Director Calvin Hamilton proposed to the Planning Commission as far back as July, 1969, that a minimum of 10% of low and moderate income housing be included in new developments. He was prompted by the uncertainty over dispersal of such housing following a mass protest in Sylmar that killed an 80-unit federally subsidized project.

In Nov., 1970, the council by an 8-7 vote rejected a Planning Commission recommendation to provide low to moderate income housing in the zoning for 4,500 units to be developed on the 212 acre Warner Ranch urban core in Woodland Hills.

Councilwoman Pat Russell, chairman of the Planning Committee, thanked Gibson for bringing the low and moderate-income housing issue to the floor.

"There's no question," she said, "that the only policy this city has on housing is a policy of rhetoric. It's time we grew up and realized that we can't produce housing by rhetoric alone.

"We are going to have to have houses scattered throughout the city for poor people to live in and not let them be concentrated as in the past."