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October 14, 1970

Housing Authority of the City of Corpus Christi
3701 Ayers Street
Corpus Christi, Texas

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

I and other interested citizens attended your workshop meeting held on Monday, October 12. At that time the Board permitted those present to express their views concerning the proposed site for a 100-unit housing development. I have since learned that no formal minutes are kept at the workshop meeting so I thought it appropriate to briefly review some of the objections raised concerning the proposed site as well as the explanations expressed by the Board.

Our major concern was that the proposed location of this housing development was in a neighborhood within what has been referred to as the Corridor, a residential area almost exclusively Mexican-American and Negro. As all of you know, our School District has been found by the Federal Court to be a segregated system. Although the court found that the School Board committed many intentional acts bringing about this result, the court also found, and the District contended, that residential patterns in the city were a cause of segregation within the system. What you now contemplate doing will only increase the segregation in Corpus Christi and will make desegregation of the system even more difficult than it already is. I believe that this was pointed out to you as plainly as possible and I believe that you conceded that this would be the effect of your action. You indicated that although you had given thought to this problem, due to the emergency need for the housing and the lack of appropriate zoning in other areas of the city, that this site was recommended to HUD. A third reason given was that HUD had placed a maximum cost on land acquisition, making other sites unfeasible.

It was pointed out to you, that above all else, the School Board was opposed to any student school assignment plan requiring transportation to integrate the system. I believe that everyone wants to avoid busing costs if it is at all possible.

Housing Authority of the City of Corpus Christi
October 14, 1970
Page 2

Recognizing that these units would be occupied predominately by Mexican-American and Negro families, there is presented to the community an excellent opportunity to make an inroad toward changing the ethnic identity of many residential areas in our city. This project can be and should be placed in an area other than an identifiable minority area. It would provide the children of that neighborhood with an integrated school without the need for transportation.

Please understand that my criticism is intended to be constructive but it does not appear to me that the objections raised by your Board members to locating this project elsewhere have much substance. First, your Board indicated that this was "an emergency" brought about by the hurricane. Truly we have had a housing shortage for needy families in Corpus Christi that predates the hurricane, as witnessed by the various projects which have been constructed in recent years. Furthermore, all of the housing authority units now in existence have been constructed in the Corridor area, and this has been done in normal times; you are giving absolutely no different treatment to this "emergency".

A second objection was that there was no zoning presently available in the south side area of town for apartments. The statement was not made that there was no property available for apartments, but simply that there was no zoning. There is a difference. The south side is filled with apartments. I have taken the liberty of xeroxing the telephone book yellow pages and if you will give this attachment a casual glance you will see that practically all of the large apartment complexes are located in the south side at the present time. A tour of the south side will confirm what the yellow pages show. The major apartment complexes in minority areas are yours and government sponsored projects.

A word about the costs of land acquisition. The amount allocated for land costs was not pulled out of the air. Apparently some investigation was made and if the allocation is only sufficient to purchase land in the ghetto area, then obviously whoever made the decision intended for the project to be placed in the ghetto and nowhere else. If this is correct, then the decision violates every policy statement of HUD. It was my understanding that HUD was to discourage building more ghettos and further complicate our integration problems.

Housing Authority of the City of Corpus Christi
October 14, 1970
Page 3

I agree with you that Corpus Christi needs this project, and more. I cannot agree with the position taken by one of the Board members that either we accept a project to be built in a segregated, minority neighborhood, or we get no project at all. I cannot accept that this is the only alternative we have.

Please give this matter further consideration and do not settle for more segregation and more school problems.

I am very discouraged. I note that although this matter has been presented to the School Board, the School Board has indicated that it can do nothing. Although this is not an unusual position for the School Board, it is inconsistent with sworn testimony presented on its behalf in the Federal Court trial to the effect that school administrators have met with builders and developers in planning for anticipated school needs.

An effort was made to permit our view to be expressed to the City Council at its meeting this afternoon but we have received word through the City Secretary that the Council will not allocate time to us. Recognizing that your Board is an independent Board, we nevertheless feel that the Council's attitude in this matter would be persuasive since it is with the Council that the ultimate decisions will be made pertaining to zoning changes that may be required to properly locate these new housing units.

I urge you to please, please, meet with the Council, with the School Board, with the appropriate HUD officials, and with the Federal Court Human Relations Committee, and to try to do right.

Yours very truly,


James DeAnda

JD/go