

...Making the Neighborhood A Better Place for Living

BY MICHAEL GRODEN

The plight of city neighborhoods has received a lot of attention lately. More and more city dwellers are moving out to suburban or rural areas to avoid pollution, crime and blight. As a result, property values plummet, houses are abandoned and deteriorate, taxes remain high and services received for these taxes seem to lessen each year.

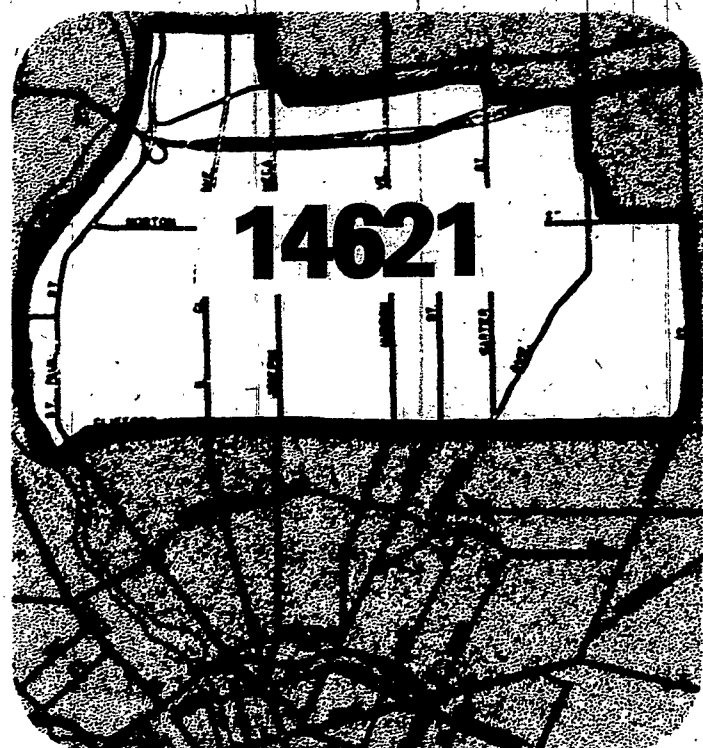
When city residents attempt to buy or improve a home in the inner city they often find mortgages or home improvement loans difficult to get due to a practice called "redlining." According to Msgr. George A. Cocuzzi, urban vicar and director of the Office of Urban Ministry, redlining occurs when certain geographic areas are placed in a "poor risk" category. Without these needed monies the area slowly begins to deteriorate.

Although these problems are difficult to deal with there are now a growing number of organizations, including Urban Ministry, that are determined to reverse the trend.

Group 14621 Assn. Inc., is one of the newer neighborhood organizations. Started two years ago, the group, as the name implies, is concerned with the zip code section of Rochester north of Clifford Avenue between Goodman Street and the Genesee River.

14621 is described, in their newsletter, as "an organization of residents of the area working together to make our neighborhood a better place to live." It is a community-sponsored program composed of individuals, families, neighborhood groups and local churches.

Robert Wendelgass, 14621 organizer, said that the group has made significant progress. Wendelgass, who holds a degree in Urban Studies and Economics from Syracuse



University, listed some of the accomplishments in a year-end report.

They include a survey of housing conditions in the area which resulted in the securing or demolishing of abandoned homes and the improvement of "numerous properties." 14621 has improved the supervision and programming of the Avenue D Recreation Center, previously a trouble spot according to Wendelgass.

They have also helped change "the structure of the Pure Waters Board" from suburban controlled to city

controlled, also brought mismanagement and overcharges by Pure Waters to public light helping insure lower rates in the city in 1977.

An information program on redlining was instituted, and they are now working on a project dealing with crime in the area. Wendelgass explained that so far city officials and agencies have given "generally good cooperation." The most encouraging improvement, however, is the cooperation of residents on neighborhood projects. "A lot of people are really getting involved," Wendelgass said.

In addition to the dues paid every year the group was given \$2,650 by the five Catholic Churches who are involved with 14621; St. Michael's, St. Stanislaus, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Andrew's and Holy Redeemer. Holy Redeemer also donated office space for the group in the old school building on Hudson Avenue.

This amount was matched by Urban Ministries. Msgr. Cocuzzi said that the church should take an active part in such groups. "The neighborhood church forms a very natural forum," he said. People attend services each Sunday, different meetings, many non-religious, are held at the parish during the week and some parishes still have schools that bring parents together. The common bond is already there.

Msgr. Cocuzzi feels that the church should not try to lead the fight but rather serve as "a catalyst" for neighborhood associations. He also feels that the problems of the inner city should be a concern for the entire diocese, not just the neighborhood parishes.

"Preaching about it (the problems of inner city living) is meaningless without taking constructive action," he said. He added that without the help of the entire church, including all diocesan departments, neighborhood groups would not succeed.

Marchers Here, in D.C., To Protest Court Ruling

Diocesan pro-life adherents will be taking several avenues to note the Jan. 22 anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision liberalizing abortion in the United States.

The Rochester Right to Life Committee has planned a March for Life and a

prayer service in downtown Rochester Jan. 22.

Marchers will gather in Washington Park at 2 p.m. and proceed down Clinton Avenue to Main Street, to the Liberty Pole, and then back to St. Mary's Church, across from Washington Park, for an ecumenical prayer service.

The prayer service will begin at 2:45 p.m. Further information is available from Ray or Lynne Buonemani at 328-4936.

Others will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to march in the capital city. Buses have been chartered from different sites in the diocese for that purpose.

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