

## Letter To The Editor

# Housing, An Immediate Concern

To the editor:

Housing — What does it mean to you? If you are a middle class citizen with a fairly adequate house and steady job, it means a secure haven for your family, a place where you can retire from the pressures of the outside world. To the poor and the disadvantaged it means a place where they can stay huddled together at night trying to keep warm, a place where the landlord keeps promising to fix the plumbing, a haven from the rain if they have enough pots and buckets to catch the water, a constant effort of trying to match income to meet rent, high electrical and water bills (because of hidden leaks), feeding a large family on little income.

Can you imagine the horrified look on the face of Minnie White, mother of nine, when she heard the shrieks of her two year old daughter Margaret? — "Mama, mama, I'm stuck," screamed Margaret! Minnie ran to the bedroom at 811 East Commerce where she found that Margaret had fallen through the rotten floor boards. (They had been in the home less than a month.) On October 11, this fall, Minnie phoned me to tell me how she, herself, had fallen through the kitchen floor of this same house. I rushed over to see her and found many boards in this home had caved in or were about to fall in. I could see the sky through the living room ceiling when I went in there to call Jack Poisson at Legal Aid. The hall floor contains a gaping hole several boards wide. Minnie used her ingenuity and covered that one with a chair. Others she had stuffed with newspapers in order to keep the cold, damp air from coming up into her house. In the kitchen the sink juts out from the wall because the wall boards are pulling loose

from the housing frame. The back porch is a series of torn screens and a board is vacant from the whole length of the porch. In the bathroom near the toilet, the wall starts quite a bit higher up than the floor. How can a family heat such a home? How will they keep the pipes from freezing?

The rent of \$45.00 per month was raised to \$51.00 in October (during the prize freeze) by the realty company. They said it was to cover the plumbing repairs, but the plumbing was broken before Minnie moved in. The water still runs even with all the faucets turned off. Her utility bill for November was \$36.00.

Seeking action, I invited Eric Scott and Freeman Hill, head building inspector, to visit Minnie's home on Oct. 22. Eric remarked on Minnie's good housekeeping, but I'm sure he was impressed by the condition of the floors and walls. The many broken windows were covered with plastic in order to keep out the exterior elements. I did notice that Freeman Hill and Eric were quite careful before crossing any thresholds and watched their steps. Mr. Hill did say that the fuse box looked okay, whereupon I remarked, "Hey Minnie! You've got a great fuse box! It's too bad you can't live in there!"

This particular house is on the corner of Walnut and Commerce and I went to the Redevelopment Office following the visit by the Asst. City Mgr. (sic) and Freeman Hill. Joe Branson and Brady Rhyne said they have been trying to get this particular house condemned for years but people keep moving in. Why do the realtors keep moving families in when they are aware of the sub-standard conditions existing? Perhaps it is time we tried again to get the city council to adopt a rental inspection system.

Minnie's problem is only one of

many that I personally know of. How many more exist of which I'm not even aware? How many of our citizens are suffering?

Minnie has been on the waiting list for public housing for 2 years but according to the guidelines she must be moved into a five-bedroom home — how impossible it all seems! How long will she have to wait? How many realtors are willing to rent to a woman with nine children? Our city is our larger home and our citizens are our "brothers." What are you personally willing to do to alleviate such situations? I urge you to ask the city council to help all our citizens to enjoy a healthier and more adequate High Point.

—MRS. DORIS LINDSAY

## You-In Print!

Contributions to WHAT'S HAPPENING are welcomed. They may be in the form of letters to the editor, pictures, or stories. Articles may be submitted handwritten or typed; all must be signed. No letters expressing a personal point of view will be printed unless submitted with a signature. Under special circumstances upon request, names will be omitted in print. Deadline for entries is one week prior to publication, or on alternate Fridays. Contact Emily Hedrick at 885-8214.

## Multi-Purpose Center Getting Land For Site

The multi-purpose service center planned by Model Cities and the City of High Point is now in the land acquisition stage.

The \$807,700 project will house offices of social and medical services, a gym with stage and dressing room facilities, a reading-audio-visual room, meeting room and classrooms, and a kitchen.

High Point's application for a Neighborhood Facilities Program grant of \$413,600 to the Department of Housing and Urban Development was begun in April, 1970, and completed in September, 1970. Model Cities committed \$197,500 to the project, while the City of High Point contributed \$198,600.

The application for federal funds was approved in July. Since then the city manager's office has had the 2.3 acres of land on Taylor Avenue in Southside surveyed and appraised.

Now the land, on which stands 24 of the worse slum residences in High Point, is being bought by the city for the service center. Legal entanglements and court settlements, coupled with the problem of finding the owner in some cases, have held up the purchase of the land in recent months.

By January 1, however, the architects, Mays and Parks, are scheduled to draw up final plans for the building. The structure will depend upon which service agencies elect to make their headquarters in the center.

After the blueprints are drawn, which is expected to take three to four months, bids will be accepted on the building. Construction will begin thereafter, hopefully by the end of spring. It is estimated that construction on the 34,000-square-foot facility will take about one year.

Families uprooted by the building will be given first priority in available housing by the Central Relocation Agency, which is working closely with the project. No family will be required to move until suitable housing at a similar cost is found elsewhere.

The multi-purpose center is expected to house services for 10,000 persons, primarily residents from the Southside and Macedonia neighborhoods. Work on the project is under the supervision of Jim Pennington of the city manager's office.

WHAT'S HAPPENING is published bimonthly by the Model Cities Commission of High Point, North Carolina, William S. Bencini, Mayor; Dr. Otis E. Tillman, Commission Chairman; Donald J. Forney, Director; Cecil A. Brown, Information and Evaluation Specialist. Offices of the agency are located at 609 S. Main St., High Point, N. C. 27260. Telephone 885-8214 or 882-9924.

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Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Emily Hedrick

## Credit Tip

Before using credit . . .

Don't rush. Read and understand the contract. Never sign a contract with spaces left blank. Always make sure you are given a copy of the contract at the time you sign it. Keep the contract in a place where you can find it later.

Be sure the contract tells you exactly what you are buying; the purchase price, or amount borrowed; interest and service charge in dollars and the simple annual rate; total amount due and the down payment; number of payments and the amount of each payment; when the payments are made; and trade-in allowances, if any.

This buying tip was provided by Consumer Credit Counseling, Inc., 142 Church Avenue. Phone Barry Boneno at 885-0041.

## Consumer Survey Being Conducted

A survey to determine the buying habits of Model Neighborhood residents is being conducted by the Model Cities Commission.

The survey, which will take a random sample of 10 percent, or 660, of the households within the Model Neighborhood, was requested by Consumer Credit Counseling director Barry Boneno.

Boneno and the staff of Model Cities hope to find out the residents' purchasing habits, and problems resulting from their purchases. Participants will be asked about their income, what they bought and on what payment terms, and the selling practices used by the salesman.

Four interviewers, two from Model Cities agency staffs and two from the community, are conducting the door-to-door research. Each carries an identification card, and each is prepared to give information concerning Model Cities and its projects.

Interviews take approximately 30 minutes each. All personal information gathered will be kept confidential.

After all the data is in, Model Cities will evaluate the results and prepare it for publication.

This survey is the first such one conducted by Model Cities staff members themselves. In the past, outside research consultants were hired.

When the results are evaluated, Boneno hopes to aim his consumer counseling more effectively to the Model Neighborhood.

Staff statistician Helene Jacobson and technical writer Victoria Thekkandam are in charge of the survey.