

Womble: Fair housing's not just a one-way street

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Chronicle Staff Writer

The burden of integration needs to be shared by the white community, said Alderman Larry W. Womble at a forum last Thursday on fair housing.

"Why do we integrate just one way?" he asked. "Why not build houses to attract whites to East Winston? It can work."

Womble and fellow aldermen Martha S. Wood and Frank L. Frye fielded questions and gave their views on "The City's Role in Fair Housing" at the Glade Street YWCA. The event was part of local Fair Housing Month activities sponsored by the

not been replaced.

"When those houses were torn down, we forced those people to move to predominantly white areas," he said. "They moved there not necessarily because they want to, but because the housing stock they would like to have is not available in East Winston. This is inherently wrong. It takes role models out of the black community."

Womble said the problem is that developers are not willing to invest in the black community.

"Plenty of that land in East Winston is just laying there vacant," he said. "Developers are

said housing should be affordable for any class of people in any part of town.

"A person should not be prohibited to live in a section of town because of their race, the size of their pocketbook, sex, religion or any other thing," she said. "It's been done successfully in Charlotte, where the City Council stood firm against opposition to such a measure. I don't see why it wouldn't work here."

Section 8 funding, a proposed landlord/tenant hearing board and a program to educate tenants on house maintenance were among other topics covered in the two-hour discussion.

Members of the audience also touched on a current landlord-tenant controversy in Winston-Salem. Some of the 36 citizens who attended had heard that the panel was to discuss a recent Human Relations Commission proposal on rent withholding. Consequently, a number of landlords and tenants came to the program ready to argue the virtues, or vices, of tenant/landlord relations.

Despite some comments by disgruntled landlords, Sharon G. Hamilton, who moderated the discussion, said everything turned out well.

"I thought it was a very productive meeting," she said. "The people got a chance to raise their concerns and raise issues about housing in the community."

In response to a question about the drying up of federal subsidies for Section 8 housing, the aldermen said they were not sure

what measures would be taken to preserve the program.

The proposal to form a tenant/landlord hearing board received a warm welcome from the panelists. The proposed board would attempt to settle disputes without legal procedures, Hamilton said. The Commission's Fair Housing Committee, of which she is a member, will look at the proposal for the 1986-87 fiscal year, which begins in July, she said.

She said the committee will bring a proposal to the community to set up such a board.

The Winston-Salem Chronicle is published every Thursday by the Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty St. Mailing address: Post Office Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102. Phone: 722-8624. Second-class postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102.

The **Winston-Salem Chronicle** is a charter member of the Newsfinder service of the Associated Press and a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the North Carolina Press Association and the North Carolina Black Publishers Association.

Subscription: \$18.72 per year, payable in advance (North Carolina sales tax included). Please add \$5.00 for out-of-town delivery. **PUBLICATION USPS NO. 067910.**

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-- Larry W. Womble

Human Relations Commission's New Horizons Fair Housing Committee.

Womble said Winston-Salem is trying to take the lead in encouraging investment in East Winston. The city recently set aside \$2 million to build 40 duplexes on University Parkway and Cherry Street, but government can't do it all, he said.

"We have to get the landowners, contractors, developers and lending institutions to invest in East Winston," Womble said. "They need to build comparable-type housing to that found on the other side of town. Then we could totally have the dream of America - fair and decent housing everywhere."

Womble said houses were torn down in East Winston and have

always coming before the Board (of Aldermen) to rezone land, when we already have plenty of land already rezoned for housing in East Winston.

"Winston-Salem is still two cities, while it should be one. We're approaching oneness, but it still is a segregated and divided city, at least when it comes to housing. We need to develop both sides of town comparably."

The three aldermen said they would support building housing projects in white, middle-class neighborhoods, though all such projects so far have been built in black communities.

Frye said he worked on and supported the South Marshall Area Plan, which allowed for both inexpensive and moderately expensive housing. Mrs. Wood

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