

HOUSING BRONZEVILLE NEWS

SERVING THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF DOUGLAS, NEAR SOUTH SIDE, GRAND BOULEVARD, OAKLAND, KENWOOD, FULLER PARK &

WASHINGTON PARK

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CITY TRIES TO MUZZLE BRONZEVILLE RESIDENTS' VOICE

HOUSING BRONZEVILLE THREATENED WITH UP TO \$1 MILLION IN FINES

The City of Chicago continued its efforts to impose an iron curtain of silence on Bronzeville's almost 2,000 city-owned vacant lots by moving immediately in the early morning of July 24th to send its garbage trucks and sanitation workers to remove signs posted by Housing Bronzeville volunteers during the previous evening. The purpose of the 2,000 dramatic red-and-white signs had been to educate local residents about Bronzeville's greatest resource for affordable home ownership—its vacant land.

At the same time that its workers pulled down the signs, the City threatened Housing Bronzeville with fines ranging from \$25-\$500 per sign.

Housing Bronzeville's "Tag Day" originated in a desire by local residents to identify for all neighborhood residents the lots that had been taken from hard-luck homeowners and quietly and secretly stockpiled by the City over many years. The City is now in the process of selling these lots to the top bidder—pushing housing costs in Bronzeville to astronomical levels—\$300,000, \$600,000, or even \$900,000—well out of the reach of most local residents or their families.

"City sanitation workers don't act this quickly to mow these vacant lots or pick up the trash on them," commented local resident Valencia Hardy. "We're disgusted that they would re-route garbage trucks and workers at 7:00AM to prevent our message from being communicated for a longer period of time."

Housing Bronzeville's message did get heard, however, as its office was inundated with telephone calls from interested residents inquiring about the signs and how they could help with the affordable home ownership campaign, one aspect of which focuses on using the vacant lots for home ownership for moderate-income residents "with demonstrated Bronzeville roots."



3rd Ward Sanitation chief, Glendale James, responds to questions from Housing Bronzeville's Valencia Hardy and WBBM News Radio's Steve Miller as to why he was removing signs and threatening the organization with fines.

"Housing Bronzeville's vision calls for affordable home ownership," added Cynthia Bowman, another Housing Bronzeville member. "I'm fortunate to be a current owner in Bronzeville. But what about all of the other moderate-income Bronzeville residents who are being pushed out of their own community? Chicago aspires to be a world-class city—we can do better than just quietly driving long-term residents out. That's why we need to publicize—and keep publicizing—this issue."

The greatest concentration of signs posted on city-owned lots were on Shields, Princeton, and Wells, from 47th to 55th Streets, and on LaSalle, Perry, and Lafayette, from Garfield Boulevard to 59th Streets. The other signs were posted throughout the community, comprising parts of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 20th Wards.

"When I woke up this morning, your signs were everywhere! I never knew the City owned so much land in my area."

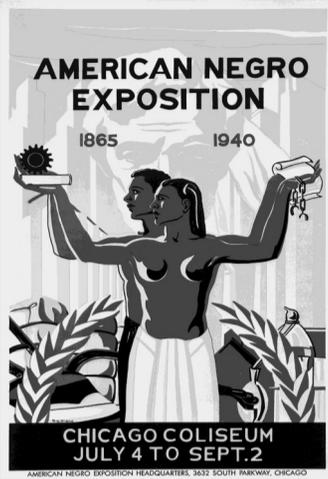
-- Telephone caller to Housing Bronzeville—7/24/07

HOUSING BRONZEVILLE GETS THE MESSAGE OUT!

Special thanks to the following news sources for their reports on our "Vacant Lot Tag Day" on July 24th:

- Leah Hope & Channel 7 news
- Steve Miller & WBBM News Radio 780
- Natalie Moore & Chicago Public Radio
- Michael Tercha, Kristen Kridel & Chicago Tribune
- Gabriel Piemonte & Lakefront Outlook

Did You Know???



American Negro Exposition poster, 1940.

- In 1960, Bronzeville had 26% moderate-income residents. Today we have less than 13%.
- City-owned vacant lots numbered 1,896 in a list provided to Housing Bronzeville at a meeting with the Department of Planning on November 30, 2006. Privately-owned vacant lots number more than 2,000, as determined by Housing Bronzeville researchers this summer. More than 20% of Bronzeville's land is vacant.
- The Mayor's 2016 Olympic plans call for an Olympic stadium in Washington Park and an Olympic village in Bronzeville's northeast corner.
- Two candidates who ran successfully for alderman in 2007—Bob Fioretti in the 2nd Ward and Pat Dowell in the 3rd Ward—both committed to support Housing Bronzeville's enabling legislation, as well as full transparency regarding city-owned vacant lots. A third successful candidate—Willie Cochran in the 20th Ward—emphasized his commitment to affordable home ownership as well. 4th Ward Alderman Toni Preckwinkle wrote Housing Bronzeville on February 6, 2007, that she has "always been an advocate of affordable housing."
- The City stands to reap \$200 million from the sale of its city-owned lots at today's going prices.

Blue Ribbon Committee Completes Work on Enabling Legislation

At a final meeting on October 25th, Housing Bronzeville's Blue Ribbon Committee put the finishing touches on its enabling legislation developed to address the affordable housing crisis in Bronzeville. Housing Bronzeville will now take the proposed legislation to the community for approval and to local aldermen to steer through the shoals of the Chicago City Council.

"Our legislation is designed to build upon the proposal mandated by 18,519 Bronzeville voters in an advisory referendum on the November 2004 election ballot," explained Reverend Jeffrey Campbell, pastor of Judah Israelite Church and chair of the Blue Ribbon Committee. "It offers a concrete goal of 26% moderate-income residents

who should live in Bronzeville and tangible steps that can be taken to reach that goal."

The Blue Ribbon Committee included 12 local Bronzeville residents and pastors and 8 housing, finance, and legal experts, several with roots of their own in Bronzeville. Nick Brunick of Applegate and Thorne-Thomsen drafted the legislation in keeping with the specifications of the Committee, the language of the referendum, and a more detailed proposal approved by delegates at Housing Bronzeville's Assembly on April 22, 2006. Mr. Brunick is former director of the Regional Housing Initiative for Business and Professional People for the Public Interest.

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Housing Bronzeville works to ensure a vibrant, politically empowered, economically diverse Bronzeville community by providing leadership to develop, maintain and support affordable home ownership through the establishment of a Bronzeville Housing Trust Fund. As a project of the Lugenia Burns Hope Center, **Housing Bronzeville** is a non-partisan organization dedicated to encouraging the improvement of all Bronzeville neighborhoods through extensive community educational and informational programs.



Blue Ribbon Committee members (Left-to-right: Vanessa Smith, Tanger Fielder, Rev. Jeffrey Campbell, Mildred Darby, Peter Landon, Cynthia Bowman, Clara Gatewood-Brown, Linda Singleton, and Gerald Offutt). Missing from the picture are Committee members: Valencia Hardy, Kenneth Williams, Rev. Clement Townsend, Venita Carr, Jeri Richard, Dr. Paul Fischer, William Higginson, Alvin Robinson, Robin Larson, Anthony Ruvolo, and Nick Brunick.

See the Housing Bronzeville Video—Become a "Friend of Bronzeville"

Please add me to the mailing list and sign me up to help **Housing Bronzeville's** campaign for affordable home ownership in Bronzeville:

Name: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

I wish to attend a showing of Housing Bronzeville's video—"Stand Up for Bronzeville!"

I wish to help form a "Friend of Bronzeville" chapter at my school _____, office _____, church _____, local community group _____.

Please return to Housing Bronzeville, 3424 S. State Street, Suite 102, Chicago, IL 60616