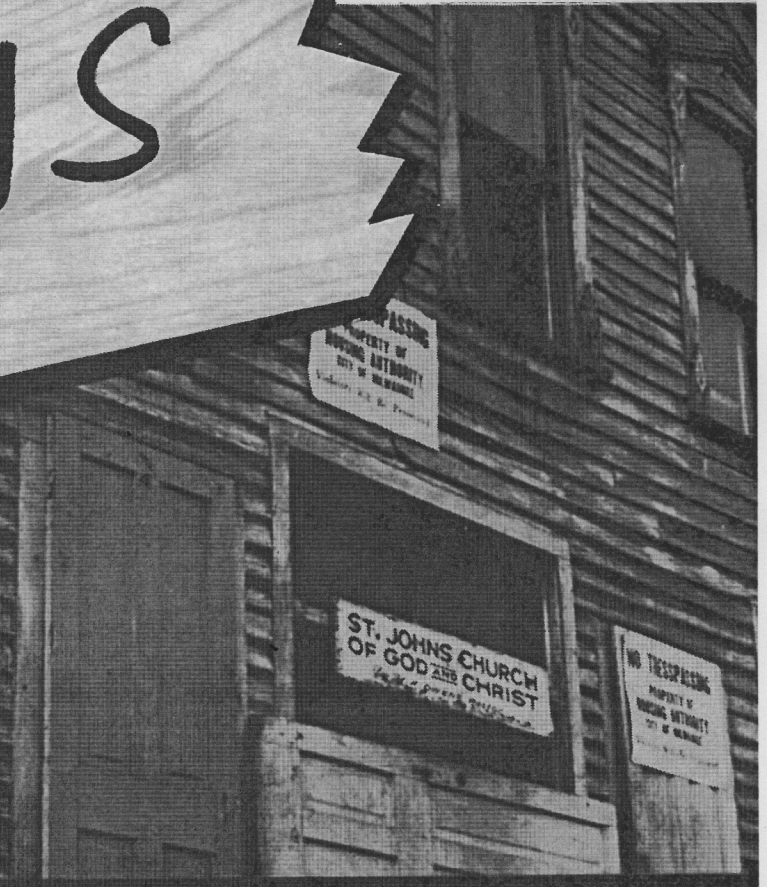
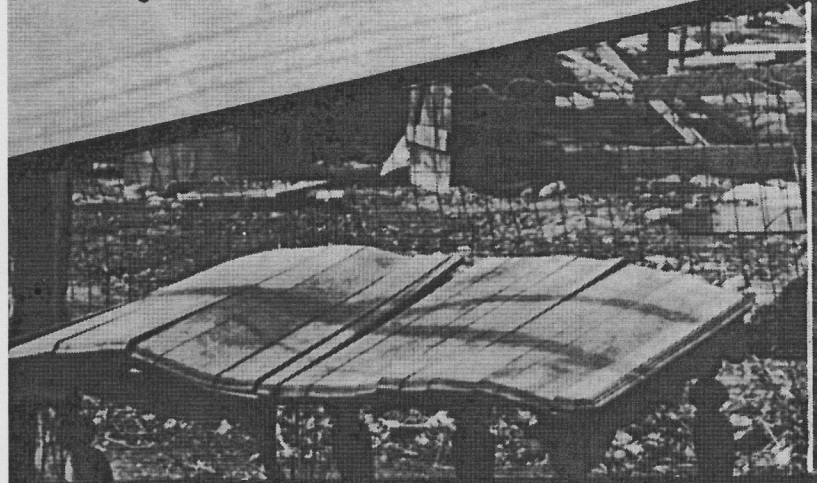




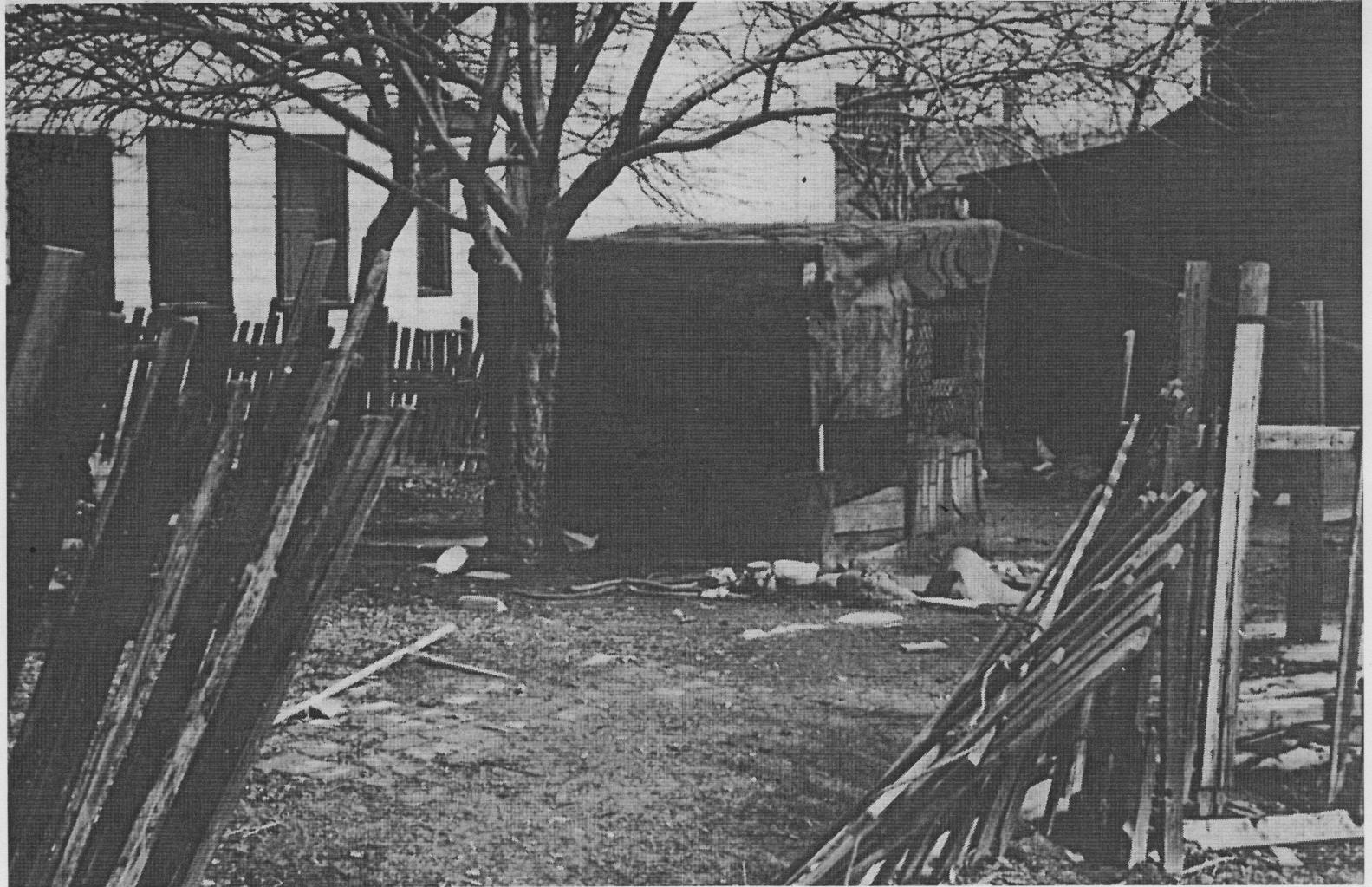
THE BLIGHT

WITHIN US



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"THE BLIGHT WITHIN US"

by

William J. Manly,

Real Estate Editor of The Milwaukee Journal

Many cities in recent years have given serious attention to the cause of blight and its effect on the community. Those concerned with revenues have found that blight reduces badly needed tax funds for community maintenance and development. Those responsible for police protection find a significant relation between blight and lawlessness. Those responsible for fire protection find their task intensified when large metropolitan areas fall into neglect and dilapidation.

Blight in Milwaukee is a problem of increasing concern to all interested in Milwaukee's present and future. The Milwaukee Journal has for years given

its wholehearted support to the finding of practical solutions to this great civic problem.

For an objective study of blight, its causes and effects on Milwaukee, The Milwaukee Journal assigned William J. Manly, Real Estate Editor, to rounding up the facts and reporting them to Journal readers. Two months were spent at the task and, in the period between March 14 and April 6, 1954, Manly's series "The Blight Within Us" was published in The Milwaukee Journal.

Because of the importance of this subject, The Milwaukee Journal has assembled all the articles and reprinted them in this booklet as another of its services in the community and public interest.

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The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter I

Boundaries Wide for City Slum Area

Solid facts are lacking on causes and cures for creeping decay in residential sections. Can something be done and who should do it? These are some of the top problems.

Some authorities believe a fifth of Milwaukee's people live in or near rot. Some say that the fraction is smaller.

Great residential areas of the inner city have decayed, are decaying or face decay. No one debates that fact. Rather the debate—shaping up on many fronts—is over these questions:

How extensive are the slum and blight areas and the areas threatened by blight?

Can something be done about them?

Who can do something?

Who should do something?

Of course there also are many important "satellite" questions and they also are being debated.

How come blight?

Whose fault?

What does a slum cost—

(a) in dollars and cents?

(b) in the humanities?

To all of these questions there are opinions based on the interpretation of strong indications, but few firm facts based on strong, broad research.

US Funds Aid Research

There has been research—\$70,-

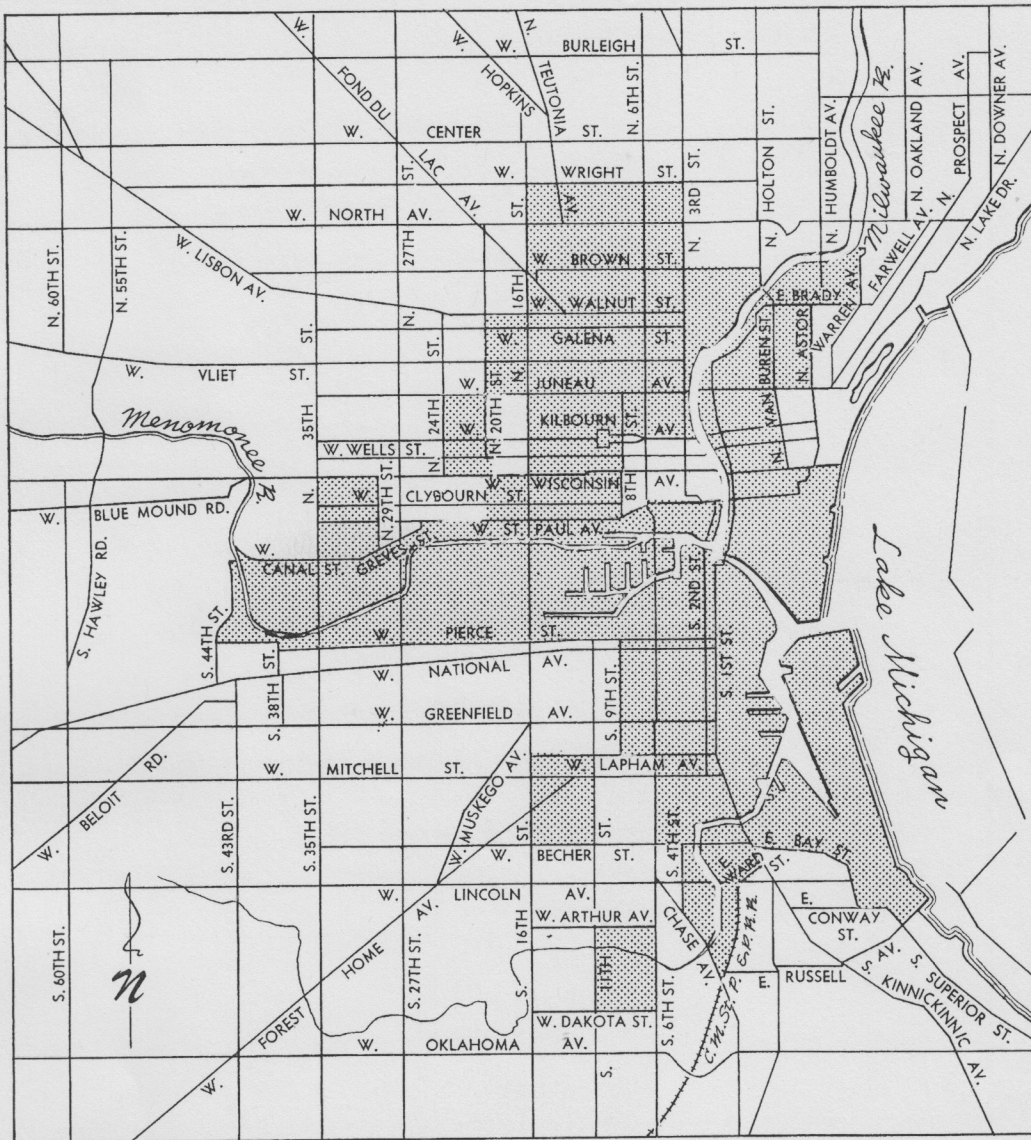
000 worth in recent years financed by federal government aid. Yet everybody agrees it is but the beginning. Nobody knows how great the problem is or how to meet it. Some don't agree with such statistical findings as there are. Everybody agrees that the information is too limited and too vague.

In Milwaukee's awakening anew to the terrible existence of slums and the brooding threat of slums to come out of blight, many minds and factors are pushing and pulling within the boundary of the perpetual problem—

public housing supporters, private builders, health authorities, welfare workers, city officials in high positions and low, the fire chief, the police chief, do-gooders and do-nothings and, especially, old John Public himself.

Under state law, the city land commission has the responsibility of determining the amount of blight and substandardness in the city and where it is located geographically.

In a report dated in 1953 but just released, it said that 15.19% of the city excessively indicated blight. This represented 5,390 of the city's 33,856 acres at that



The indicated spread of blight in Milwaukee, shown in the shaded areas, is based on an analysis of 1950 census figures for residential buildings only. It does not reflect commercial or industrial conditions. As a result, coincidence of blight factors on only a few houses in an area otherwise almost completely commercial would place it within the

shaded portion of the map. This blight indication map was prepared by the city land commission, which used available census statistics in determining the degree of 10 elements of blight. Where seven or more elements overlapped in a census district, the area was placed in the blighted classification.

time. The area was the home of 121,356 persons, 19% of the city's population.

Many of these Milwaukeeans do not know that it includes them. A lot of others don't believe it. But the records show it.

Thousands of persons are jammed into structures that should hold only hundreds. In the really bad areas, the ways of life are appalling. The smoke and dirt

of traffic and business damage health. Crime is greater. Fires are worse. Juvenile and adult delinquency rates are high.

Generally speaking, the whole inner city was placed in this unhappy classification. (Bear in mind, however, that the study relates only to housing. For the purposes of the study, a few old homes in a big business area causes the whole area to be classified as blighted.)

The "blight area" boundary is very irregular (see map), but it runs as far north as W. Wright st., as far west as S. 44th st., and as far south as W. Dakota st. and east to Lake Michigan.

Idea Can Be Confusing

That thought is confusing. Suppose you drive through the area. Rock bottom slum and blight is obvious, of course.

But all of the area doesn't seem to be that way. Take W. Michigan st. Start at N. 35th st. and drive east. You are in a blighted area, according to the map.

You pass row after row of old duplex buildings on narrow lots. A few have a nodding acquaintance with paint. A few wear rather new artificial brick siding. Then there's the neighborhood church followed by more duplexes. Cross streets bear the same drab appearance.

Then you cross N. 29th st., going east. The same thing, you say? Well, it looks like it. There are the same type of structures, the same corner tavern, the artificial brick siding, the duplexes and the narrow lots. But this area isn't blighted, according to the map.

You say to yourself: "Somebody's wrong. This isn't all blight and slum."

True. And therein lies much of the problem when the experts try to tell the public what they mean. Let's look into that.

Fighters of slum and blight have always faced the problem of not having enough information. Governing bodies won't spend much money for studies. Ways had to be found to use what findings were available.

The land commission chose federal census findings, compiled every 10 years. It selected 10 "elements of blight," reasoning this way:

"There are certain conditions (not every one of which, in itself, is necessarily bad) which cause undesirability or are evidence of undesirability within a neighborhood. When seven of the 10 elements are present to a degree above the average for the city as a whole, blight is thought to exist."

The 10 "elements" selected were:

Old dwelling units—50% or more dwelling units over 30 years old.

Substandard units—20% or more without private bath or dilapidated.

Low value—Average value of owner occupied one dwelling unit structures, \$7,500 or under.

Renter occupancy—75% or more dwelling units renter occupied.

Rent Cost Is Factor

Low rentals—Average monthly rental under \$35 a dwelling unit.

Land overcrowding—Population density per gross acre over 30 persons.

Unit overcrowding—3.12% or more of the units have more than one and a half persons a room.

Sickness rate—Average rate of tuberculosis hospital admissions 0.70 or more per 1,000 population.

Juvenile delinquency — Rate

of 20 or more per 1,000 population 19 years of age or younger.

General assistance — 4% or more of population receiving general assistance.

Almost any area of the city might have one of these factors present. But it took seven of the 10 to cause concern.

Another important point to remember: Census findings are reported on a "tract" basis. A tract is a relatively small area, usually following street lines, containing perhaps 4,000 to 6,000 persons. A small pocket of serious blight might cause a whole tract to be classified as blighted.

The city is divided into 160 census tracts. The land commission found that 30 had at least seven of the 10 elements of blight. These tracts include our best downtown areas. That's because only housing was rated, even if the tract was almost 100% in commercial or industrial use.

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 2

Slum Battle Hampered by Lack of Leadership

An aroused public, sound program needed for successful fight, but Milwaukee seems to have neither; laws called inadequate, city departments "muddling."

A successful fight against slum and blight must have three things:

A sound, broad program.

Strong, adequate leadership.

An aroused, informed public.

Milwaukee appears to have none. There is no over-all direction. Public and private leaders have tangled, oftentimes with bitterness. City departments are "muddling." Present laws are inadequate. And the public has shown little interest.

To leave it at that, however, would be unfair. There have been recent flickers of light. Out of them may come the guiding flame. These possible beginnings include:

City proposals for large scale redevelopment with the co-operation of private enterprise.

City proposals for strengthening of its own laws to halt the further spread of blight and its elimination, where feasible.

A realty group program based on the industry's national "build America better" campaign.

The start of thinking about slum and blight by the Milwaukee Builders' association.

US Loans Would Help

The city plan for redevelopment would utilize federal loans and grants to acquire badly blighted sites. These would then be offered to private individuals like this:

Here is a slum site. We bought it at a high price, tore down the buildings and prepared it for reuse. We have placed a low price on it to interest you. All we require is that you follow the general program set up to conform to the city master plan for proper redevelopment of the site.

The city has obtained a promise from the federal government that \$5,354,000 would be earmarked for redevelopment here if the city qualified itself.

21 Cities Got Grants

We're behind. Twenty-one other cities already have received loan and grant contracts for 42 redevelopment projects.

A challenge of the constitutionality of the state's blighted area law slowed down Milwaukee.

The argument is concerned chiefly with the use of the city's power of condemnation. Blight and slum land owners can make big profits from low investments. They sometimes ask fantastic prices to sell.

In a redevelopment program, the city could use condemnation to buy at a price determined by the courts before reselling it for reuse by private builders.

Those challenging the law claim that the city has no right to take property from one owner and sell it to another who could profit by redeveloping it. Only condemnation for "public use" is constitutional, they insist.

The city says "public use" is served when slum and blight are eliminated, that what happens after elimination of blight is merely incidental.

Question Before Court

The question is before the circuit court. Whichever side loses

is expected to appeal to the state supreme court, so no early solution is seen.

A second step in the city's slum battle was taken recently when Dr. E. R. Krumbiegel, city health

commissioner, proposed a sweeping revision of the city's housing code. This still must run the gamut of public hearings and common council approval. Its fate is difficult to guess. The commissioner anticipates a strong fight from property owners, rooming house operators and others. The 57 page proposed code is before the city attorney for review of legal points. It will be submitted to the common council soon. The new code would greatly stiffen the city's weapon in its war against slovenliness, neglect and insanitary conditions — all found in many a blighted area.

It seeks to correct many of the difficulties created by the present less stringent provisions. An important proposed revision would provide for the licensing of rooming houses. City officials have long complained that this lack has kept them from dealing effectively with bad operators.

Occupancy Limited

Another important section of the proposed code seeks to rewrite the limits of occupancy. The present ordinance, based on cubic footage, has permitted overcrowd-

ing, hastening deterioration and adding to the insanitary conditions of many buildings, according to Dr. Krumbiegel.

The commissioner also proposes a board of housing appeals to review his department's condemnation orders, denials of licenses, its suspensions or revocations.

Finally, the new code would broaden the terms under which the health department could condemn a building as unfit for human habitation.

At present, buildings which are condemned to human habitation remain standing because they are not considered structurally safe. As eyesores in the neighborhood, they continue to contribute to the blight.

There are two approaches in the so-called "private enterprise" field.

Campaign Studied

The Milwaukee Board of Realtors is studying application here of a campaign to rebuild American cities sponsored by the National Association of Real Estate Boards. The program calls for restoration of structures that are blighted; demolition of those that are too far gone, and upgrading neighborhoods through improvements in streets, parks, public properties, etc.

There is nothing new, fundamentally, in this approach. Six years ago Dr. Krumbiegel urged:

(1) Utilization of measures to protect better areas.

(2) Rehabilitation of less severely blighted areas through improvement and modernization.

(3) Clearance and rebuilding of the most severely blighted areas.

But the strong realtor support is new. The president, Joseph W. Buellesbach, said:



Dr. Krumbiegel

"We are planning to initiate meetings with prominent national authorities to attempt to alert this community and its leaders to what has been accomplished in other cities with similar problems. It is our opinion that now is the time for the creation of a citizens organization dedicated to the blight problem — a group composed of government, civic and church leaders — similar to the 1948 Corporation or the Greater Milwaukee committee. We stand ready to serve."



Mr. Buellesbach

The board has sponsored two public meetings. One meeting discussed the rehabilitation program under way in Baltimore, Md. The second featured a California builder who told how 'private enterprise' could interest itself in rehabilitating blighted houses.

The second private industry group, the Milwaukee Builders association, also has sponsored a public meeting on the problem. Its speaker was the deputy building commissioner of Chicago, who noted the attendance of only 35 Milwaukeeans and scored public apathy when "blight is marching on at a terrific pace."

Four "Philosophies"

The association itself, however, hasn't settled on a program. Its leaders said that four "philosophies" were current among mem-

bers and that these would have to be ironed out.

The "philosophies," as outlined to the reporter, are:

1. Rehabilitation of blighted structures.
2. Redevelopment of spots in blighted areas, with better financing arrangements for the builder.
3. Large project redevelopment for blighted areas.
4. "One member has another idea but we don't know what it is yet, that's why we want to get going on a committee study of the various ideas."

This desire to "get going" on blight is comparatively new with the builders, too. They gave a number of reasons.

"This trouble is just being brought to light," said one.

"We've got to get going because the philosophy for many years was to assume that if things were left to the individual they would get done," said another. "But it wasn't. Now we have to start to study and form an association program."

There were other reasons, too, why builders were unable to do much about slum and blight, they said. One was the big housing shortage, which called upon all their resources. There were restrictions on the use of materials for some years after World War II.

There were differences of opinions between the industry and the national and local administrations, along with financing troubles and their own lack of experience. Now, they hope, things will be different.

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 3

Foundations of Blight Often Hard to Discern

Definitions of terms found easily, but money is needed for detailed studies that really reveal the condition of areas and open the way for redevelopment.

THE city is concerned by its slums, its blight and its near blight. Residential areas thus classified, whether with certainty or vaguely, are increasing in the inner city—the area fanning out irregularly a mile or two from downtown, home to 120,000 people. Slums, those squalid, smelly breeders of disease, misery, strife and expense—and occasional human greatness—are known to everybody on sight and deplored by all. They are the common disgrace of cities of the world.

Many cities take them for granted. Milwaukee fights slums. Sometimes with force, sometimes with only a despairing wail.

Now again the cry is growing stronger. Public officials, private business, good citizens are trying to see a way into the problem in order to fight out of it — or at least to gain a little against the great decay.

Terms Are Defined

To discuss this, it is necessary to define the basic terms.

The dictionary says: "Slum—a district comprising streets thickly populated, especially ones marked by squalor, wretched living conditions or the degradation of its inhabitants."

Blight and near blight are not so easily recognized.

The dictionary says: "Blight—any disease, symptom of disease or injury resulting in withering, cessation of growth and more or less general death of parts."

Large areas of Milwaukee would seem to have such symptoms, but research on them has been comparatively limited. The city land commission, charged by law with responsibility for determining the amount of substandardness in the city, outlines the situation a little more clearly with this definition of a condition of blight:

"Any condition which makes a residence or an area less healthy or safe for its residents than is

considered essential for minimum livability. To describe an area as being blighted is simply a general way of stating that the area fails to meet reasonable standards of livability which must exist in order to assure health and safety."

How can Milwaukee relieve the slum and blight sickness?

You can add a coat of paint, a bit of plaster, a wire for "rat-proofing."

The experts don't believe those are answers. They might easily perpetuate the very causes.

Better to examine the "patient" closely, determine the causes, then recommend the cures.

Blight is by no means confined to areas with unpainted, sagging structures, surrounded by refuse, junk and grassless yards.

Land Commission Tells What It Sees

The city land commission puts it this way:

"In some areas of the city, decay and deterioration are really

obvious. There are other areas, apparently unaffected, which have been thoroughly analyzed and found to be in the advance stages of blight. These areas do not display their defects in an obvious way, and they do not conform to the popular, stereotyped concept of a blighted area."

Dr. E. R. Krumbiegel, city health commissioner, added this word:

"There are places where facilities are deplorable and maintenance is good. The casual viewer sees only the good maintenance and believes that no serious housing problem exists."

Is "Only Rough Screening"

Carl H. Quast, the commission's planning analyst, explains that the 10 elements of blight—such as land overcrowding, juvenile delinquency and poor plumbing—used to outline bad areas are "only a rough screening."

"You would have to go house to house to make detailed studies," he said. "That would be costly." Therein lies the rub—money. Detailed studies have been suggest-

ed time and again, and as often vetoed because of the big cost.

"Of course, we'd like to have it done because we believe the findings will confirm what we suspect as to how bad a lot of the blighted area really is," the planners insist.

An example is available. Last year the Milwaukee Housing authority ordered a study for a small, proposed redevelopment project of seven blocks bounded by N. 6th, N. 11th, W. Galena and W. Walnut sts. (see map) in the 6th ward.

Answer on "Paint It Up"

These blocks answer those who would urge the "fix it up, paint it up" type of rehabilitation, at least for this particular area.

Inspectors and experts from various departments combed the area for information.

For example, Leon M. Gurda, the city building inspector, reported back that land use is excessive. Originally there were 64

lots. These have been subdivided into 121, most of them no more than 25 feet wide. Of the 121 lots, a third have more than one principal building on them.

"About 93% of all the buildings don't have minimum open spaces required by the zoning ordinance," he said.

He found 87% of the homes in less than fair physical condition, 70% without minimum sanitary fixtures.

"Nothing less than total demolition and redevelopment is the answer," Gurda concluded.

The city health department checked maintenance, sanitary facilities, sleeping space and other deficiencies affecting health, safety and livability. It used the American Public Health association standards.

"The area is unrehabitable and demolition is warranted," Dr. Krumbiegel concluded.

Checked by Land Board

The land commission checked

crowding of land, availability of public parks and playgrounds, the sanitary system and public water supply; proportion of nonresidential land uses on streets in residential blocks; proximity to major street traffic arteries, proximity to railroads, and amounts of hazards and nuisances from residential land uses.

It considered the noise from juke boxes and people in near-by "taverns, pool halls and restaurants," the "constant odors" from near-by manufacturing establishments, the high degree of traffic congestion, and noise and smoke from vehicles.

Neighborhoods like this spread blight," the commission decided. It recommended changes in zoning "to prevent mixed land use, expansion and development of recreation areas and, where possible, replating to conform to modern design standards."

Effect on Taxes Eyed

Finally the city tax commis-

sioner's office wanted to find out what effect blight and slum had on an area's tax base. What was the city losing through lessened taxes?

That study, comparing 1950 and 1940 information, was beclouded because the value of everything had gone up. Despite this, the slum area showed its bad side.

Figures were compared on a typical \$10,000 house in the city on an average and in the study area itself.

The \$10,000 home in 1940 increased to \$20,460 in market value in 1950 for the city as a whole, the office found. This was an increase of more than 99%. But in the slum area, the 1950 value was up only 70%, to \$16,780.

"All areas have increased in value," the office said, "but this upward trend in the project area is far less than that of the other areas studied."

No wonder some people are beginning to ask whether the city, as a whole, can afford such an area.

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 4

Slum Dwellers Pay Up in Misery, Not Taxes

Blight is raising havoc with city's levy base, a big factor in channeling public attention to aging, crowded area; police, fire records show what redevelopment can accomplish.

People who live in slums and blight areas pay for them in misery. Other residents pay in tax dollars.

People in one slum-blight area averaged \$9.14 in property tax in 1940 and \$9.93 in 1950. People in the rest of the city averaged \$27.79 in 1940 and \$47.32 in 1950.

In one year a "good" area had 62 arrests, a blighted area of somewhat smaller population had 358 and a slum-blight area had 1,012.

In five years, a ward with blocks of horrible housing had 3,775 fires. Another ward, comparable only in number of residents, had 1,154.

Blight is raising havoc with the city tax base. This is a potent factor in the developing attention by public officials and citizens to slums, blight and near-blight in the inner city's aging, crowded homes through which residents of greater Milwaukee move each day on their way to work in the busy downtown stores, offices and factories.

Conclusions Difficult

Finding out what slums and blight cost everyone is difficult. Multiple factors defy precise conclusions.

However, Tax Commissioner Thomas A. Byrne made a beginning. He had his staff spot check a blighted area bounded by W. Juneau av., W. Galena, N. 7th and N. 12th sts.

In 1940, each of the then 3,395 persons in the area paid an average of \$9.14 in property tax. In 1950 that had increased only 8½% to \$9.93 per person. The city average increased 70%, from \$27.79 in 1940 to \$47.32 in

1950. If the blighted area increase had equaled the city average, the per capita tax would have been \$15.55 instead of \$9.93. Based on present estimated population, that would have meant \$27,500 more for the city from this little area—and it's only a drop in the Milwaukee sea of blight.

The Milwaukee police department keeps record, too. Police Chief John W. Polcyn offered a report for one

year's arrests on 25 charges ranging from murder to petty larceny. The totals were compiled for a "good" census tract (bounded by W. Brown, W. Wright, N. 35th and N. 41st sts.); blighted tract A (bounded by W. Kilbourn and W. St. Paul avs., N. 8th and N. 13th sts.) and blighted tract B (bounded by N.

Van Buren st., Milwaukee river, E. Wisconsin and E. Juneau avs.). The "good" tract, with a population of 5,075, had a total of only 62 arrests. Blighted tract A, with a smaller population (4,041), had 358. Blighted tract B, with a population of 4,206, had a staggering one year arrest total of 1,012.

Chief Polcyn thinks a lot of the trouble is due to the overcrowding of blighted areas.

More Police Needed

"In a normal area of one and a half square miles, a one man squad car will do," the chief said. "In a congested, blighted area the same size near downtown we need 38 men.

"If the area were cleaned up, we could accomplish the same work with 15 men. Figuring the average officer at \$4,830 a year, that would mean a saving of about \$110,000 a year—plus saving the cost of more ambulance runs, the work of the bureau of identification and the large volume of bookings on arrests."

Fire Chief Edward E. Wischer also has some interesting figures. He compared the blighted 6th



Thomas Byrne



Chief Polcyn



Chief Wischer

22nd is covered by engine company 24. "If the 6th ward were developed, there still would be a lot of people in it," the chief added. "But we could take out one engine company and use it in a newly annexed area. We're go-

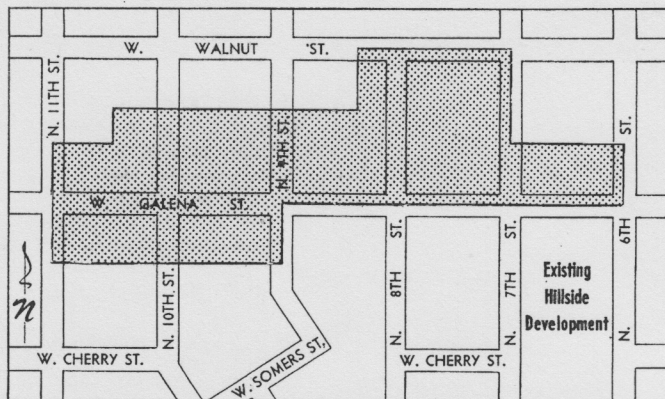
ward and the more prosperous 22nd (N. 27th, N. 60th, W. Hadley sts. and W. North av.). They are about the same size. In five years the 6th ward had 3,775 fires; the 22nd had only 1,154. The 6th ward needed truck company 3, plus three engine companies. The

Fire Losses Decrease

The fire department also has figures to indicate, on a very small scale, what redevelopment did for two blocks in the 6th ward.

From August, 1944, to August, 1949, there were only 57 dwelling units in the area. There were 14 fires, with losses estimated at a total of \$20,073.31.

Hillside Terrace, a public housing project, then was erected. The number of living units in the two blocks jumped from 57 to 232. The number of fires dropped to five, with a total loss of only \$500.



This proposed redevelopment site in the 6th ward was studied by four teams from city agencies to determine the degree and cost of slum and blight. The findings were that the conditions were bad, costs were high and the area should be demolished and rebuilt.

—By a Journal Artist

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 5

Slums Cost City, Yes, but Dweller Pays Most

TB rate is higher and crime is more frequent in such areas, census figures show.

Everyone agrees that slums cost more tax dollars than they produce and most everyone strongly suspects that they cost the slum dweller himself something, too.

What price lost ambition? Is there a price for sleeping four and five in a bed or on an old door placed over a bathtub?

Milwaukee is facing up to more and more pressure from growing slums and residential blight in the inner city. It is trying to figure out what the problem is and how to meet it.

Officials have estimated the high tax dollar cost of the aging and rotting zone between the busy business area in the city's heart and the good, substantial homes farther out.

Social scientists and health authorities cannot measure in exact dollars the cost in disease, delinquency and despair. Yet, they have unmistakable guideposts.

Census Figures Given

Last year, in Milwaukee county, there were 623 new TB cases. They were concentrated largely in Milwaukee's blighted areas.

The 1950 federal census figures give supporting evidence. Three census tracts were compared on the basis of TB hospital admissions in 1947, 1948 and 1949.

One was a blighted tract (21) in the middle of the 6th ward. Its population was about 4,088; its TB rate per 1,000 was 3.29. A second blighted tract (114) was in the near south side. Its population was about 3,038; its TB rate was 2.65 per 1,000. A substantial tract (100) was selected on the west side. Its population was about 3,300; its TB rate was only .39 per 1,000.

The city average as a whole was only .751.

A Wisconsin Anti-Tuberculosis association report shows that in 1949 the sanatorium costs per year for treatment range from \$1,856 to \$5,417. Add the costs of medical study, diagnosis and treatment by private physicians, public or private assistance to the family and loss of wages.

But Experts Say . . .

Some argue that "the people, not the housing" cause the disease. Educate the people, this argument runs, and you solve the problem.

The experts say: "It is a disease caused by a germ, spread to people by people. We know the disease is highly communicable. We know blighted areas are overcrowded. There is more TB in blighted areas. So . . ."

The same census tracts were used in considering delinquency among children, 5, through 19 years.

In the city as a whole, 19.4 out of each 1,000 were known to the children's court for delinquency. In blighted tract 21, however, the rate was 62.5; in blighted tract 114, 50.9. But in "substantial" tract 100, the rate was only 18.4.

Seen Rate Decline

Again, is it the housing or is it the people? Children's Judge John J. Kenney wrote this:

"What goes on under the roof is more important to the child than the condition of the roof itself. However, the ever existing dual presence of high delinquency and substandard housing is a fact. We at the juvenile court over the last 20 years have seen the statistical rate of delinquency reduce in certain areas, following the extension to those areas of public services—that is, street

improvements, lighting, sewer connections, etc., and the destruction of shacks and the erection of decent homes."

Newark, New York, Cleveland, Louisville, Los Angeles—all cities say the same.

The National Association of Home Builders tells its members:

Return Almost Nothing

"About 10 million houses and apartment units in the United States are slums or blighted—one in every five dwelling places in the country.

"Because of the extra services they require, these slums eat away about 40% of every city's budget dollar. And they return almost nothing to the community except crime, disease and poverty."

The NAHB report said that slum and blighted districts of a city accounted for: 33% of the population; 45% of the major crimes; 55% of the juvenile delinquency; 50% of the arrests; 60% of the TB victims; 35% of the fires; over 40% of total city services costs—and only 6% of the tax revenues.

Does the Milwaukee story fit these statistics? There haven't been any recent studies to determine it precisely. Spot checks and surmises indicate it.



Judge Kenney

Causes of Blight Reach Back Into City History

Neglect of planning, time, economics of families and high profits involved.

The causes of blight and slums reach deeply into the very history of a community. Every major city of any age at all has them. They include:

Time itself, which brings age.

Lack of proper planning in the city's early days.

The economics of families.

Lack of education and training for many citizens.

Discrimination, which brings overcrowding and blight—and high profit to the absentee property owner.

In general, every city of the same class tends to reproduce all the different types of areas found in another. You will find a central business and industrial district and a "zone of transition." This is generally a slum or blighted area in the throes of changing from residential into business and industrial use.

Then, in succeeding, concentric layers, will be the poorer class homes, the better homes and, finally, the suburban and rural homes.

These zones, or "layers," aren't static. They expand constantly and crowd in upon each other as a city grows. As a Milwaukee housing commission wrote 21 years ago:

"Our city growth has been characterized by a process of people climbing over each other from the center toward the outskirts."

Grew Rapidly in Old Days

When Milwaukee was young, it grew rapidly. There was little planning. Everyone just wanted to live close to the center. Transportation was limited. The man had to get to work, his wife to stores and his children to school.

Soon the industrial and commercial activities of growing Milwaukee began to encroach. The people wanted parks and playgrounds. Traffic increased. These older residential districts found themselves with smoke, dirt, noise and a lot of people who had no place to go for relaxation.

The people who could afford it moved out into newer areas. Poorer families, often immigrants, moved in. So did marginal

commercial operations; there wasn't any land planning to keep them out.

Two Areas Spotlighted

Apply this generalized bit of history to two of Milwaukee's so-called blighted areas.

Take an area in the 6th ward lying between N. 4th and N. 11th sts., along W. Cherry, W. Galena and even W. Vliet sts.

Once, this area held a substantial, prosperous German group, in homes erected right after the war—the Civil war, that is. Traffic problems and the infiltration of industry became obnoxious and so, around 1905-'10, these families started to move out. Even the houses themselves were becoming old-fashioned to these families.

Many of these older homes were bought by Russian Jews who came to Milwaukee around 1908 to 1911. They used the buildings more intensely. They had larger families and there were more families per building.

New Owners Also Moved Farther Out

As these new owners became more affluent, about the time of World War I, they began to move out, too. Many, however, retained ownership. This was due to several reasons, apparently. The buildings and the area had deteriorated to such a degree that few with any money wanted to buy the houses. Those who were willing to live there often didn't have the money to buy.

An increasing number of Negroes then began to move in. Generally unskilled and untrained, they sought the cheapest housing they could find. Racial discrimination kept them from many areas. But in this old area the rents were cheaper and the owners—perhaps more sympathetic because of the discrimination they themselves once had met—did not refuse them.

Blight then really entered the picture. The owners said the low rents they obtained kept them from doing good maintenance. Those Negroes who did manage

to buy found that the only way they could pay the purchase price was to overcrowd the buildings with roomers.

Blight, Slums Spread

In one way or another, this has been going on ever since. Blight and slums spread. The people began spilling over into adjacent blocks. Where many buy, they overcrowd to pay the price. Where they overcrowd, they create new slum and blight.

Another example is the 5th ward, which runs roughly from the Menomonee river south to Greenfield av., between the lake and S. 29th st.

Once, there was an upper middle class occupancy, largely German. Again, because of intruding, nonresidential uses, the owners began to move away.

There came then an influx of south Europeans—Serbs, Bulgarians and others. Many still live in the area; some have moved to better living. Today, there is an increasing number of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the 5th ward, accepting housing where it is open to them and cheapest.

Slum and blight have come also from other factors.

Milwaukee had no zoning until 1920. Before that you could put up a factory next door to a home. The enactment of the ordinance in 1920 didn't do much to help the core of the city, because it already was pretty well built up.

The 1920 law, in effect, put a sort of ring around the city's core, according to Elmer Krieger, executive secretary of the city land commission. This line would run roughly along Cleveland av., west to about 27th st., north to W. Keefe av. and then east again to Lake Michigan.

"Within this core," he said, "you have the typical house in front, one or even two in the rear of the lot, stores and commercial warehouses all built right in the middle of residential areas.

"Outside of this core there is enough light and space around most of the homes. In the older wards, the lots often were 50 to 60 feet wide, but then they were split. The lots left were only 25 or 30 feet wide, and the people built a second house on many, and then many times they'd throw

up another cottage in the rear. We couldn't let them do that under zoning and health standards today."

'Deteriorated' Areas Often Ask Zone Change

When an area becomes "deteriorated," the tendency many times is to ask for a change in zoning to permit more crowding.

"They come in and say, 'Oh, this area is on the downgrade already, let me put in an apartment house and get it on the tax rolls,'" Krieger said. "We have to battle constantly against this popular misconception."

The board of zoning appeals must give the final answer to those who apply pressure.

The board has granted a lot of exceptions. Last year, it heard 362 requests for zoning changes. It granted 277 of them—about 76%. In the five years, 1949 through 1953, it heard 1,449 appeals and granted 1,146—or better than 79%.

Mayor Zeidler points out another contributing cause of blight and slum.

200,000 Units in City

There are about 200,000 dwelling units in the city. Most of them are frame. Assuming a life of 100 years, 1% ought to be replaced each year. That's 2,000 dwelling units a year razed and replaced.

"Assuming five dwellings to the acre, that would be 400 acres that ought to be rebuilt each year," Mayor Zeidler said. "That's where the accumulated blight shows up, because it isn't being done."

In 1952, only 124 dwelling units were razed. In 1951, there were only 198. In the 25 years between 1928 and 1952 only 5,736 dwelling units were razed in the city.

While it may seem high, 5,736 does not compare favorably with the required 2,000 a year average—or 52,000 for the 26 years since 1928.

Two Blocks, Sum Total of Slum Redevelopment

But Housing Authority has built 969 units for veterans.

Milwaukee's battle against slum and blight—a losing one—is going on all the time. It encompasses demolition and redevelopment; enforcement of building and housing codes, and private building and remodeling work.

The Milwaukee Housing Authority is the city's redevelopment agency. It stems from the United States housing act of 1937, although the authority was not created here until 1944.

It acquired eight and one-half acres in the 6th ward between N. 6th, N. 7th, W. Galena and W. Vliet sts., demolished 57 structures and, in 1948, built Hillside Terrace, a 232 unit low rent project.

This represents the total actual slum redevelopment in Milwaukee—two blocks.

Built 969 Units

The authority, however also has built 969 units for veterans—247 at Northlawn, 331 at Southlawn, and 391 at Berryland.

It also took over Parklawn's 518 low rent units built in 1936 by the federal government and in 1950, erected Westlawn (726 units) on 81 acres of vacant land between N. 60th and N. 68th sts., W. Silver Spring dr. and W. Custer av.

There are two sets of income requirements and rental charges established by the authority. In the low income projects families can make no more than \$4,000 to get in—and that much only if the family has seven children. For continued occupancy, the top income is \$4,825.

Rentals for these low income units range from \$20 a month to \$80, depending upon the size of the family, the annual income and the amount of living space needed.

Rents for \$55 to \$64

The income requirements for acceptance in the city's veterans housing projects ranges from \$4,000 to \$4,400, the latter for a family with four or more minors. For continued occupancy, a family with five or more children can have an annual income of no more than \$5,200. Rentals for these units range from \$55 to \$64 a month, but the occupants must pay for their own heat and utilities.

These projects have provided 2,445 families with at least a

temporary alternative to the doubling up and overcrowding that are considered important blight and slum factors.

The units are reservoirs of housing which could accommodate some families that have to be relocated for later redevelopment projects.

Their occupants can build up their finances in order to move into the open residential market. In the first 11 months last year, 309 families moved out of the low rent projects, 27 of them specifically to buy homes, 105 into private rental units.

The authority is engaged in a program for 404 more low rent units in the six blocks just west of Hillside Terrace. Fifty-one blighted structures have been demolished, 137 will be torn down shortly.

Acts as Agent

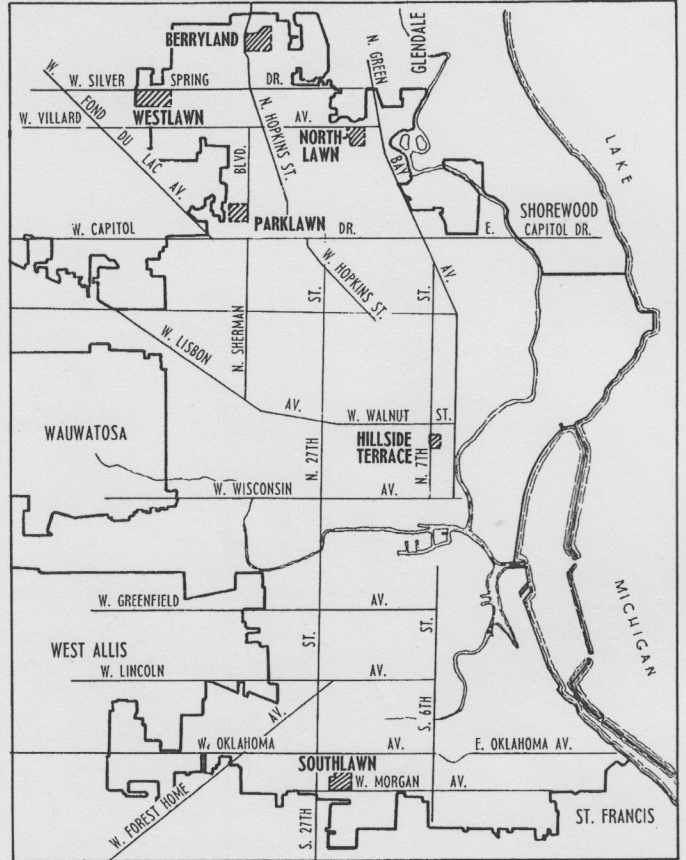
The authority has a dual personality. It provides low rent housing but it also acts as "redevelopment agent" for the city.

Under the United States housing act of 1949, the federal government offered financial aid to cities for slum clearance and urban redevelopment. The urban redevelopment program is not a construction project, like the low rent public housing program.

The redevelopment plan calls for possible acquisition of blighted areas, demolition of structures, clearing and replanning of the areas to sell or lease for re-use by private enterprise. In other words, after the city (through the authority) does all the spade-work, the areas are to be sold to private operators for their own construction and ownership. Of course, they must follow the redevelopment plan approved by the city and the federal government.

Although the federal act making this possible was passed in 1949, the common council didn't get around to naming the authority as its agent to act until December, 1952. Today, redevelopment represent 20% of the authority's budget.

There had been some preliminary steps. The federal law requires any redevelopment program to fit a city's master plan. The land commission had com-



Here are the locations of various housing projects erected under the direction of the Milwaukee Housing authority. Hillside Terrace (232 units) and Westlawn (726 units) are low income, federal housing projects, paid for with authority bonds issued with the guaranty of the federal government, which pays an annual amount each year to reduce the principal. Northlawn (247 units), Southlawn (331 units) and Berryland (391 units) are veterans housing projects financed and erected by the authority for the city. In addition, the authority operates Parklawn (518 units), a low income project built by the government. —By a Journal Artist

pleted Milwaukee's master plan in 1947.

Help In Planning

Also, several city officials, at the order of the common council, had made a study on the joint problems of blight elimination and urban redevelopment in the city. Their thick, well mapped book, has helped in planning redevelopment steps.

Aided by such preliminary work, the authority has selected seven major areas of blight for detailed study, obtained council approval on boundaries of several of these areas, and conducted detailed studies on two.

It has supplied the federal government information on a city request that the government earmark \$5,354,000 of available

funds to be used here when redevelopment plans have been completed.

Right now, work has more or

less stopped. The city's right to condemn blighted sites for redevelopment has been challenged as unconstitutional. Briefs have

been submitted to the circuit court.

A long court fight looms. Government and private redevelopment

ers can go no further until the question has been settled.

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 8

Shortage of Inspectors Hinders Slum Battle

Housing deteriorating faster than orders for building repairs can be issued.

You read these days about a new "Krumbiegel ordinance." It fits into the discussions by officials, citizens and private builders on Milwaukee's increasing residential rot, involving perhaps 121,000 people within the inner city. Some say a tougher ordinance will help; some say it won't.

Here is the story of the ordinance:

Every working day, two and three-fifths men leave the city hall to continue the health department's fight against slum and blight. They are supposed to cover 55 square miles to find violations of the city's housing ordinance and to order changes—perhaps 10 or 20 of them.

If they did all of this, they'd be lucky to get back in 15 or 20 years to see if the orders had been carried out.

Sounds silly? It is, so of course the inspectors concentrate in various areas. But the point is still the same: There are not enough men to do the job. Housing is deteriorating faster than it is being ordered repaired.

But when the department begged for money for more inspectors, the common council turned it down.

Often Gets Snubbing

Other difficulties arise. There are arguments over where the few inspectors should be sent: Into real slum areas, where buildings ought to be torn down, not patched up? Or, into fringe areas of blight to halt its further spread?

When the department tries to enforce the law, it often is snubbed by the property owner or the tenant. When the department goes to court, delays often are incredible.

Then, too, the ordinance itself has developed a number of flaws. A new, far tougher one is being drafted. The battle over its adoption undoubtedly will prove terrific, and a watered down version—as has happened before—may result.

That is the brief history thus far of what once was hailed as perhaps the first real attempt by

a city to conserve and rehabilitate its residential areas.

The law wasn't given a good try even from the start, in 1945. The health department was given funds for a housing section consisting of only five inspectors, a supervisor and two clerks. They had to help the Milwaukee Housing authority make special surveys, as well as do inspection work.

Staff Spread Very Thin

The law provided that orders requiring substantial structural repairs or alterations be held up until Jan. 1, 1948. This recognized wartime shortages, but it didn't help prevent blight and slum.

In 1949, the city board of estimates and the council agreed to cut out the survey work requirement for the authority. But they abolished the housing section. Instead, the department was given funds for a smaller sanitary staff of four inspectors, a supervisor and one clerk.

This staff had other work to do, along with enforcement of the housing code. At the same time, the city was growing through annexation. The sanitation staff had to be spread thinner and thinner. Today, the time of two and three-fifths inspectors is all that can be devoted to the housing code enforcement, according to Dr. E. R. Krumbiegel, the health commissioner.

What are these inspectors trying to enforce?

The law is called the "Krumbiegel ordinance." The health department is given the power to condemn for occupancy (not for demolition) any dwelling units which do not meet healthful living standards. The owners have the right to appeal to the commissioner and to the circuit court.

Owner Is Warned; He Is Responsible

Penalties range from \$10 to \$50 fines "for a violation of one day" to imprisonment from 10 to 30 days for each day the violation

continues.

Critics have charged that the ordinance isn't good enough—that it places no blame on the tenants.

"Go after the tenants and we wouldn't have many of these troubles," they have said.

That responsibility is placed very clearly. The occupant is responsible for general maintenance; he "shall eliminate all infestation by extermination," he "shall maintain in a clean and sanitary condition plumbing fixtures used by himself or his family," etc.

In multiple family dwellings, the department usually sends notices to the tenants telling them what should be done. But the owner also is warned, and the law makes him responsible.

Woman Curses

"They don't always like that," Dr. Krumbiegel conceded. "When we order them to do something, they reply: 'That's up to the tenants.' A lot of them seem to think we should deal exclusively with the tenants. But, as you can see, it just can't be worked that way."

Some areas take far more time to inspect than others.

On a typical morning, in the deepest blight, the inspector may be able to visit no more than three or four buildings.

The reporter went one day with Inspector Stanley Studer to inspect a building near N. 3rd and W. Vliet sts. The walls were dirty. The basement was rank. The dirt floor showed the marks of rats.

But when the inspector took out his pencil, there were immediate questions. Studer explained that the owner (who happens to live in a west side suburb) would be ordered to make some changes. By then the woman of the house was screaming curses. She wanted no part of Studer.

Many Cases Carried Over

"Don't tell him to fix the place up," she begged. "I don't want to rock the boat on rent. My husband gets only a small pension. We can't afford to pay more

rent."

Studer wrote out the orders, anyway.

[The owner appeared some time later—after a Pacific vacation trip—to promise his "complete co-operation," the department said.]

Sometimes several orders must be issued for a single building. One owner was ordered to: Install bathtub, sink and toilet; put in electric wiring; remove cracked and peeling plaster; clean floors; install outside window in one room; make windows in dwelling weather tight, and provide at least one screen for each room.

An inspector can't cover many such buildings in a day. Statistics for 1953 are not available. In 1952, the inspectors went through 5,602 dwelling units. They issued from 1 to 20 orders for 2,800 of the units. By the end of the year, 2,083 of the orders had been complied with. The remaining carried over into 1953—some winding up in court.

Successes Are Drops in Sea of Blight

Also in 1952, the inspectors found 241 buildings that, Dr. Krumbiegel said, were "really rotten apples."

Of these, 169 were emptied of occupants during the year; 45 were torn down; 147 were rehabilitated; 25 were vacant at the end of the year and 24 were in process of being vacated or rehabilitated.

These successes are but drops in the Milwaukee sea of slum and blight. But they are examples of what could be done on a greater scale.

As recently as last December, Dr. Krumbiegel begged the council's finance committee for 18 additional inspectors. Finally, he asked for even one more. He was turned down again.

The opposing aldermen asked: Shouldn't the present housing ordinance be made stronger first? And, shouldn't the department

concentrate more in the "bad" areas of the city?

Dr. Krumbiegel reported that a new code was being drafted.

Eye 90 Day Deadline

To fight blight and slum, many buildings should be torn down. The health department can only order a building cleared of human occupancy. Only the building inspector can order a building razed and then only if it is unsafe. A building can be unfit for human

occupancy but safe structurally. "Many of these structures only sit there, unoccupied, and become even worse eyesores in the neighborhood than they were when we ordered the tenants out," Dr. Krumbiegel said.

The proposed new code will attempt to avert this. It would give the owner 90 days to raze after the building is declared unfit for occupancy. After that, the health department could order it razed and the owner assessed the cost.

Another difficulty concerns the number of people that can occupy a room. The restriction now is based on the number of cubic feet in the room. But many rooms, particularly in older buildings, have extremely high ceilings.

Would Change Yardstick

"Sometimes 12 to 15 people can qualify to live in one room on the basis of its cubical content," Dr. Krumbiegel pointed out.

The new code would change the

yardstick to square feet of usable space.

Last fall, the state supreme court ruled invalid that part of the city building code which required a bathtub or shower in every dwelling unit. Health authorities regard requirements for adequate sanitary facilities as all-important in the fight against blight. They hope that new legislation will sharpen their blunted weapon.

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 9

Gurda Says Roadblocks Hurt His Fight on Slums

Structural safety his concern; finds many handicaps in seeking changes.

There is another chapter of frustration in Milwaukee's fight on blight and slum.

The building inspector, Leon M. Gurda, is concerned with structural safety. He checks new construction. He checks changes in existing buildings when they are enlarged or altered for more intensive residential use. He also inspects public buildings.

Somehow, blight and slum just seem to get shoved into the background. Many buildings aren't changed. They aren't maintained. They just age. The inspector doesn't check these.

Then, there are the owners who just make changes, without permits. These are among the more important causes of blight and slum.

"We don't know about those unless we happen to stumble across something," Gurda said. "There are probably thousands of buildings as bad as the ones we do see."

Has 29 Inspectors

Why not look for them? In 1927, Gurda had 43 inspectors. In 1950, he had 40. Now he has 29, and the building permit load is at an all-time high.

"There isn't much time left to devote to dilapidation," Gurda said.

He figures eight additional men could make "reasonable progress in blight elimination."

"Last year," he recalled, "I asked for three more electrical

inspectors and got money enough for only one.

"We didn't ask for any more building inspectors because the Griffenhagen report came in and the city has been thinking of consolidation of various departments. There's no point in hiring more men until that's settled."

[The report of Griffenhagen & Associates, public administration analysts, was made more than four years ago.]

Sometimes the inspector's office "stumbles across" slum or blight. Sometimes it is from a tip. Or Gurda or Harry Glisch, his deputy, "just happen to see something" on the way to work.

Wheels Set in Motion

Whatever the source, the tip sets wheels in motion. Nothing much happens. This is due partly to the law. Nobody is doing much about that either.

Gurda has tried upon occasion. Some results are interesting. For example, one problem in slum areas is the owner who gets a permit for alterations. In 1952, Gurda proposed state legislation so he could withhold permits for work in areas that were going to be torn down or changed anyway.

The council referred it to the city attorney's office. The office replied that the city would first have to set up a project program and timetable for doing things in various areas.

"Further Consideration"

The council sent this back to the city attorney's office for "further consideration." An assistant city attorney said he wasn't sure what the "further consideration" meant.

So, the "boys around the office" get around a table "every week or 10 days or so" and "kick the thing around just hoping somebody will come up with an idea."

Of course, this takes the council off the spot so far as making any decision is concerned, and the "boys around the office" can have a lot of bull session fun with it. But it will cost the city money whenever it finally gets around to moving into an area.

The circle is starting all over again. In February, the council referred to the city attorney's office a request for drafting of a similar ordinance on permit issuance.

Problems of Condemnation

There are also the problems of condemnation. Under state law, a building has to be safe. The owner has the option of fixing it up or razing it. If he does neither, the building inspector can order it razed. The inspector can have the job done and assess the cost to the owner at tax time.

But, the state law doesn't say how much repair work is needed.

"It need be only minimum," said Gurda. "A builder can make a building structurally safe and it may still be blighted—no paint,

cracked plaster, the floors worn and out of shape. The building remains an eyesore."

So, city codes were devised to aid in that. They say that if a building does not conform to the neighborhood the owner can spend no more than 50% of its assessed value in fixing it up. If the building does conform, he can spend no more than 60%.

Tried to Change State Law

But the city attorney has informed the building inspector that this city law is unconstitutional because it goes beyond the state law. Why not change the state law?

Gurda says he has been trying to do that since 1937. Every legislature session finds him in Madison. All he seeks are amendments setting up yardsticks beyond which such an owner cannot go in fixing up blighted buildings.

The proposal is voted down every time. Gurda's explanation is: The measure is introduced to apply only to first class cities—Milwaukee is the only one in Wisconsin. Others, including the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, like the idea so much that they submit amendments to make it state-wide.

"And then it's voted down," sighed Gurda. "I've tried to keep them from amending it, but they always do."

Private Business Fails in "Direct" Slum Attack

Over-all contributions of organized groups are, however, important factors.

Spokesmen for organized building, realty and allied associations appear many times at city hall and elsewhere to attack or defend—always representing themselves as the spokesmen for "private enterprise"—phases of Milwaukee's struggle to arrest the spread of residential blight in the zone around the city's core.

In reality, what they represent is private business and industry in their fields—at least those parts that are members of their associations, pay dues and meet to determine policies.

The question here is: What has private business done to date?

Its direct attack, through construction, has failed; its over-all contributions, tending to lessen blight factors, are more important than detractors admit.

Land Costs Are High

Slum land costs are very high. Private operators can't condemn land as the city can. Assembling land for a project often is terribly difficult and costly. So are demolition and replanning. Governmental help in these, along with financial assistance, is considered necessary for any major job.

Twice private operators have sought this assistance.

In 1947, the Milwaukee Urban Redevelopment Corp. proposed redevelopment of four blighted blocks near Red Arrow park, between N. 9th and N. 12th sts. and south of W. Wisconsin av. It wanted to erect four 11-story apartments.

The fight in the common council was bitter. The private firm repeatedly explained its plans to meet every legal and city requirement. They were met with the jeers and catcalls of residents of the neighborhood, led by their alderman, John Koerner. The council rejected the plan, 14 to 13.

Plan Revision Asked

In 1952 the Milwaukee Builders' association and the Milwaukee Board of Realtors called for redevelopment of 141 acres in the 1st ward—a 50 million dollar project for 3,800 apartment and single family units. The council decided that some of the proposed site was not sufficiently blighted.

The council's buildings and grounds committee suggested that the plans be revised to embrace part of the proposed area and part of adjacent, more blighted blocks. The private business spokesman agreed, announcing: "We will submit new plans when the city determines the boundaries and sets its policy."

Ald. Fred C. Hass, committee chairman, said he first wanted to "find out what the traffic plans for the area are." It's in his ward.

That was on Mar. 30, 1953. A year later Hass was asked what had happened.

"Nothing," he replied. "Maybe it's my fault."

New Questions Arise

Others, particularly the Milwaukee Board of Realtors, see success in fighting blight through the "encouragement of home ownership." Studies have found less blight in areas where there are fewer tenants and more home owners.

Some questions arise, however. Is the rate of new building sufficient? Who can afford the homes? What does expansion of the city, for new building, really cost in terms of tax dollars spent? How much home ownership can one encourage in areas—the blight areas—where families outnumber buildings five to one?

The residential construction rate in Milwaukee county has been high. In the last seven years (1947 through 1953), permits were issued for about 46,100 new units.

In the same seven years, marriage licenses totaled more than 57,300. In other words, there were about 11,000 more new families formed than dwelling units built.

Home Prices Increase

Along with the increase in residential construction volume has come an increase in prices for homes. But private business has a "trickle down" theory. A family that can afford it moves into a new home. Their old home is bought by a family with less income, etc. Eventually, the doubled up family or the one living in a slum is given a chance at a home that becomes vacant.

Critics contend that frequently a home which finally "trickles down" to the lower income family is already blighted.

In connection with the high building rate on open land, instead of building on redeveloped land, the question is asked: Does the expansion of Milwaukee cost too much and take too much of available funds when viewed in the light of spending more tax revenue to rebuild and redevelop in the blighted core?

Builders have applied pressure—with considerable success—to bring vacant land into the city.

Less Expensive in City

"It's a lot more expensive to build outside the city," explained Roy Healy, executive vice-president of the Milwaukee Builders' association. "If a site is annexed, the city can put in water and sewers, instead of the owners digging wells and installing septic tanks.

"It costs more to the builder and the home buyer if he has to put in the utilities and the roads."

Some argue that this cost to the city is more than repaid by the new taxes. Others estimate that it takes the city 15 to 20 years just to get back its original outlay.

The city budget supervisor, George C. Saffran, has some interesting figures and comment. He has divided Milwaukee into three parts:

The inner city, bounded roughly by Lake Michigan, Greenfield av., North av. and N. 27th st. (wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10).

The intermediate city, a half mile in width, ringing the inner city (wards 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 25).

The outer city, with the comparatively new, recently annexed areas (wards 9, 14, 16, 17, 23, 24, 26 and 27).

Outer City Got Most

The city spent \$45,026,000 for capital improvements in the years 1950-1953, inclusive. The inner city got \$10,261,000; the intermediate area, \$7,900,000, and the outer city, \$26,800,000 (twice as much as the inner city).

Break down the totals. Take streets. The outer city got \$3,792,000; the inner, residentially blighted core got only \$1,600,000—and most of this was downtown (Wisconsin av., N. 3rd st., etc.).

There are 335 miles of Milwaukee streets that are 25 to 28 years old, "getting chunky" and starting to crack, Saffran said.

"Many should be redone, but the outer streets are draining most of the money," he added.

Then there is street lighting—often criticized in the blighted, inner core. In the four years, the city spent \$341,000 for this in the inner city—again primarily in the downtown business section. In the outer city—almost all residential—\$475,250 was spent.

"We have recognized the problem of the inner city lighting," said Saffran. "We have started a program, but it is small because it requires a lot of money."

Playgrounds Lacking

Lack of playgrounds is another criticism of blighted areas. The inner city got \$255,000 for this in the four years, most of which went for the enlargement of four playgrounds. The outer city got \$652,000 for 19 new playground sites.

"The land cost is very high," Saffran explained. "For example, in the outer area we can get needed land for perhaps \$2,000 an acre. In the inner core we recently had to spend \$60,000 for just a couple of pieces for a playground enlargement in the 1st ward."

Inadequate street traffic systems are held to be a contributing factor to blight. Street widening, alleys, etc., are important. Yet, in the last four years, the inner city got only \$364,000, while the outer city got \$925,000.

"If that kind of money is going to be spent on the outskirts," Saffran said, "where is the money coming from to do the jobs we know should be done in the inner city?"

Schools in the blighted areas have suffered, too. In the city, almost half of the school buildings are between 40 and 80 years of age, six are over 70, 14 are over

60 and 18 are over 50. While this aging was in process, in the last four years, Milwaukee annexed much new territory—adding almost two and a half square miles between April, 1951, and September, 1953, and there is another three and a half square miles in the process of annexation.

Replacements Deferred

The four year school expense for capital improvements was: Inner city, \$1,195,000—almost all of which went for the addition to the Milwaukee vocational school;

outer city, \$7,658,000.

"Because of dwindling funds," said the Milwaukee school board, "and the urgent necessity of getting roofs over the heads of children in areas where school facilities were nonexistent or totally inadequate, some over age replacements, unfortunately, had to be deferred.

"School buildings become obsolescent for various reasons . . . thereby making it impossible to offer the children attending them equal educational opportunities." Shall the city follow the urg-

ings of those who say: "Expand or die"? Or shall it have less expansion and concentrate available tax revenues in rebuilding what area the city already has?

Milwaukeeans will have to face the question sometime, and upon the answer may hinge the future of blight and slum here, according to Mayor Zeidler.

Three Queries Listed

"Saffran's figures illustrate one of the phenomena of American cities that make some think the future of cities is hopeless," said the mayor. "I don't agree, but

I don't have the complete answer, either."

He suggested trying for possible answers to three questions:

1. Should the annexed areas be provided huge schools and hard surface roads—"the full treatment"—at once, or should it be spread out?

2. Should the city services be spread out, too?

3. Should these areas be required to pay more toward the actual cost of the services than they now do?

The Blight Within Us . . . Chapter 11

Racial Discrimination Adds to Slum Problem

Culture conflict, greed, lack of proper laws, contributing to poor conditions.

Slums and blight aren't caused just by the impact of time and the lack of proper city planning. Nor are they caused alone by the fact that there aren't enough decent houses at prices people can afford.

People have a lot to do with it, too. Often, in Milwaukee, families living in blighted areas have been blamed. Mayor Zeidler terms them a "very strong force."

"The obstacle involves the cultural patterns of people from rural areas moving into the city—even moving in from other countries—who are unused to the Milwaukee requirements for sanitation and cleanliness," he said.

"This is a very strong force tending to create blight. Sleazy people make sleazy living conditions."

Landlords Share Blame

A trip through some of Milwaukee's blocks of slum and blight shows that it isn't always the tenant. There are owners, too, who don't care—the "milking landlord" who is more interested in profit than good housing, especially since he often doesn't have to live in the building.

Thus a curious mixture of greed, conflicting cultural patterns and lack of adequate, hard hitting laws and enforcement agencies contribute toward residential blight around Milwaukee's core.

To that mixture must be added one other ingredient—racial discrimination.

The latter is all the more serious because so many consider it a "skeleton in the closet"—something you don't talk about publicly.

Private talk is another matter, as many Milwaukeeans know. This is true among city officials, realty and building groups and a good share of the general public.

A city planning employe discussed blight and slum problems, then added:

"But I hope any stories that are written won't mention the 6th ward."

Realtors Duck Question

Yet most of the city's wretched slum and blight conditions exist in that area. Much of the city's nonwhite population is centered there, too.

The Milwaukee Board of Realtors, which has announced that it planned to study blight and slums, refused even to discuss the question of nonwhites when it was queried.

Mayor Zeidler gave the reporter a list of blight and slum factors. Discrimination wasn't included. Some weeks later, however, he called to add this:

"I didn't mention the Negro problem. But it really is the most important one. There's no point in not admitting it. Something has to be done about it."

The problem is not a new one. It has been studied by various groups, among them the governor's commission on human rights.

Buying More Difficult

"Every thinking citizen is aware that it is more difficult for a nonwhite family to rent or buy a good home than for a white family," the commission reported. "Many citizens have ignored this unpleasant truth, some have bemoaned it and others have excused it."

In a recent publication, the commission cited federal census figures showing that, between 1940 and 1950, Milwaukee's nonwhite population increased 145%, while the number of nonwhite dwelling units increased only 79%.

Overcrowded conditions are the obvious result, particularly since discrimination tends to corral nonwhites in certain areas.

"Milwaukee Negroes," reported the commission, "do not live in the blighted section of town through choice. Even those with sufficient income must usually remain there because they are not wanted elsewhere, because they meet a fairly ironclad 'gentleman's agreement' when they try to move."

Large Share Segregated

As a result, a large share of Milwaukee's nonwhites have been segregated in the 6th ward. Another difficulty arises:

"This fact contributes to the popular, but erroneous, impression that blight and Negro occupancy always go hand in hand," reported the city land commission.

"Actually, there are areas in the city, also obviously blighted,

in which Negroes do not reside."

Fears based on discrimination were spurred by the influx of nonwhites into Milwaukee—as well as many other northern cities—during the war and postwar years. Milwaukee's "newest strangers"—as they are called by the mayor's commission on human rights—were Puerto Ricans.

The first large scale movement of these workers here was in the fall of 1950. By the end of 1952, there were about 2,500 in the city.

Milwaukee's Negro population increased, too. The mayor's commission reported that the rise, from 1940 to 1950, was from 8,821 to 21,772. More recent estimates, according to the governor's commission, "indicate a higher figure of 25,000 to 30,000."

Influx Seen Stopped

This influx now has stopped, according to a report last February from Negro leaders. Attributing the cause of reduced employment, they estimated that perhaps 1,000 to 2,000 of the city's Negro population had left.

The problem of too many people in too few houses remains, however. The colored man seeks a better job and escape from either the "serfdom of southern feudalism" or the even more wretched living in Puerto Rico. So he comes north, perhaps to Milwaukee. He is poor. He joins others who are poor. They find the cheapest housing where nobody else wants to live.

He can't pay much rent. To increase his income, he often may

jam in more people. The building deteriorates further, sometimes into conditions that are all but unbelievable.

Some tenants, who finally scrape together enough money, move out. Many, however, do not because of the discrimination they know—or at least expect—they'll meet.

Some of this discrimination arises from the widespread belief that property values in a neighborhood will be hurt if nonwhites move in.

Survey Abandoned

In 1952, Mayor Zeidler asked the commission to study the relationship between property values and the racial identity of the

purchaser. A Chicago research agency asked \$1,000 to conduct the study. The commission asked the common council if it could use \$1,000 of its already approved budget. The council said no. The undertaking was abandoned.

San Francisco, however, made such a study. The report showed that sales to nonwhites in white areas did not lower values.

Another such study was made in Los Angeles by Belden Morgan, a member of the Society of Residential Appraisers. Morgan reported that, at first, whites sometime "become panic stricken and desert a neighborhood when Negro families move in."

"After the first hysterical selling phase passes," he found,

"prices become stabilized and then gradually increase under the pressure of Negro bidding. . . . The old law of supply and demand asserts itself. . . . The only effect from an economic viewpoint is a broadening and strengthening of the market by virtue of the increased demand."

Fear Pervades City

But most whites either do not accept that claim or they do not understand it. The widespread fear of property value losses pervades the city. Discrimination confines the nonwhite, in Milwaukee as elsewhere. The bulging population bursts its bounds and begins to move into adjacent areas. Again, the confining prac-

tices of discrimination and low income work their havoc.

That is what is happening in Milwaukee today. Proof can be found in place after place. In appraising the quality of housing in Milwaukee's blighted areas, Dr. E. R. Krumbiegel, city health commissioner, said:

"Blight spreads insidiously but inexorably; first from dwelling to dwelling; then, from block to block; and finally, from neighborhood to neighborhood. It eventually destroys in its wake not only the best in property values but, more often than not, much of the best in human values.

"Blight has grown from apathy, neglect and lack of vision."

Milwaukee Chicago Attacks Blight on a Broad Basis; We Need To

Milwaukee — stalling on its Civic Center, building piecemeal, arguing instead of doing something about blight, all too slowly tackling its problem of downtown parking and deterioration—ought to get some inspiration from Chicago's new, bold plan for improvement.

Chicago is getting ready to attack a 150 acre stretch of blight in a civic center project along the Chicago river. It's a \$400,000,000 plan — and includes new federal, state, county and city buildings, a new library, new center for the University of Illinois. It is to be circled by new, privately built apartments.

This isn't just a political dream. Leading Chicago businessmen and civic leaders sparked it. They have interested insurance companies in it as an investment. They give assurance that the money is

available. Their motive is not just to provide needed buildings, but to strike back hard at the deterioration that is eating away at Chicago's Loop, as it is at the core of every large American city.

The public buildings would be constructed with private money, too, and turned over to the various branches of government concerned under long lease-purchase agreements. The local government would enter the picture by condemning the blighted area and making it possible to clear it — as well as by joining in planning, zoning and other necessary actions to make the project possible.

Here's an example of civic enterprise led by citizens who are not content to sit back to wait for what is usually timid and all too slow action by local government. Milwaukee needs that kind of enterprise. If we don't get it, — beginning now when action on housing codes and against blight and slums is vitally needed and becoming a major issue — hopes for fighting downtown deterioration will be dim indeed.

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"The Blight Within Us" is just one series of articles out of scores which The Milwaukee Journal publishes to provide background information to readers in the interest of better public understanding of vital public problems and issues.

