

Urban Renewal:

What's It All About?

(Earl Newkirk, executive director of the city redevelopment agency, discusses urban renewal and redevelopment in these columns three times weekly. Suggestions, comments and queries are welcomed by the agency, whose office is in the city hall annex, 322 Church street, GA 6-0460.)

By Earl Newkirk

The other day, when writing about why it was so important that the community plan simultaneous development of the flood control levees and the San Lorenzo park project, we mentioned another conversation with a friend on a topic closely related to this.

The subject brought up revolved around property values and their so-called "stabilization." In essence, the question seemed to be something like this: "Shouldn't property values be stabilized before our city—through the redevelopment agency—begins actual work on the San Lorenzo park project?" And further, "Won't the construction of the levees actually affect property values further?"

First of all, let's not forget that this question of "stabilization" of property values must have been high in the minds of the city council when they elected—before your executive director reported on the job—to place a general ban on major construction in the San Lorenzo park project in an attempt to forestall—or at least to minimize—speculation and thereby raise the costs to the city for the project. Then, as to another aspect of the same question, in point of fact, redevelopment of the San Lorenzo park project itself will contribute to stabilizing property values. Let's not forget that the federal urban renewal administration has said that the redevelopment agency may not dispose of any land it acquires which is subject to inundation by flood—until flood control is assured. As it turns out, it does not appear that this will mean that the agency has to sit with land on its hands for any undue period of time. The U. S. engineers now expect to have completed the levees by the fall of 1958.

The redevelopment agency esti-

mates that it will be possible to begin acquisition of those properties which are to be acquired this spring and that it will take about a year to complete all acquisition, relocation and preparation of the land—including site improvements—for the new uses called for in the redevelopment plan ultimately adopted by the city council. This would be some time in early 1958. Thus, disposition of land could begin immediately inasmuch as the U. S. engineers would have completed all their work and flood protection would be a reality before the winter rains of 1958-59.

As for the levees affecting property values, it would certainly seem they will to some extent. And this brings us again to two additional factors which we trust everyone is keeping in mind. One, an owner of property in any redevelopment project has "first crack" at redeveloping it if he agrees to redevelop it according to the uses called for by the plan adopted by the city council and if he demonstrates he is financially able to do so within a reasonable period of time. We discussed this rather fully in one or two earlier columns. The second point is this: No one is going to make any money directly from this project. On the contrary, it will no doubt cost us something and so long as the project is worth it to the community as a whole, this will be understandable. On the other hand, whatever property is "left over" after ownership participation, will be sold to help meet the costs of the project and thus cut the actual share of costs to the city.

Naturally, we want any cost to the city that may develop to be as small as possible. The San Lorenzo park project would not be possible were it not for the city and federal governments. No private developer could do what the city proposes for us. On the other hand, should the city be forced to deny itself any opportunity to get back as much of the cost of the project as it can? If a private developer puts in a new subdivision is he denied any increase in property values which may result from his putting in his "project"?

And let's not forget—there will be another appraisal after the plan is approved by the city council—and fair market value will be offered for every piece of property acquired. This, too, we discussed at great length in earlier columns and will be glad to do so again if anyone has further questions.

The San Lorenzo park project is proposed because the city council believes it will benefit the community as a whole—in a thousand ways, both directly and indirectly. And with no increase in the tax rate due to redevelopment.

This reminds me of our new estimates of tax receipts from the San Lorenzo park project. Tax receipts based upon the anticipated uses called for in the redevelopment plan. We've about run out of space here, but remember we said we'd all benefit indirectly because the higher economic use of land in the San Lorenzo park project would bring in a greater amount of taxes—without an increase in rate, etc. We've new "before and after" figures to compare. Will tell you about them in Friday's column.

And please don't forget the redevelopment agency's final public hearing before presenting the San Lorenzo park project redevelopment plan to the city council for its public hearing. The hearing will be Friday at 7:30 p. m. in the council chambers in the city hall.

Mauritius, island in the Indian Ocean, was the home of the extinct dodo bird.

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