

Dr. I. Dent, Mayor  
and City Council,  
City Hall,  
Edmonton.

Dear Sirs

Re: Report to City Council regarding Community  
Development Services in the City of Edmonton

In response to your request the Edmonton Social Planning Council is pleased to submit the enclosed report and recommendations. Members of our staff have had several discussions with the Western Centre for Social Dynamics and a few limited comments about this operation are also included.

Yours very truly,

Gerald H. Wright,  
President.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES IN EDMONTON

This report is under the following headings:

- I. Recommendations
- II. The Concept of Community Development
- III. Some Examples of Community Development as an Internally Motivated Process
- IV. Some Examples of Community Development as an Externally Motivated Process
- V. Relative Merits of Public or Private Administration
- VI. Western Center for Social Dynamics
- VII. Conclusion

### I. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the City Council accept community development as being a necessary and valid process for our City.
2. That the City assume responsibility for providing community development services in Edmonton.
3. That the City contract with a private organization for the provision of community development services rather than administering these through a public department.
4. That the City consider as a primary requirement a review and report of all current community development programs operating in Edmonton under various sponsors.

### II. WHY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The concept of community development is based on several factors:

1. That many citizens do not for a variety of reasons participate in decisions that affect their individual lives or decisions that control activities that are conducted within their neighbourhood or community.
2. That citizens need to have a means through which they can explore and develop alternatives to traditional systems which may not be relevant to their needs.
3. That the potential for the disadvantaged person to participate in the decision making process is minimal without the introduction of an

of an external force or thrust usually in the form of a skilled community development worker. Citizens may be disadvantaged through poverty, physical or mental handicap, or cultural conflict. These elements tend to cluster in neighbourhoods.

### III. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTERNALLY MOTIVATED PROCESS

It is important in examining the concept of community development to recognize that it is a process that is going on around us in continuous form. It is in no way limited to a process that derives energy and resourcefulness from an external source but in most instances is a natural response by concerned citizens. In recent years in our city some new and vital incidents have occurred that would indicate that citizens indeed wish to participate more fully in the design and operation of their community and are prepared to do so. Some viable examples of this trend have occurred within recent months in Edmonton. Several approaches have been made by citizen groups to the School Board asking for use of the school facilities with the understanding that they as responsible citizens have a right to use these facilities, that they are prepared to assist groups within their community offering activities, and further that they will assume responsibility for supervision. Here we observe a break from the traditional pattern of the school designed and used for formal educational purposes only and functioning only in a very limited fashion otherwise. The development in the Norwood Region where a school readiness program has expanded to a neighbourhood drop-in center through the initiative and interest of the parents' group. When the City Parks and Recreation Advisory Board invited citizens and organizations to offer their suggestions for parks and recreation planning over 70 groups, <sup>a surprising number</sup> took the opportunity to participate in the master plan. The Downtown youth center is another example of a group of citizens who by reason of their youth are usually excluded from decision-making have gathered together and determined that they can undertake the operation of a new and different kind of facility. All of these then are current examples of opportunities that citizens or groups of citizens have created for themselves to be a part of the design and service system of the community.

#### IV. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS AN EXTERNALLY MOTIVATED PROCESS

A Provincial Community Development Worker has been located in the City of Edmonton for the past three years. This worker has concentrated his efforts mainly in that part of the city designated for urban renewal (Boyle Street). During this time other organizations and groups have employed community development or detached workers, many of whom have also centered their activities in the Boyle Street section of the city. Through the influence of these workers some dynamic changes have occurred.

- A group of single homeless men operate a self-help cooperative employment club.
- This group in collaboration with others has written an extensive brief on the conditions and services available in Edmonton to men of this category. The brief recommends changes such as the development of a classification center and new patterns of assistance such as cooperative living arrangements and clothing depots.
- This brief has been presented to the Human Resource Development Authority, it indicates the potential for planned change that lies with the consumer services who heretofore have been considered powerless and from whom opinions are rarely, if ever asked.
- In the Boyle Street area of our city a neighbourhood information and drop-in center is operated by volunteers from the community.
- This center also serves as the location of legal aid through a plan operated by law students professionally supervised.
- Groups of citizens from Boyle Street have been instrumental in urging the city to take action in regard to the housing crisis.

These then are examples of the community development as it has occurred in what might be considered a disadvantaged section of the city when skilled community development workers are available to citizen groups.

#### V. RELATIVE MERITS OF PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ADMINISTRATION

Community development as a concept and technique is a relatively recent happening. The concept of a private corporation to undertake community development activities and training programs is new in Canada and hence is difficult for us to evaluate since there is no experience to date. In Canada the majority of programs of this kind are operated under public

departments and in the main in rural parts of the country or in towns threatened by a destroyed economy. In Nova Scotia, Canada Manpower has engineered an innovative program in community development to increase participation of men considered unemployable to organize in self-help groups towards full employment. Throughout the country in Native Communities, community development workers and CYC workers have encouraged Native participation in conducting their own affairs and the collaboration of Native groups for mutual support and strength. In the City of Montreal a program of social animation is operated by a private planning agency (Conseil des Ouvres) to identify and train indigenous leaders and to generate community activity and energy around pressing social issues. In most of these instances you will note the program is sponsored by a public department. This frequently creates a distressing situation where the community development worker in his attachment to his community and its needs finds himself in open conflict with his employer. This situation can cause difficulties of a far-reaching nature and cannot only endanger continuance of the program but also affect the community in a negative fashion.

The measurement of success of such a program is not easy to understand or accomplish. Gains may not emerge or be recognizable. There is no guarantee that when the professional community development worker is removed from such a neighborhood that any gains will be maintained or that the neighborhood will not revert to its prior status. The changes for success are highly dependent upon the skill of the worker and the bond of trust that can develop between him and the citizens and the extent to which he can truly become an indigenous part of that community. To accomplish this requires workers with extensive training and skills who are free of the encumbrances of a structured system of operation, record keeping and accountability. The worker must truly be detached from the bureaucratic hierarchy and attached to his neighborhood.

In considering the relative merits therefore of a community development program operated by a public department or one purchased from a private corporation the City Council is urged to keep its attention focused on the results accruing to the constituent. The potential for benign results is unquestionably higher under an arrangement with a private organization.

VI. SOME COMMENTS ON THE WESTERN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The Western Centre for Social Dynamics has been incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act without share capital. It is a non-profit organization. It has the status of a charitable institution and is so listed in the files of the Charitable Organizations Branch, Ottawa. It has been incorporated since April of 1969. The following is a list of Directors of the Company:

C. Linklater	Fort McMurray, Alberta	- Chairman of the Board
P. Dixon	Fort Chipewyan, Alta.	- Vice-Chairman
M. Whitford	Richmond, B.C.	- Secretary & Treasurer
R. Albert	St. Paul, Alta.	- Director
F. Griesbach	Cloverdale, B.C.	"
M. Murray	Edmonton, Alberta	"
C. Pickles	Fort Rae, NWT	"
D. Smith	Westlock, Alta.	"
Dr. Stickel	Edmonton, Alta.	"
A. Towill	Edmonton, Alta.	"

There are two professional staff people J.R. Whitford, Richmond, B.C. Executive Director, and John W. Ekstedt of North Surrey, B.C. Financial Development Officer. Mr. Whitford is well known in Edmonton and Alberta through his work as Director of the Community Development Branch of the Provincial Government. Several members of his directorate are or have been on the staff of the Branch and have had experience in Alberta municipalities.

The Western Centre for Social Dynamics is designed for professional community development; it intends to provide a four part program:

(1) Research - This function is one of a consultative nature through which professional workers from the Centre research problems for industry, government or private agencies on a contract basis. (The Centre has completed two research reports and a third one is being completed at present. Of these we understand that one was a contract with the City of Vancouver, another with a Federation of Native Tribes and the third with the community of Lynn Lake.)

(2) Community Development - It is this function of the Centre that the City of Edmonton is contemplating purchasing on a contract basis. At present we understand that the Centre has made eight major proposals of this nature. Approximately half of these are for municipalities and directed towards specific projects.

(3) Education - This function will be to provide courses for community development workers. These will be on a fee basis. It will also, by contract, organize and conduct courses for communities or groups. The Centre intends to offer regular workshops in community development and to have available a variety of films, lectures and resource people. The education function will extend to in-service staff training.

(4) Administration - The Board of Directors will be closely involved with the work of the Center. In addition to the two executive officers already named it is expected that other members will be added to the professional staff as required.

Financial Support - The Centre will be subsidized in three ways:

(1) Fees - These will include fees for contracts in community development, consultative and research services, tuition for education programs, and charges for seminars and workshops.

(2) Donations from philanthropic foundations

(3) Donations from corporate or individual donors.

The Centre will not at any time become involved in any kind of mass appeal to the public for funds. This type of fund raising would negate the entire concept and principles on which the Centre is founded. It is our understanding that the Centre would be entirely agreeable to having a statement to this effect written into the contract with the City of Edmonton.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The Edmonton Social Planning Council commends the City Council for its foresight and initiative in considering this very significant development in our City. The Social Planning Council has a long standing commitment to the concept of community development and in fact have, for a period of twelve months, employed a detached worker on our staff whose responsibilities are of this nature. During November of 1968 the Social Planning Council brought to the City of Edmonton, Mr. Michel Blondin a premier exponent and designer of the social animation program operating in downtown Montreal. Mr. Blondin's visit was organized to stimulate further activity in community development in the urban setting.

The Social Planning Council wishes to make it clear to City Council that community development is not something that City Council is going to purchase for someone else. This is not just a financial arrangement or the purchase of a service but a commitment to the process which will involve City Council and citizens throughout the City continuously. At the point at which the City Council undertakes community development whether through a private company or a city department, Council itself will become part of the process. We are prepared to offer assistance and support and submit that this is in no way an experimental process but one where the outcome is not and should not be predictable. We encourage City Council to continue its involvement in community development programs.