



A view of Patton Avenue in the historic Galisbaro neighborhood from St. Andrew's Catholic Church features the Hotel Roanoke, First Union tower and Mill Mountain in the background.

City's 'vision' blind to core neighborhoods

STORY by MARY BISHOP / Photos by STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS
THE ROANOKE TIMES

Roanoke City Manager Bob Herbert was asked late last month if the old neighborhoods around downtown are worth saving.

He paused a long time. Finally, he spoke about the importance of downtown's economic prosperity and the city's "public infrastructure."

"Then, you ask, 'Is the abutting property important?'" he said.

"Well, yes," he said. "I think that over the next 50 years, you will see some changes. But in the neighborhoods that are organized, that want to retain the residential character, I think they'll be around."

"What will happen to neighborhoods that aren't as well organized, that want to retain the residential character, I think they'll be around."

"Roanoke has been warded repeatedly — seven times in almost 40 years."

Save the old housing and the whole city will suffer.

As early as 1998, city planners sounded the alarm. They warned that thousands of homeowners were facing the encroachment of unsound housing conditions and other nagging infrastructures that has meant a loss in property values, a degradation of the living environment and above all, the deprivation of community pride."

Planners said it again three years later. "In a land-locked community, with little open space in which to expand," they said, "preserving existing neighborhoods becomes an increasingly important concern. Older neighborhoods should be viewed as an indispensable asset of the city, and preserving them a top priority of local government."

But over those three decades, City Hall and Roanoke's non-profit organizations have not stopped the slide of the city's oldest neighborhoods.

Home ownership rates in the seven neighborhoods surrounding downtown have steadily declined. In Galisbaro, where almost half the residents lived in their own homes in 1970, only a third do now. In the Southeast Roanoke neighborhood of Belmont, the number of families on public assistance has tripled since 1970.

"This is a serious, major, urgent call to arms," Alvin Nash, president of the Blue Ridge Housing Development Corp., a local non-profit organization, said last week.

"What is dying on the vine is these marginal communities," Nash said, "and the greatest asset we have is these marginal communities. In most of the cases, they have the greatest part of the history of this community. They're the closest to the heartland of the city."

"When I ran for City Council, we didn't have one discussion of housing," said Nash, who worked in Total Action Against Poverty's housing programs for 15 years. He ran unsuccessfully for council last year.

Though city employees and volunteers have worked to help



THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Poverty, crime and decay in Roanoke's oldest neighborhoods

City has spent more than a third of community development block grants on economic projects

By MARY BISHOP
THE ROANOKE TIMES
During the past 20 years, Roanoke has spent nearly \$50 million in federal money that was supposed to help poor people. Here's where most of the money went:

- \$18 million — 37 percent of the money — went for economic development projects such as industrial parks, the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center and downtown parking garages.
- \$11.3 million for housing.
- \$8.5 million for administration and planning.
- \$1.7 million for parks.
- \$600,000 for neighborhood activities, newsletters and community buildings.

Since 1975, the city has received more than \$49.1 million in Community

Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. By federal law, the money is supposed to be used mostly to create housing and jobs for poor people.

The Roanoke Times gathered data on how Roanoke spent the money from the city's Grants Performance Reports, standardized records filed with HUD since 1975 and required by all governments

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Times wants to hear readers' views about Roanoke's oldest downtown neighborhoods and what is happening there.

If you have something you'd like to say, get in touch at 983-0100 and give us letters 124.

Our plan is to publish some reader comments in the course of our series. The invisible inner city: Poverty, crime and decay in Roanoke's oldest neighborhoods.

that receive CDBG money. Figures for the 1992-93 fiscal year were not included, that year's report was missing from city files.

Ed Grumlich, a CDBG expert at the Center for Community Change in Washington, was surprised at the 37 percent spending for economic development. "That is unusual," he said. "The national average for cities' spending for economic development, according to Grumlich, is 7 percent. 'I don't think it ever went over 10 percent.'"

City Manager Bob Herbert made no apologies for the 37 percent. "I'm proud of that number," he said. "Economic self-sufficiency is the goal, and if that can go to low- and mid-income people, we can really hit a home run. Then people have money to invest in their homes and their property. There's not anything that has

PLEASE SEE CDBG-48

Community initiative was a success

Grants for police enter final phase

Community policing has helped cut crime rates, but may run into trouble when federal money runs out.

EVANSVILLE, IND. — WASHINGTON — An crime continues to drop across the country, officials in city after city are commending police in their best weapons.

But beginning next year, federal grants that encouraged the practice start running out. Through many police departments have started planning for a future without that federal money, others are still trying to figure out how to pay for the officers they added.

The question is: Does the city have the money to keep the police officers after the grants run out? asked Mark Duffell, executive director of the National Association of Criminal Justice Planners. "It's a very real question. How much can cities afford in terms of hiring additional

officers? Some might say we'll do it. Others might say we want more parks or longer library hours."

So far, some \$3.3 billion has been handed out to hire some 61,000 officers in about 9,000 police agencies. Those new police officers are supposed to be out in the neighborhoods trying to solve problems before they erupt.

"What will happen when that money dries up is very difficult to tell," said James Short, a professor emeritus at Washington State University and president of the American Society of Criminology. Charles Miller, a spokesman for the federal Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), said departments knew what they were getting into in the first place. In fact, he said, the Justice Department required them to develop plans before they got the money.

"Most of them have thought PLEASE SEE POLICE-2

REACHING OUT



ON FATHER'S DAY, Bob Soda plays with his 4-year-old son, Jimi, in Southwest Roanoke. Jimi's favorite toys are dinosaurs, which he knows by name.

The father she never knew This year, she has a dad to celebrate with

Christa Maria Eastburn was shocked when she got a letter from her father — whom she thought was dead.

By KELLY GARNIS
A 30-BLOCK DISTRICT IN KANSAS CITY, Mo. — In the midst of a raging world war, under a canopy of evergreens on a German mountainside, Karl Reinhold and Ingeborg Mueller found time for love.

Nine months later, in January 1944, a daughter — now Christa Maria Eastburn — was born. Until this spring, she believed her father, a German soldier, had died in the war.

Shortly after this year, she learned the truth. Her father, she said, was still alive. He had written her a letter from the man who was supposed to be 50 years in the grave.

"All these years of questions," he wrote. "I don't know what you have lived through."

to find out something about her father for a genealogy study, said.

"It was a letter to register."

"The last thing she expected was a letter from the subject of her inquiry."

"Years flowed days later when the revelation finally sank in."

"Get. I have a father," she said. "It was a feeling of connection."

Shortly after Germany fell in 1945, Eastburn's father was confined to a prisoner-of-war camp until 1948. Afterward, her parents divorced and in May 1949, Eastburn, her mother and a new father — a U.S. soldier — moved to Dupont, Fla.

"I really thought that man was my father until I was 13," Eastburn said.

As her mother was divorcing that man, the truth came out. "This is not my mother name. This is not my father name. I felt confused, but not upset."

Eastburn, who had recently written German relatives hoping PLEASE SEE FATHER-48

Rental inspection program ambitious, but slow

By S.D. HARRINGTON

It may be too early to gauge the effectiveness of Roanoke's newest effort to fix up the houses in downtown neighborhoods—a rental inspection program that began last fall.

Building inspectors finished their first street, Elm Avenue Southwest, in February. They're working on Orange Avenue in Northwest and Balliet Avenue and Janicke Avenue in Southwest.

It will take years, but they plan to sweep through all of Roanoke's most troubled neighborhoods.

Until about 12 years ago, there was little regulation of rental housing in Roanoke. Building inspectors were kept busy making sure new houses were up to code.

A city planner was quoted in 1970 saying the city didn't strictly enforce the building code for rental housing because too many poor tenants would be displaced and there wasn't enough good affordable housing to accommodate them.

The city decided to pay more attention to Roanoke's substantial housing in 1985, after 76-year-old Marjorie Tate died in her rented shanty on 10th Street Southwest.

Tate's wood stove went out, and she froze to death in her sleep.

The public outcry over her death led the city to hire inspectors (Dick Hartzett from the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and Dan Webb from Total Action Against Poverty) to do a random inspection of the hundreds of housing complaints the city received each year from residents.

According to a computer analysis of the city's inspection files, the number of rental houses cited by the building department for code violations climbed from four during the year preceding Tate's death to 114 in 1995. But Dan Pollock, the city's coordinator of housing development, estimates that there are 1,300 substandard houses in Roanoke's central neighborhoods.

Hartzett and Webb were stuck patching problems rather

than preventing them. Unless there were complaints, they had a hard time pinpointing bad houses. Often they had to referee disputes between landlords and tenants.

"It's not building problems. It's people problems," Hartzett said.

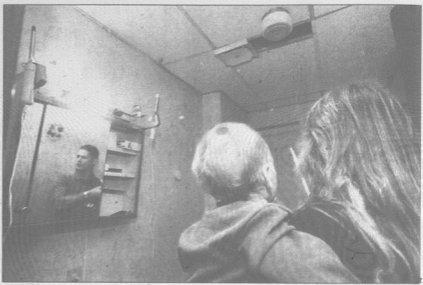
Roanoke began talking about a program to regularly inspect rental housing in 1995 after being urged to do so by neighborhood groups.

But it became a priority when a fire in a rented four-story building killed a 65-year-old Goldie Christine Duncan and four of her grandchildren in January 1996. Fire investigators found no fire exits, walls, which are required and might have slowed the spread of the fire.

About several more months of planning, the city began a program of regular inspections of rental houses in the city's Rehabilitation and Conservation districts, roughly a 1- to 2-mile radius around the downtown business district.

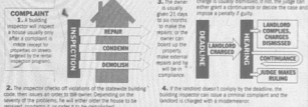
But some have criticized the city for lacking down from some of the regulations it had planned—after 80 landlords formed an organization to fight regular rental inspections.

Landlords can refuse inspection of an occupied unit, but



Dave Hartzett, city building inspector, is reflected in a mirror as he takes a look at Francis Davis apartment at 1020 Jarman Ave. S.E.

THE BUILDING INSPECTION PROCESS



1. The inspector checks off violations of the statewide building code that are in effect in the city. Depending on the severity of the problem, he will order the house to be repaired, considered it, or order it to be demolished.

When a tenant moves out the space cannot legally be rented again until it has been inspected and the landlord has paid a \$75 fee.

The city dropped a requirement for landlords to display a sticker that would tell prospective renters a house complied with building codes.

2. If the landlord doesn't comply by the deadline, the building inspector can issue a general complaint and the landlord is charged with a misdemeanor.

ROBERT LINDSEY / THE INVISIBLE TIMES

"They've done watered it down," said Gene Wert, a former member of Roanoke's Board of Maintenance Appeals and a property manager. "If they keep on,

it's going to leave about as much teeth as I do."

Others are staying optimistic until the program has had time to produce results.

Paula Prince, president of Old Southwest Inc. and a neighborhood leader who pushed the city to implement the program, said she has noticed some landlords fixing up properties on streets surrounding Elm Avenue, where the inspections started. But it's too early to tell what long-term effect the program will have.

"It's going through its shake-down period," she said. "I think it will need a year or two before it's institutionalized."

Pollock said that while the program won't solve all of a neighborhood's housing problems, it should improve the maintenance practices of some landlords.

Some landlords, however, "will be a little through and through," he said.

According to the latest information available, 163 of about 315 rental units on Elm Avenue Southwest have been inspected. The owners of 41 units refused inspections, and owners of another 30 units didn't respond.

City inspectors are still unsure how they will monitor the units that were not inspected. They've thought about looking for changes on mailboxes or utility accounts.

But Hartzett anticipates those houses could be some of the worst.

"The ones that call you and want you to participate usually are not that bad," he said.

S.D. Harrington can be reached at 924-3236 or dharrington@roanoke.com.

FROM A City

neighborhoods, Roanoke has never had a detailed strategic plan for the inner city, Nash and others said. "If you look at all the stuff that's in this city," he said, mentioning the downtown market and the Hotel Roanoke, "it's a part of a strategy, it's a part of a plan."

Dan Pollock, the city's housing development coordinator, said the closest thing to a strategic plan was a 1988 study by a city housing task force.

Architect Ron Crawford, a member of the board of commissioners of the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, was chairman of that task force. It warned that Roanoke was



approaching a housing crisis and that faces from obtaining proportion of expensive housing were paying for services to poorer neighborhoods.

"The city's ability to maintain a high standard of services to its citizens is strained by this imbalance in the tax base," the city-appointed group of lawyers, councilmen, landlords, ministers and developers said in its report.

"Roanoke is showing signs that its econ-

omy is beginning to get out of balance, particularly in terms of the age and income."

The task force urged the city to launch a comprehensive housing strategy, conduct 150 renovations each year and push construction of new houses to lure young families back to the city.

Bob Herbert never took it to City Council for adoption. Crawford said recently "I'm kind of tired of one of them that they asked for all this help from citizens and never did anything with it."

Crawford said he asked Pollock about the recommendations for a couple of years. "When it was just on a back shelf some place."

Pollock said the report didn't suggest some changes, such as development of a vacant lots inventory. He said the task force report was sent to elected members but "was never presented to them or their constituents."

This still frustrates Crawford. "I think the fact that City Council never adopted a housing strategy tells me that public bodies don't understand how important it is. Until they do, the likelihood of something happening is minimal."

Paraphrasing the 150 annual renovations, the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority this fiscal year did 36 comprehensive and 51 limited renovations of owner-occupied housing.

Five years after Crawford's task force, The Enterprise Foundation, a



City Manager Bob Herbert is proud that shoppers at Valley View Mall have made Roanoke one of the top per-capita retail centers in the nation.

WHY IT MATTERS

"The city needs to see the neighborhoods as part of the downtown if they want to develop downtown into a wonderful place where people want to live and set up their businesses. City leadership needs to realize what it's got — and protect and enhance it."

MAX MATTHEWS

BOARD MEMBER, THE ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION

City Council's "vision" statement on Roanoke's future pledged last year that "we will be a community of stable, safe, caring and friendly neighborhoods." But just the year before, older neighborhoods and housing for the poor were mired in an owner's list of properties. Among council's highest-priority items was housing for medium- to upper-income people.

Five years after Crawford's task force, The Enterprise Foundation, a

national organization that promotes the rebuilding of urban neighborhoods, studied housing in the Roanoke Valley. It said in 1993 that nearly all housing for poor people was in the city, not Roanoke County or Salem, and called on them to do their share.

Enterprise faulted Roanoke and its low profits, low tax base and more to upgrade housing. While

other cities created nonprofit community development corporations to rebuild neighborhoods, the consultants said that, in Roanoke, "there are a total of one or two people who understand and are empowered to take the role of nonprofit developer in the region — and, both of them have limited experience to date."

Other critics have as many as 30 community development corporations that drive housing and neighborhood renewal. Roanoke has only two — and, CDC's, with slow and limited results. Nash's Blue Ridge Housing Development Corporation, which has renovated five houses and opened single-room-occupancy rental buildings in its six years (it's building two houses this summer); the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization, which has done the most by building or repairing 16 houses within its neighborhood in 17 years; and a CDC set up by Roanoke banks several years ago that produced no housing at all.

The Enterprise Foundation said housing development in Roanoke has been hindered by disagreements among the parties involved. In 1993, a renovation loan program was discontinued because of disputes among the city, the housing authority and several banks over who was responsible when borrowers defaulted. The program had made 231 loans totaling about \$6 million for poor homeowners.

The foundation called for creation of a regional development corporation to drive housing construction and renovation for poor people across the valley. "As far as the local governments getting together and forming anything, that was never done," said Sue Yates, Salem's planning and development director.



City Manager Bob Herbert said nothing he or his neighbors mean their economic development. "The people have money to invest in their homes and their property."

"When asked why, he said, 'I guess that's something you'd have to ask the politicians.'"

To almost every question about the growing poverty of Roanoke's central neighborhoods, Herbert's answer was the Urban Partnership. That's a financial reward system the state set up to encourage city and county governments

PLEASE SEE CITY/PT

THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

A SPECIAL REPORT

FROM A6
City

to cooperate on public services and save money for taxpayers. There's not much financial incentive in it yet, Herbert acknowledged. But he said the disconnect between Roanoke and surrounding county governments may trigger a wider public debate about how the fate of all the communities are linked to the city's. Herbert said it will take years for the governments to work this out.

The Urban Partnership is offering \$6 million in incentives the next two years. That's not much to be excited among 35 counties and 41 cities, said John Moore, an urban-outreach professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. "To encourage suburbs to work with central cities — that is going to take a lot of money."

With suburban legislators driving state politics right now, Moore said, "The cities really have their backs up against the wall. In the General Assembly and the governor's office, there doesn't appear to be much sentiment to be loyal when measures" to help the cities, he said.

"We're developing a state of mind and a political climate, and nobody seems to be concerned," he said.

"We are continuously cursed by a Virginia style of government, where you don't have metropolitan planning and where contiguous areas don't feel responsibility for the central city," said Ted Edlich, executive director of Total Action Against Poverty, the leading anti-poverty agency in the region.

Virginia is the only state in the nation in which cities and counties are independent of each other. Poor people choose Roanoke because the city has the most social services and housing for the poor in the region. But because Roanoke is an independent city, it gets no financial help with social services from surrounding governments.

Even so, Herbert said, the city is making progress.

He spoke proudly of Roanoke's AA bond rating — a financial achievement recently placed in part by his upbeat annual report on Roanoke's fiscal condition to a Wall Street bond rating service.

He said Roanoke is the "10th or 14th" highest per-capita rate in the United States. He said that distinction is raised primarily by all the people from outlying areas who sleep at Valley View Mall.

Herbert said Friday he has been aware of conditions in the old neighborhoods. "This is not new information for our planning staff, our social services staff."

"At the neighborhood level," he said, "we're fighting to slow down and reverse the process by which people convert from single-family to multi-family units."

He offered the city's new rental inspection program as evidence of a heightened attention on the city's part.

"It's going to begin to demonstrate after three to five years," he said, "that these neighborhoods are not going to continue to have these rolling conversions."

Herbert said he understands the significance of neighborhoods near downtown. When he travels to other cities, he said, "The first question is, 'Where is the center?' " "Where can I walk?"

But some neighborhood leaders see a disconnect between Herbert's praise and Herbert the city manager.

"They cross and cross and cross the Jefferson Center, the Hotel Roanoke and the farmer's market area, as if they are heading to do good deeds in the old neighborhoods," Old Southwest Inc. board member Max Matthews said of city leaders.

The city needs to see the neighborhoods as part of the downtown, if they want to develop downtown into a wonderful place where people want to live and set up their businesses," Matthews said. "City leadership needs to see what it's going to protect and enhance it."

Ted Koebel, a housing expert at the Tech Center for Housing Research, said saving Roanoke a old neighborhoods will require strong leadership within

the neighborhoods themselves, a nonprofit organization experienced in development of low-income housing and acquainted with bank officials, and "a city that is willing to give the necessary support to make things happen."

Neighborhood advocates in Roanoke said that the city needs legislative and judicial help, quick recondemners of substandard houses, zoning to limit by lot size the number of apartments in a house, a faster way to force cleanup or demolition of vacant houses, a toughening of local court decisions against land landlords.

Housing experts around the state said Roanoke so far has lacked leadership on housing and comprehensive neighborhood revitalization.

Charlottesville-based Virginia Mountain Housing, with offices also in Winchester, Charlottesville, Richmond and Virginia Beach, is the highest-profile developer of low-income housing near Roanoke. It is restoring 700 units this year in Charlottesville, Portsmouth, Newport News and Virginia Beach and is builds 20 to 30 houses a year.

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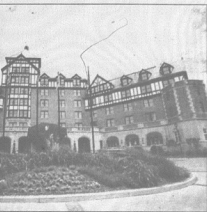
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The City of Roanoke has spent \$1.4 million toward the revitalization of Henry Street, but only one of the three remaining buildings has been restored.



STEPHANIE KLEIN DAVIS (top) and (left) Federal Community Development Block Grant money is being used to renovate a \$6 million federal space to restore the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center. City grants administrators say the hotel eventually will revitalize the money.

SPENDING NEARLY \$50 MILLION IN GRANT MONEY

How Roanoke spent nearly \$50 million in HUD Community Development Block Grant money, 1975-1996

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, DOWNTOWN RENOVATIONS & CITY HALL ADMINISTRATION 52%	
Economic development	\$15,895,886
Administration & planning	\$5,232,396
Home grants	\$4,852,933
Small business assistance	\$446,819
Preservation of downtown historic house	\$4,000,000
HOUSING 21%	\$27,644,819
Housing needs	\$6,251,929
Home ownership for low to moderate-income people	\$1,352,295
New housing	\$12,226,268
Financial assistance for loans and leases	\$41,717
ELIMINATION OF BLIGHT 10%	\$11,368,312
Poverty alleviation & clearance	\$4,372,718
Demolition	\$37,238
Grants to help people buy and maintain vacant lots	\$6,961,356
\$5,929,116	

PARKS, LANDSCAPING, INFRASTRUCTURE 8%

Streets, trails, including Central Park

Parks	\$2,098,765
Streets	\$710,642
\$2,809,407	

HOUSING HELP FOR THE POOR 3%

Section 8 vouchers and rapid re-housing

Section 8 vouchers	\$993,350
Rapid re-housing	\$297,474
\$1,290,824	

NEIGHBORHOOD GRANTS & COMMUNITY CENTERS 1%

Community buildings

Community buildings	\$151,364
Grants	\$9,242
\$60,604	

Source: Virginia State Department of Community Development, Division of Housing and Community Development, 1996. HUD Community Development Block Grant money is being used to renovate a \$6 million federal space to restore the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center.

don't we just get on with it?" "This is an All America city, and if it's an All America city, it ought to be dealing with this."

Engineers in the city's Municipal Building have said the Roanoke Times' series on "The Invisible Inner City" hurts the city's image and disregards the progress being made in old neighborhoods.

As an example, Roanoke Economic Development Director Phil Sparks said, residents of Day Avenue now have twice-a-year trash pickup days and they call police when they have problems. "Ten years ago," he said, "that wouldn't have happened."

Roanoke Public Safety Director Chip Stead said Roanoke has a new arm of city government dedicated to solving neighborhood problems.

The year-old group of city

ROANOKE HOUSING STUDIES

1968: City planners urge major revitalization of city's oldest housing

1971: City blames aging job market for housing problems

1974: Consultants urge housing revitalization and new construction

1990: Law force urges low-cost housing revitalization and new construction

1995: Another law force urges housing revitalization and new construction

1993: A housing-related study concludes Roanoke needs widespread to help old neighborhoods

1997: Consultants urge the city to embrace the "invisible inner city" and the fortunes of downtown

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Stephanie Klein Davis is a staff writer for the Roanoke Times.

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Poll says many think president can't control racism

Devise criticism, Clinton pushes for race dialogue

President Clinton reaffirmed his commitment to resolving racial conflict, but critics say it's just talk.

ANNOYED PERSON

WASHINGTON — With his national dialogue on race barely under way, President Clinton was defending the idea Sunday as a good use of the presidency. "It's an effective 'bully pulpit' for resolving conflict among the races.

A poll released Monday might suggest otherwise. It found there is more than half the Americans consider racism an intractable dilemma that no president can control.

In a flurry of television interviews, Clinton sought to dispel critics' argument that the campaign he unveiled Saturday in San Diego, which revolves around having Americans speak out before a presidential advisory board, will be a lot of talk about race with little or no official action.

Where Clinton is most likely to face the sting is on an affirmative action. Critics say the president was absent on that issue during the most inflamed moments of the debate.

"There are other issues here," he said, and having Americans visit their opinions about them before the advisory board will give him the information he needs to try and solve the problem.

FROM A1

CDBG

Tuesday: Stories about Roanoke's Northside Neighborhood Environmental Organization, which has built new houses and renovated old ones, and an independent group of neighborhood leaders called the Presidents Council.

The city's Office of Grants Compliance said the percentage of money spent on economic development ranged from 15.6 percent to 20.9 percent of CDBG money in fiscal 1994-95 through 1994-95.

On neighborhood development spending, Spence said she would have compiled the figures differently from how the newspaper counted staff salaries at the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership, a city office that assists neighborhoods, as an administrative expense. The city would have counted it under neighborhood-development.

The newspaper counted streetlight, sidewalk and street sign projects as neighborhood organization under infrastructure. The city considered those neighborhood development.

The Times contacted

A CBS News poll released Sunday indicated that 58 percent of Americans believe racial problems are beyond the president's control, up from 46 percent four years ago. Twenty-six percent of blacks and 53 percent of whites said they think race relations in the United States are "generally bad."

The poll also reflected a stark racial split: 71 percent of blacks but only 32 percent of whites said improving race relations is among the most important things

Seventy-one percent of blacks, but only 32 percent of whites, said improving race relations is among the most important things America needs for its future.

America needs for its future. Sixty-two percent of whites, but only 26 percent of blacks, said race is important, but so are other issues. And 53 percent of whites said it's taking on racism to "guarantee his place in history," while 47 percent of blacks said he is doing this "because he really cares."

The poll was conducted by telephone June 10-11 with 1,021 randomly selected adults. It had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

The White House said the poll results reflect the problem that Clinton identified, and things may change once people begin talking. "The president believes in and foremost: Get people involved in this discussion. White House spokesman said.

The president's initiative is to hold an annual year-long series of town hall meetings by an advisory board whose members recom-

mandations The White House will compile into a report on coping with the country's new multiracial, multicultural reality.

"I consciously set it up as an

advisory board so that I could not keep my distance from it," Clinton told CNN. "I'm not trying to claim responsibilities."

Clinton will also propose legislative and other initiatives to address race-based problems in areas such as employment, housing, law enforcement and education. He directed his Cabinet to begin working on proposals right away.

Labor Secretary Alexis Herman said she would assemble her top aides starting today to weave Clinton's goal into the five-point agenda she has set for her agency.

But she does not interview her agenda includes improving skills of all workers, helping more people from welfare to work, improving education and recruitment benefits, establishing "healthy discrimination-free" workplaces and helping workers shoulder the dual burdens of work and family.

Lani Galanter, the University of Pennsylvania law professor who in 1993 was selected by Clinton to head the 10-member civil rights advisory task force, told CBS the president "is doing us a service" by ordering a frank assessment of where America stands on race.

But she does not interview her agenda includes improving skills of all workers, helping more people from welfare to work, improving education and recruitment benefits, establishing "healthy discrimination-free" workplaces and helping workers shoulder the dual burdens of work and family.

"To say it's wrong and that we're sorry about it is not a bad thing. That doesn't weaken us," Clinton told CNN. "Now, whether this legislation should pass, I just need some time to think about it."

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, speaking on ABC's "This Week," said the apology bill "probably would not happen."

"We should have an apology for what [is] happening in America today — the poor quality of education, the danger to the schools, the lack of opportunity," Lott said.

Since 1994, the city has claimed that its spending of \$1.4 million of CDBG money on land acquisition and plans for Henry Street would pay off in plenty of jobs for the poor. The city has struggled all that time to rebuild the once-famous black commercial street into an entertainment district. The only building restored so far is the Dumas Hotel Music Center, open occasionally for community events.

they're low," Gramlich said of the city's anticipated, most of which are poor people according to the city's Office of Grants Compliance.

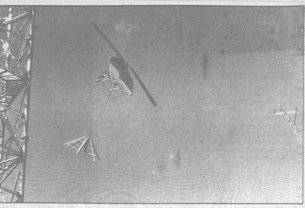
Gramlich said the city is spending 30 percent for use for housing in the coming fiscal year, but that's better than the national average, around 16 percent.

He questioned, however, Roanoke including detritations and efforts to bring substandard houses up to the building code standards, especially in the case of Cooper Inn.

Roanoke has backed up its use of CDBG money for economic development by assuring HUD the projects would create jobs for poor people.

Some of the city's projects did just that. The Hotel Roanoke

FATAL ENCOUNTER



CO-PILOT ZAHAL ABDIN ALI hangs from the door of his disabled helicopter Saturday near Kr. al Lumpur, Malaysia. The 1-ton jet helicopter was lifting to the top of a communications tower hit the tower, swinging the craft into the tower and shearing the tail section. All the pilot, the tower designer and two people on the ground were killed.

1st-in-the-nation law to be decided again in November Oregon calls second vote on its 1994 doctor-assisted suicide law

Opponents of the issue say new information justifies the election, but supporters call it an insult to voters who've made their choice.

BY TONY DAN AND ALLEN PRESS

SALEM, Ore. — Penny Schlatzer, terminally ill with ovarian cancer, says she might consider pills just to make sure she has enough to end her life if Oregon voters reverse themselves this fall and forbid people from legally obtaining suicide drugs.

Opponents approved a first-in-the-nation assisted suicide law in 1994 but the law has been torn up in court. Last week, opponents persuaded the Legislature to send the issue back to the voters to decide if it all over again in November.

Schlatzer, 56, doesn't plan to take a actual dose of drugs anytime soon, but she wants to be prepared.

"I don't want an undignified, painful death. So you have to start talking to the doctor and say, 'The

pain is so bad, I need extra pills,'" says Schlatzer, from near Eugene.

According to the law, once a doctor determines a patient has less than six months to live, a second doctor must decide if the patient is mentally competent and not suffering from depression.

The patient may then request suicide medication in writing, signed by two witnesses, and the request must be repeated verbally before any prescription is written.

In winning the second vote on the issue, opponents of doctor-assisted suicide said new information has come out since 1994 that justifies asking residents to cast ballots again.

Backers of the law called the move an insult to voters who already have decided the matter, although it passed by a narrow margin.

The assisted suicide issue is already before the U.S. Supreme Court, with a ruling expected before the court takes its summer break. However, that is premature to state laws prohibiting

such suicides, not laws permitting them.

Both sides expect a lightning-expensive campaign before the November election.

"People want choice and dignity in the dying process," says Faye Garsh of the Denver-based Hemlock Society U.S.A., which worked for passage of the 1994 law.

Opponents of assisted suicide have formed a campaign committee and have a California political consultant, Chuck Cavalieri, who helped defeat an assisted suicide measure in that state five years ago.

"People will do what they have to do to prevent an unwise and dangerous public policy from gaining a foothold in the United States," says Bob Castagna of the Oregon Catholic Conference.

Legislators who backed the second election said studies showed that, in the Netherlands, where euthanasia is legal, 25 percent of patients who take pills end their lives suffer lingering death, sometimes lasting for several days.

Since 1994, the city has claimed that its spending of \$1.4 million of CDBG money on land acquisition and plans for Henry Street would pay off in plenty of jobs for the poor. The city has struggled all that time to rebuild the once-famous black commercial street into an entertainment district. The only building restored so far is the Dumas Hotel Music Center, open occasionally for community events.

In accounting for expenditures on Henry Street in 1994-95, the city told HUD that 343 retail, restaurant and entertainment jobs eventually would be created there. So far, according to the music center's owner, Todd Austin, Agent Poverty, the only workers there are two drivers, a custodian and six people in the center's kitchen who make meals for children at Head Start centers.

In the early 1980s, when the Coca-Cola bottling plant threatened to move out of Roanoke, the city persuaded the Gainsboro company to stay by giving it a \$4 million, interest-free federal loan for a major expansion and clearance of 34 nearby homes and 21 businesses. That was one of several initiatives, soon after with CDBG money, Coke later repaid the city. Spence said the city paid interest on the loan with CDBG funds.

The city said HUD at the time that Coke promised to create 80 permanent jobs for residents of the poor black neighborhood and for other minorities. Soon after the expansion, the plant changed hands and new workers hired from the community were quickly laid off. The city said the plant now has 311 workers.

WHO TO CALL

- Need help? Information? Want to get involved?**
- **Change Boo Herbet**, 853-2323
 - **Mayor David Bowen**, office 344-6492, home 427-4150
 - **Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership**, 398-1420
 - **Roanoke Union Ways**, office 981-1096, home 344-9939
 - **Roanoke Council**, home 398-4788
 - **Roanoke area's Rent**, office 345-6533
 - **Roanoke William White**, office 342-1440, home 563-0414
 - **Roanoke Housing Department**, 853-1208 or 853-2222
 - **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority**, 983-9281
 - **Roanoke Office of Grants Compliance**, 853-8003
 - **Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership**, 345-8250
 - **Roanoke Housing Department**, 398-1420

A few years ago, the city borrowed \$6 million in federal money to restore the Hotel Roanoke and build the adjacent conference center. Roanoke will repay that money with CDBG money at about \$550,000 a year until fiscal year 2011-14. The city said the money gradually is being repaid by the hotel. Another \$80,000 in CDBG money went for the hotel's asbestos removal, financing assistance and employee training.

Staff writer S.D. Harrington contributed to this story.

Healy Babb can be reached at 853-2328 or healy@roanoke.com

ONLINE

Want to see more on how Roanoke spent nearly \$50 million in Community Development Block Grants?

The Roanoke Times has compiled a database that shows CDBG expenditures between 1973 and 1996. You can search the data on line.

www.roanoke.com/ratimes
Look under "the inside news" link

None on record to blacks for slavery Clinton says he'll consider an apology

But the president also said that he doesn't think making reparations is a good idea.

WASHINGTON PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Clinton said he will consider extending a national apology to black Americans for slavery — but not compensation for their ancestors' suffering. "It's been so long and we're so many generations removed," he said.

Thousands of applicants came from a single Ohio lawmaker who introduced apology legislation in Congress last week, just as Clinton was preparing to unveil his national initiative on race in a speech in San Diego.

In a radio interview aired Monday, Clinton said the apology proposal caught him off guard. He said he would think about it because "there's still some

unfinished business out there among black and white Americans."

"I think it has to be dealt with," Clinton told the American Urban Radio Network. "I think that would be a helpful debate." Last month, Clinton apologized for the nation to the black men who were awaiting execution in 1955 in the governor's Tankersley Sing Sing Murky and in January he awarded — 50 years late — the Medal of Honor to seven black World War II soldiers for valor in combat.

But Clinton said he disagreed with the idea of paying reparations to the descendants of slaves, something many black activists have said is needed to begin rectifying more than 200 years of inequality that blacks have experienced.

"I suppose that some would think that but it's been so long

PLEASE SEE AP0200-02



Members of the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization gather outside 810 Loudon Ave. N.W., one of their first restoration projects. From left are Biffora Mitchell, Hange Junior, Letitia Woodruff, Susanna Strickland, Eva Hughes, Barbara Wilson, Joanne English and Ella Burge.

Northwest women take back neighborhood

Story by MARY BISHOP / Photos by STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS

THE ROANOKE TIMES

The Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization is the envy of Roanoke neighborhood leaders.

It has renovated a dozen houses and built six large, handsome houses in the style of the old homes around them. It has helped poor families buy homes and has rented the renovated or new apartments to others. It is the only neighborhood group that is building and renovating houses.

Did NNEO succeed because founder Florine Thornhill coziered up to the past two city managers? Because NNEO has not criticized the city in public, as some other neighborhood groups have? Because it has received so much help from city officials, as well as bankers, foundations and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development?

"Yes, yes and yes. But people who have watched since 1980 say the bigger reason is that Thornhill built a game plan and stuck with it. She was persistent. She kept track of every project, and she insisted on quality construction.

"The trick is, Mrs. Thornhill says, 'We've got to do it, and just jump in and does it,' said architectural adviser Don Harwood of Hill Studio. Her organization has raised more than \$750,000 and owns 30 lots on which to build more homes.

To neighborhoods that envy her, Harwood would ask, "How many houses have they done?"

"She never takes the hand that feeds her," he observed. "I mean, you've got to do that. She actually has banks calling her" to offer low-interest loans.

OUR SERIES

1 **NEEDS** The lives of Roanoke's inner-city renters. Profiles of historic City Center and Tazewell avenues. The plight of vacant homes.

2 **WITH** The business of land-lording and some of the people who are in it.

3 **NEEDS** What other cities do about decaying neighborhoods and what's being done — or not done — in Roanoke.

"Mr. Herb Ewert taught me how to go to the banks. He took me to one or two," Thornhill said, referring to Roanoke's city manager from 1978 to 1985. She said current City Manager Bob Herbert also gives her advice.

"I would do anything in the world for Mr. Thornhill," Herbert said.

"When she approached the city and when she approached the banks, she always had a plan," said Marian Allen, coordinator of the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership. "I always heard people in the city say that when Mrs. Thornhill came in with a problem, she always came with a solution to the problem."

"If people think she's gotten special attention for her neighborhood, Alan said. "It's because she knocked on the door and asked for it."

And when Thornhill would ask the city for a federal Community Development Block Grant, she would walk along a few hundred dollars her members raised cooking their own supper.



THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Poverty, crime and decay in Roanoke's oldest neighborhoods

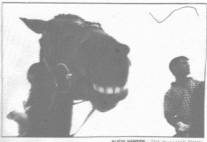
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PLEASE SEE IN0406

HAPPY TO BE HERE



WHATABOUTME had a bit of a similar situation at the Roanoke Valley Horse Show. Trainers Don Stewart (left) and Jimmy Toranzo gave their horses a workout in the training ring.

Proposal requires FAA approval Airport considers a fee for passengers

In 1991, Congress passed legislation giving airports the go-ahead to charge up to \$3 per passenger.

By MEGAN SCHMIDT

The Roanoke Regional Airport is considering charging a user fee for outgoing passengers to raise money for airport improvements.

The commission plans to apply to the Federal Aviation Administration for permission to levy a passenger facility charge a fee of up to \$3 per person for departing passengers.

The commission will discuss the issue further Wednesday morning when it selects a company to help it compile and submit an application to the FAA. If the application is approved, the commission will have to approve the fees before they can be levied.

In 1991, Congress passed legislation giving airports the go-ahead to charge each user fee. Money collected can be used only for expanding and improving airport facilities, not for operating expenses. Each airport can charge no more than \$3, and passengers can be charged more than \$12 per round trip.

About 280 airports nationwide are approved for such

charges, said airport spokesman Mark Courtney. In Charlotte, the airports in Richmond, Norfolk, Lynchburg and Charlottesville impose them.

The user fee is a reliable source of funding, Courtney said, both to augment existing funds and to safeguard against future cuts. Federal funding, including the airport improvement program, has been on uncertain ground for several years, he said. If funding is cut, smaller airports — such as Roanoke Regional — would be the first to feel the squeeze.

To qualify for FAA approval, an airport must recommend projects with specific starting and ending dates, Courtney said. It also must consult with the carriers who fly through the airport. Once an application is submitted, he said, it likely would take about a year to be approved.

The commission probably would use money from the charge to reimburse itself for projects already under way, including the new field maintenance building under construction or upgrading surfed signs, he said. The commission also could use the funds to pay for the financial consultant who will compile the application.

Megan Schmidt can be reached at 961-3140 or megan@roanoke.com

The eagle may take flight from the back of the quarter

Making way for a change in change

A federal proposal would redesign the quarter, replacing the eagle with state-specific images.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON — The majestic eagle gracing the back of the quarter for more than half a century might soon temporarily cede its place to such critters as California's bear and Louisiana's pelican.

A proposal before Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin would direct the U.S. Mint to produce 50 new designs, one for each

state. The familiar profile of George Washington would remain and the quarters would be the same size and weight, so they'd work in vending machines. But starting in 1999, five new designs for the quarter's reverse side would be issued each year for 10 years, replacing the eagle.

Collectors hoard with the same old coin designs are enthusiastically lobbying for the plan. Under a law enacted last October, Rubin has until Aug. 1 to decide "This would be the biggest thing to happen in numismatics [coin collecting] in my lifetime,"

said Kenneth Brown, president of the 100-year-old American Numismatic Association.

Critics worry that the plan would subject the Treasury Department to a flood of commemorative proposals from Congress. But backers say the new quarters would earn the government billions of dollars and teach children about the heritage of their states.

"Fuguetting everything else, I just think it's fun," said Rep. Michael Castle, R-Del., whose own state, the first to ratify the Constitution, would lead the cavalcade of commemoratives.

"When you get quarters for change, you're going to look at them."

A March telephone poll of 2,032 adults age 18 and older, with a margin of error of 2 percent, found far more respondents favored the program (51 percent) than opposed it (11 percent). A substantial minority — 38 percent — was indifferent.

But, more importantly, 75 percent of those polled said they'd likely save some of the new quarters, just as Americans squandered away an estimated \$1.8 billion of the slightly more than 2

PLEASE SEE QUARTERS A2

THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

A SPECIAL REPORT

FROM A1 NNEO

"You can't go in fawning," Thornhill said of working with the city. "Nobody will work with you if you're fawning. We found them very cooperative with us, but we went in with a plan and with the right attitude."

Thornhill used to be more silent. Maggie Griev, who set up the Neighborhood Partnership in 1980 and now works with a national housing institute in Maryland, remembers city workers' first encounter with Florine Thornhill. Hundreds of neighborhood residents were at a meeting at the Roanoke Civic Center. Leaders from affluent neighborhoods like Raleigh Court spoke of their relatively minor troubles. Finally, Thornhill, then a 38-year-old housewife, rose to speak. "I live in a slum," Griev recalled her saying, "a slum that's been ignored for years. Let me tell you about the rats and the abandoned buildings." She electrified the gathering with her graphic description of real life in her old neighborhood.

Two factors fed Thornhill's determination to save the old homes around her and restore them well. The loss of her childhood home in Danville during the Great Depression, and the con-



STEPHANIE ALLEN-DAVIS / THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Florine Thornhill is a founder of the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization. "Most people wait until the neighborhood is gone and then talk about it," she said. The NNEO motto is "You don't have to move to live in a better place."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Times wants to hear its readers' views about Roanoke's oldest downtown neighborhoods and what is happening to them. If you have something you'd like to say, call our hotline at 961-0100 and go to mailbox 7824.

Our goal is to publish some reader comments inside the course of our series, *The Invisible Inner City*. Poverty, crime and decay in Roanoke's oldest neighborhoods.

struction standards of her father and of her husband, retired masonry contractor John E. Thornhill.

"We knew what it was to live in a home," Florine Thornhill, 75, said of her parents and eight siblings. Her mother died in childbirth after the family lost its valley farm. The Dan River and the railroad ran through it. Thornhill says even her dad's chicken coops were well-made. She believes grief over dispossession hastened her mother's death. Her father died at 52.

At 13, Thornhill left home for New York and a job as a maid and nanny. She met her husband on a visit to Roanoke. They married when she was 14 and he was 18 and, after some years in Orange County, moved into 819 Centre Ave. N.W. in 1945. The street was just opening up to black families.

"These houses were in terrible condition," she said. There had to be no bathroom or porches. John Thornhill began restoring the house. "Little by little," Florine Thornhill said, "I learned how to hold boards while he nailed."

As her nine children were born, she did domestic work for Roanoke families and laid paper-work for her husband's jewelry cleaning business. All around her neighbors' houses were falling apart. One old woman's house burst down. "I was the only one," she said. "So many people in my neighborhood," Thornhill recalled.

She and 14 other neighborhood women got together the first time since 1940 in the basement of London Avenue Christian Church. "Crime was so bad," she said, "you couldn't even walk to church." They appointed 25 block captains, put in new locks at home and installed dusk-to-dawn lights. Eventually, their group covered Siamondash Avenue to Moscoran Road, Fifth Street to 14th Street.

The women's husbands, some of whom now are on NNEO's board, joined them in cleaning up vacant lots. Thornhill coined NNEO's motto, which is still on a banner in the group's offices at 802 London Ave. N.W.: "You don't have to move to live in a better place."

Like another successful Roanoke neighborhood activist, Joel Richard of Old Southwest, Thornhill was home all day. She could keep an eye on the neighborhood. She pursued landlords and other absentee owners of neglected houses until they sold them to NNEO. She chased off drug dealers. She went to city meetings and kept up with the latest housing programs.

"She's been the ear to the crack over there, and I've been the ear to the crack over here."

WHO TO CALL

Need help? Information? Want to get involved?

Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization, 243-5474

the ear to the crack over here." Richard said. "You need to be a doer mother, you need to be a policeman, you need to be a facilitator. She's been that over there. Every neighborhood has to have one of these, or you don't make it."

Thornhill has been sworn, said Paula Prince, president of Old Southwest Inc., another neighborhood organization. "If she has reached out the right time, if



ROBERT LINSFORD / THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

she modeled at a moment she knew was a pattern lie, she's gotten what her neighborhood needs."

Thornhill fought construction of small, cheap, low-style homes on vacant lots. "It's not right," she said. She has insisted on large, two-story houses in keeping with the old ones.

The old homes, she said, were "built with love, with gables and architectural features."

Thornhill has a humble demeanor and rarely speaks ill of anybody, but she is said to be shrewd. "Mrs. Thornhill looks everybody," architect Harwood said. "She knows a lot."

Contractors learned early on that the elderly woman could catch slipped work as quickly as any male client. Members of NNEO said she inspected contractors' work regularly.

"When NNEO began home renovations, Thornhill clustered them on a few blocks in order to encourage further investment," said stretching out too far where you wouldn't see the progress," she said.

She has reached out not just



Stephanie Allen-Davis is the new president of the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization.

to city departments and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, but to the federal government, national foundations and valley banks. She set up an advisory board that includes an executive of National Black Grants have come from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Allstate Foundation, the McAuley Institute and HUD.

Thornhill received an award from President Clinton in the White House Rose Garden a few years ago. She's given speeches in Texas and Massachusetts. "I've

never been in college," she said. "But I've spoken at a college."

In January, NNEO became the first Roanoke neighborhood organization in recent years to hire an executive director — Stephanie Shende, an urban planner with big-city experience.

Nationsbank announced this spring that it got NNEO to have begun a partnership to give the neighborhood greater access to loans and technical help.

Thornhill had a stroke last fall and retired as president in May, succeeded by Doris Mack, one of her right hands since NNEO began. But at the ceremony marking Mack's election, the members made it clear — Thornhill is still on the real-estate committee."

May. Dates can be reached at 961-3358 or map@roanoke.com



This house on Loudon Avenue northwest (above) was one of the first to be fixed up by the Northwest Neighborhood Environmental Organization. The same house before renovation is seen below.



STEPHANIE ALLEN-DAVIS / THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Neighborhood organizations coming together to tackle problems

See 10th Edition, June 18

By Mary Bishop
THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

The suggestions have circulated for years. Do white neighborhoods get faster help from the city than black ones? Does City Hall return calls from a middle-class neighborhood more quickly than from a poor one?

The problems will never entirely disappear, but Roanoke neighborhood organizations finally have a way to check each other out.

A year ago, as a way to solve more independently of the city-run Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership, presidents of a few neighborhood organizations formed the Presidents Council. Old-timers say this is the first time neighborhood leaders from around the city have regularly sat around a table and gotten to know each other.

The group has met with City Council and a succession of city department heads but has yet to inaugurate a city-wide project. When it does, housing probably will be the theme.

The Presidents Council may publish a brochure on the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords.

"That's one of the issues that's really strong, coming up," said Charles Hancock, president of the Garden City Civic League.

Cheap and affordable new houses built on vacant lots are another common cause that is being considered for a campaign. "We all get housing problems," said Paula Prince, president of Old Southwest Inc.

The council recently spoke up for neighborhoods on two hot issues — Southeast's plans with vacancies and the city administration's plan to hire a consultant to draw up a plan for park improvements. (The vacant problem hasn't been PLASE SEE PRESIDENTS' AND

Three members of the Presidents Council are (from left): Charles Hancock, Garden City Civic League; Tony Stavola, Greater Raleigh Court Civic League; and Alfred Dove, Fairland Civic Organization.



STEPHANIE ALLEN-DAVIS / THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Wednesday Profiles of Old Southwest Inc., the grande dame of Roanoke's neighborhood groups, and the Southeast Roanoke Christian Community.

In a related ruling, Utah's bid to outlaw abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy was rejected

Court rules in favor of state's allowing only doctors to do abortions

The two decisions show the high court adhering strictly to the legal line it has drawn on abortion, the Supreme Court said Monday that states may require the operations be performed only by doctors but refused to

reconsider the rule allowing a pregnant woman to choose an abortion until her fetus becomes viable.

In a 6-3 ruling, the court upheld a Montana law that prohibits physicians assistants from performing abortions.

Similar laws are in effect in 30 other states.

Court puts limits on whistleblowers. AS

In a second action, the justices rejected Utah's bid to outlaw abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

In the past, the court has said a woman's right to abortion sometimes until the fetus becomes capable of living on its own — a stage of development that comes between 24 and 28 weeks of a pregnancy, medical experts say.

Utah lawmakers tried to push back the limit by several weeks

but their law was struck down as unconstitutional.

The two decisions show the high court adhering strictly to the position it adopted in 1992, States 700 "to regulate the practice of abortion," the court said then, so long as they do not put an "undue burden" on the right of women to choose to have one in the first six months of a pregnancy.

Since then, the justices have repeatedly cut off further litigation

that challenges that framework. They have also refused to hear arguments in a single case that deals with the right to abortion.

The 1995 Montana law was challenged as an "undue burden" by abortion-rights lawyers representing Dr. James Armstrong and Susan Cahill, his assistant.

Cahill was said to be the state's only physician assistant who had performed abortions prior to the law.

Utah lawmakers sought to forbid abortions after 20 weeks except to save the mother's life or when the pregnancy threatened "grave damage" to her health.

Lawyers for the state's abortion-rights group in 2000, Montana also challenged the measure as an "undue burden" on pregnant women, citing examples of unwanted pregnancies that have been raped or had medical problems.

FROM A6

Presidents

resolved, but the city decided to do its own park plan.) The presidents are convinced they have the potential to prompt widespread change. "We know we can be very powerful," Prince said. "From the beginning, we knew we'd have much more of a voice than any of us individually."

The council has already improved problem-solving in the neighborhoods, according to Estelle McCadden, president of the Melrose-Edgely Neighborhood Forum in Northwest Roanoke. "All in all, things are much, much better," she said. "We are getting quicker response to our complaints."

Tony Stavola, past president of the Greater Raleigh Court Civic League, said the council's greatest accomplishment to date has been to dispel myths about all the savvy and influence being in one neighborhood. South Roanoke is not a neighborhood of "rich people that don't have problems," he said, and some black neighborhoods in Northwest Roanoke have been more successful than many white communities. They put a lot of the other neighborhood organizations to shame.

"You always hear, 'They get help, and they don't,'" McCadden said after initial meetings last

WHY IT MATTERS

"We need to stabilize our inner-city neighborhoods or [else] Raleigh Court, which is right next to them, will be the next one down the tubes"

TONY STAVOLA
PAST PRESIDENT OF GREATER RALEIGH COURT CIVIC LEAGUE

year? "This way we can find out."

Hague's work said there has been something of a bonding among neighborhood officers. "I need to think we have these problems and nobody cares. You find out you're not as unique as you thought."

Prince thinks the networking is invaluable. Before, "we all knew two or three" other presidents, Prince said. "Now we know a whole bunch."

Evelyn Bethel, president of

has no returned over the council. Alan attends meetings but is not in charge, Prince said.

Most members of the Presidents Council are heads of groups that belong to the partnership, but Prince said partnership membership is not required. "This," she said emphatically, "is not a city group."

Joe Nash, Wayne crime watch chairman and unsuccessful candidate for City Council last spring, also would like to think the partnership was just a neighborhood for the city.

Now he's on the Presidents Council, the partnership's steering committee and three of its subcommittees. He is convinced the council is free of the city administration's control.

He has only a phone for Alan and her assistant, Chris Clum.

"They actually are more pro-neighborhood than they say privately," Nash said. He said the two aren't afraid to go to any city department with a neighborhood's complaint.

Nash thinks neighborhoods and the city departments are working better together than they have in a while. "It finally looks like some of these people, their lightbulbs are coming on."

Mary Bishop can be reached at 983-3358 or mary@roanoke.com

ON LINE

Want to see the complete records on Roanoke's inner-city rental housing and how City Hall spent nearly \$50 million in federal grants that were supposed to help poor neighborhoods?

The Roanoke Times has compiled databases of Community Development Block Grant expenditures between 1975 and 1996 and of building code violations in rental properties from 1982 to 1996. You can search both databases on line at:

www.roanoke.com/ratimes

Look under "The Inside Inner City"

the Historic Galax School Preservation District. Inc. has also inspired much about the Presidents Council. Nor, she says, has it inspired after.

She suspects a controlling influence by the Neighborhood Partnership, which lends support and keeps minutes for Presidents Council meetings.

Council members and Marian Alan, Neighborhood Partnership coordinator, said the partnership

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Matching Kits Available

Old Southwest: 'People knowing people'

STORY BY MARY BISHOP / PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS
THE ROANOKE TIMES

When Joel Richert hears of the struggles to save old streets across Roanoke or only a few alleys away, she heaves a

mighty sigh. She's been on the front lines a long, long time and has pretty much won her own battle.

The historic houses on Old Southwest's middle and southern streets, with their brightly painted porches and lush landscaping, may be places of privilege these days. The Wild-flour Cafe on Old Southwest's Fourth Street may draw diners from Roanoke's richest neighborhoods now.

But Richert remembers when that section of Old Southwest was not so tidy. She remembers the soiled tarponns strewn on front lawns, the people urinating on their neighbors' porches and throwing garbage out their apartment windows.

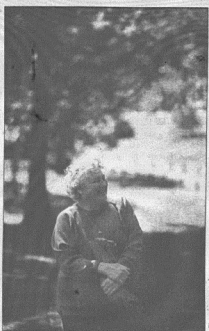
"I still have the underwear we found on our front porch one night — purple with black lace," she said.

In the mid-1970s, her husband, Bob, was the first president of their neighborhood organization, then called the Old Southwest Neighborhood Alliance. The group has rescued a park, a school, hundreds of homes — and inspired a ledgerful of city ordinances, policies and neighborhood grants.

Joel Richert, still one of the neighborhood's leading activists, is convinced that with similar determination, most of Roanoke's other old neighborhoods, including the northern part of Old Southwest, can make a comeback. But it will take time. "People want instant success today," she said. "They want to lose 20 pounds overnight."

Old Southwest is a microcosm of Roanoke, one of the city's greatest victories. Income and housing conditions. It's a big neighborhood, stretching from Marshall Avenue near the Jefferson Center all the way to a bluff above the Roanoke River. Homes on middle streets, such as Walnut Avenue, are as elegant as many in wealthy north Roanoke and many are valued at around \$133,000.

But neglected homes remain on most Old Southwest streets, and on Dry Avenue to the north, home values are \$1,000 for an abandoned house, \$12,000 and \$14,000 for a few occupied houses and more than \$70,000 for some owner-occupied homes.



Joel Richert, a longtime activist in Old Southwest, walks through Highland Park and picks up empty 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor in brown bags.

Residents talk continually about whether the neighborhood will continue to gentrify, as more affluent people buy rown-down houses and fix them up. Will there always be room too in Old Southwest for renters and working-class people? The presence of many modern apartment buildings built in the past 20 years indicates there will.

"I want us to remain multiracial, multiethnic and multiethnic," said Paula Prince, president of Old Southwest Inc., the group's name now. "All good historical districts are a mix. They have apartments, [and] they have historical homes."

"I know the attitude of the board is we like the diversity of the neighborhood. We just want people to be good citizens of our neighborhood," said Max Matthews, another Old Southwest leader.

Matthews, a resident since 1989, has a neighbor with "maybe two teeth in his head. He's a good neighbor. The man walks a lot and watches out for neighbors. 'D' rather have him than somebody who doesn't come out of his house," said Matthews.

OUR SERIES

1 The head of Roanoke's inner-city system, Prof. and trustee Dennis Thegn, says of vacant houses.

2 The business of landscaping and some of the people who are in it.

3 What other cities do about closing neighborhoods and what's being done — or not done — in Roanoke.

THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

Poverty, crime and decay in Roanoke's oldest neighborhoods

Arney sidesteps questions Defense of Gingrich less than energetic

Republicans are discussing their leadership, and an unsigned letter calls for a vote of no confidence.

ASSOCIATED PRESS — Web discussions rating in the ranks. House Majority Leader Dick Arney issued a belated defense of Speaker Newt Gingrich on Tuesday after first sidestepping the issue by telling questioners to "have a good day."

Arney's response came as a group of conservative Republicans — smaller than anticipated — met privately to discuss the party's leadership.

Last week needs to be analyzed in terms of where we're going and why we're here," said Rep. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., referring to a highly publicized GOP retreat last week as a showdown with the White House on disaster-aid legislation.

Graham, who organized the meeting, added, "I don't think the speaker's in any trouble" inside the GOP caucus, and he sees no need for a vote of no confidence in the leadership.

Initially, the developments came as Gingrich, the architect of the GOP victory in 1994, was celebrating his 54th birthday.

The internal tensions surfaced

at a critical juncture for the Republicans, who will try to win passage next week of two major bills drafted to implement the balanced budget accord negotiated with President Clinton. One is a tax-cut bill that has already come under attack from the White House, which says it would benefit too many benefits on the rich.

The other is an enormous package of budget cuts, including changes in Medicare, that has drawn objections from Democrats and the White House.

Some Republican lawmakers are afraid the GOP is ill-prepared for the coming campaign on those bills — leading in mounting up votes for passage and in countering claims made by Democrats and the White House in a major public relations struggle.

Arney, 56, for his part, said he does not feel bound by the budget deal. "I was not in the budget negotiations," he said. Asked whether Gingrich is bound by the budget agreement, Arney replied, "You would have to discuss that with the speaker."

As majority leader, Arney is second only to Gingrich in the GOP hierarchy and has worked closely with him since the GOP took control of Congress two and a half years ago.

PLEASE SEE GINGRICH A2

Dissenters fear inflated sentences Juries allowed to remain ignorant of no-parole law

If jurors don't know about the new rules, the judge should not tell them, an appellate court has ruled.

BY LAURENCE HANNAK
THE ROANOKE TIMES

Juries cannot be told there is no parole for the criminals they sentence, the Virginia Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday in a decision that critics said could lead to inflated punishments based on speculation by ill-informed jurors.

Defense lawyers and a judge who wrote a dissenting opinion argued that because some people are not aware of the details of legislation that abolished parole effective Jan. 1, 1993, juries should be informed of the law before sentencing someone.

If a jury is uncertain about parole eligibility, the argument

was, it likely would set a heavier sentence under the assumption that the defendant would be released after serving only a fraction of the time.

"We railroad jurors and prejudice defendants when we fail to inform jurors that parole is no longer available," Judge James Benton wrote in a dissenting opinion. The inescapable conclusion is that a certain degree of jury ignorance can be tolerated.

But in a 2-1 decision handed down in Richmond, the court maintained a long-held rule that sentencing is a function of the judicial branch and the administration of punishment is the job of the executive branch. The principal rationale underlying our system of sentencing is founded in

PLEASE SEE PAROLE A2

ABOUT TO VOTE



PAPERMAN of the Muge people awaits his turn to fill out a paper ballot in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. The election started Sunday and continues through June 28. A record 2.6 million people have registered to vote. The South Pacific nation's population is 4.3 million.

It's looking for homes for 144 research chimps

Air Force says it's bedtime for Bonzo

It began using chimpanzees in space research in the 1960s, but those animals are long gone. These animals have been used for medical research.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ARLINGTON — They were stark, poked, probed and kept in cages in the interest of science. Some may have AIDS or hepatitis. Now the Air Force is looking for someone to care for 144 chimpanzees once used in research.

Acting under a law passed last year, the Air Force on Tuesday formally opened a process to divest itself of a colony of chimpanzees formed 30 years ago to help put America into space.

At a public meeting, Air Force officials said they would accept bids to take the animals and

the buildings at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., where the chimps are housed. But they cautioned that successful bidders will have to prove that they have enough money, adequate facilities and the trained people needed to take care of the animals, which may live well into the next century.

Animal-rights groups say they want all the chimps, but acknowledge that finding places to put them will be hard.

"Thousands of people are looking for homes for these animals that will not subject them to research," Elliot Katz told Air Force officials. "They (the chimps) have been in prison on your base all their lives, and now we want to put them into a place with a good quality of life."

The Air Force got into the chimp business as part of the nation's space effort, but none of the 144 animals now alive took part in space research, said Air Force Col. Jack Blackhurst.

Instead, the apes were leased out as subjects for medical research.

Of the 144 animals, 103 have been used in AIDS and hepatitis studies, said Lt. Col. Denver Marlow, a veterinarian in charge of the animals. About 40 have been injected with live viruses. They would have to be housed at special sites to protect others from possible infection.

Thirty-four of the chimps were captured in the wild and brought to the United States for research. These animals, now 30 to 40 years

PLEASE SEE CHIMPS A2

THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY
A SPECIAL REPORT

Partnership aims to rekindle spirit

By S.D. HARRINGTON
THE WALNUT TIMES

Dorothy Phillips used to be reluctant to tell people that she lived in Southeast Roanoke. It had a reputation as the bad seed of Roanoke neighborhoods.

Then she started noticing the proud homeowners who kept up their houses and lawns, the elderly women walking by her house to church every Sunday morning, and the old homes on her block of Stewart Avenue that gave the neighborhood character.

"I've gone from hating it to loving it," she said.

A lot of Southeast Roanokers are like Phillips in taking pride in their neighborhoods. They are quick to point out the bricks where homeowners keep their houses in good repair.

But longtime residents say Southeast's pride is not the same as in the days when everyone knew everyone, when church congregations were made up of the residents around them and when all of the blocks were healthy.

Now, younger residents come and go. Older ones have died. An alarming percentage of the residents are poor. Many blocks have slipped into decay. And many members of the neighborhood churches no longer live in the neighborhood.

But five Southeast churches and a community center that is battling poverty are trying to rekindle the pride and spirit that longtime Southeast Roanokers recall. They call themselves the Southeast Roanoke Christian Partnership.

They want to renew the churches' connections to the neighborhoods. They want to help younger residents into neighborhood activities. And they want to help struggling families gain the self-sufficiency needed to live a part of the community.

"So many families in these neighborhoods are isolated from each other," said Tom MacMichael, program developer for the Presbyterian Community Center of the dying forces in the neighborhood.

MacMichael knew after talking with Belmont Presbyterian Church pastor Elliott Hipp that many of Southeast's churches were working together informal-

ly. He envisioned the partnership as an umbrella organization where churches could pool their resources with the help of the Presbyterian Community Center.

Last spring, five churches agreed to come together: Belmont Presbyterian, Belmont United Methodist, Waverly Place Baptist, Ninth Street Church of the Brethren and Belmont Christian.

Last September, the partnership sponsored a community-wide gathering at Jackson Park. They called it the Harvest Festival.

They invited all of Southeast Roanoke. Gospel and blues bands played. A magician entertained the kids. It was the first time in quite a while that an event like that had been held for Southeast Roanokers.

But the members of the partnership realize community pride won't magically appear. One of the causes of the disconnection among residents of Southeast

Roanoke has been the growing poverty, MacMichael said.

Communities thrive on families, neighbors and churches, he said. But those connections are lost when people are struggling with bills, rent, child care and substandard housing. They often have to move when bills get too high. They are seldom rooted in one community.

The Presbyterian Community Center is attacking those problems. It offers financial assistance for utilities and rent. It tutors neighborhood children after school. It teaches parenting and literacy classes.

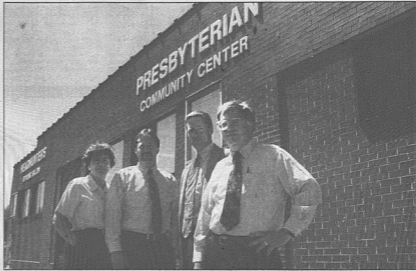
The center pays volunteer caseworkers with parents.

One mother was afraid to go to a parent-teacher association meeting with her child. A volunteer went with her. Another mother was too intimidated to go to the doctor. Her volunteer caseworker went with her.

"That's the kind of thing that doesn't cost a lot of money," MacMichael said.

The churches and Carlton Health System hired a registered nurse to provide free health services in the community. The nurse, Betty Herman, works out of an office at Belmont Presbyterian.

If they can help people get past the health and financial problems, their quality of life will improve, MacMichael said. They



Members of the Southeast Roanoke Christian Partnership are (from left) Pat Dillard, executive director of the Presbyterian Community Center; Tom MacMichael, program developer for the Presbyterian Community Center; Elliott Hipp, chairman of the partnership and pastor of Belmont Presbyterian Church; and Sam McMichael, pastor of Belmont United Methodist Church.

will grow more attached to the community.

"If we can help create the environment where some of that connectedness can happen, that's where we can benefit," said Sam McMichael, pastor of Belmont United Methodist Church.

The one thing missing from the partnership, MacMichael admits, is grassroots leadership. Most of the church and community center leaders don't live in Southeast.

They are looking to the Southeast Action Forum to fill that void. But the forum's members are aging. They've had a few younger residents get involved, including 50-year-old president Richard Nichols. But the majority of the members are elderly.

"Most of us have gotten in the senior citizen class," said Lenora Williams, 85, a past president of the forum. "You need some young blood out in a while."

Mildred Prater, who has lived in Southeast Roanoke for 66 years, said it had one of the best neighborhood organizations in the city at one time. She remembers when there were 60 to 70 members. Now she says they're lucky to get 20 at a meeting.

The Southeast Action Forum has done many things to help rebuild its community. Members

Thursday: The Loudon/McIntosh Neighborhood Organization is consulting with experts and financiers to help stop decay in the community.



worked with the city to restore the old farmhouse on Jamison Avenue. They held their meetings there.

But for everything it has accomplished, the neighborhood has suffered more setbacks. Two First Union bank branches on Ninth

Street closed a year ago. And the only grocery store in the neighborhood announced last month that it will close its doors and a Reeves Drugstore will replace it.

Owners of the grocery store said they would reopen in Southeast if they could find a feasible

location. The Christian partnership has been meeting with the city's economic development director, Phil Sparks, to see if the city can do anything to keep the grocery store in the neighborhood.

PLEASE SEE SOUTHEAST A5

Givers have opportunity to promote their products, companies after an international audience at 3-day event
Corporations contribute money and equipment for Denver summit

Governments usually foot the bill, but organizers say they're soliciting services to ease taxpayers' load.

WASHINGTON — From a cable company to a famous beverage, big business has piled up \$6.5 billion to help President Clinton entertain world leaders at their summit in Denver this week.

Even the summit conference table — a 700-foot-long centerpiece of woods from Colorado at a cost of \$17,000 — was financed by donations from 40 corporate sponsors, including telecommunications companies, local businesses and foundations.

By signing on, the contributors was the opportunity to promote their companies and products before an international audience. The donations also can pay a political dividend for corporations, allowing them to connect

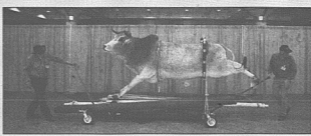
relationships with the Clinton administration as well as state and local officials whose decisions affect them.

"It's an indirect form of political giving," said Paul Hendrix, spokesman for the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonprofit group that studies campaign finance.

Governments usually foot the bill for such summits, but U.S. organizers said they decided to solicit money and services from business to lighten the load on taxpayers.

"It was a level of fund raising that would have to be huge," said Andrew Hudson, spokesman for Denver Waste Management and the mayor's representative on the summit host committee.

Corporate sponsorship is commonplace in politics. Corporations gave millions to help stage the presidential debates, celebrate



"Big," a stuffed 800-pound brahma bull, is pulled through the Colorado Convention Center on Tuesday as part of the Coors beer display. The company's chairman, Bill Coors, wrote a \$100,000 check for the summit.

President Clinton's inauguration, and underwrite the hoopla at party nominating conventions.

In all, corporate money will take care of about half the three-day summit's cost, estimated at

\$18 million to \$20 million. Cash donations and in-kind contributions of goods and services still are pouring in, organizers said.

The Denver summit will be an elegant affair, Hudson said, but

don't expect these events to cost as much as other countries do.

Former Clinton deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes, a central figure in the campaign finance controversies, digging the White House, is the summit director.

The biggest contributor, in terms of cash, is TeleCommunications Inc., the Englewood, Colo., cable giant, which donated \$300,000. The company also outfitted the main summit buildings with extra cable lines, at a cost of about \$50,000, so participants can watch CNN and other cable TV channels.

Even companies that are big supporters of Republicans wanted a piece of the summit action. Bill Coors, chairman of the Adolph Coors Co., which gives generously to Republicans and conservative causes, wrote a \$100,000 check and helped raise money from others as co-chairman of the summit committee.

THE INVISIBLE INNER CITY

A SPECIAL REPORT

FROM A1 Southwest

"We didn't care who lived over there and how much money they made," Richert said of his peak years of activism. "We just didn't want anyone breaking in our cars."

She said the early years were rough for many new Old Southwest homeowners. This neighborhood was red-tinted," she said. "You couldn't get insurance over here." Department store clerks would see her address and doubt her credit.

A busy prostitute lived next door to them on Allison Avenue when their children were little. Eventually, the couple bought houses on either side of them and became small-time landlords to gain peace on their street.

"I broke up a drag ring across the street in five days," Joel Richert said. Max Matthews, who serves on Old Southwest's board with Richert, calls her the neighborhood's "L.N. observer."

Joel Richert went after negligent landlords, too, and wound up with a managing job 80 rental units in Old Southwest.

Richert was home all day. She was there to catch trespassers in the act, and when she had to stay up all night to resolve a neighborhood crisis, recuperating her sleep when she could.

Richert wouldn't stand for her neighbors let their garbage be around in their back yards. She showed them medical book pictures of scary-looking skin diseases to frighten them into living more cleanly.

She made people angry and they threw rocks through her front window.

"God, it's not for the faint-hearted," she said. "I don't have these gray hairs for nothing. I've had my car burned. If that wasn't a being in the middle of it, I don't know what is."

Former City Manager Irem Ewert took Richert to other neighborhoods' meetings, using her as a model of somebody intent on changing her neighborhood.

She, in turn, asked Downer to make the city more responsive to neighborhoods. At his request, he required all city administrators who had anything to do with neighborhoods — zoning officials, public safety and planners among them — to spend hours with her. "He filed a bus and we started in Southwest," she said of the tour of the city. "I talked for half a day."

Old Southwest's accomplishments are numerous. It won status as an historic district and saved Highland Park School, peering for it to become the first old Roanoke elementary school to be renovated.

The neighborhood has built a list of residents who obeyed the city's architectural guidelines for the old houses, convenience store owners who sold cheap wine to drunks, church members who tore down old homes to build parking lots and zoning that encouraged doctors and lawyers to convert many of the old homes east of Franklin Road to offices.

Richert became a walking scorebook of neighborhood activism and historic preservation. Ask for her advice about what to do with a Roanoke block, street or neighborhood — or the whole city — and you'll get an earful.

"To rescue a street, she said, the people who live there must become intimately familiar with it and nurse it along 24 hours a day, like a baby. "You can't be a mother an hour a day," she said. "You have

WHO TO CALL

Need help? Information? Want to get involved?
 ■ Paula Prince, president, Old Southwest Inc., 643-8844

to persist to the point where you think you're going to lose your mind."

• Residents must get to know every person in every house. They must be able to recognize even the cars they drive. Only then can neighbors spot signs of trouble and help the people around them.

"I don't think street lights are the answer. Duck-to-down lights aren't the answer," said Richert, reciting some of the textbook cures for crime-ridden neighborhoods "if a people knowing people."

She has achieved an even deeper level of familiarity — she knows the history of most of the 800 houses in Old Southwest.

She set up a file for each and listed old city assessments, newspaper clippings — anything she can access. "Every house is my baby," she said.

Her knowledge has helped sell homes and, she believes, prevented owners and renters to trust properties with more renters.

• A neighborhood must maintain a constant presence before all government bodies that affect it.

Richert for years has been the plump, gray-haired woman sitting halfway back in the spectator seats of the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Architectural Review Board and City Council.

Now, Day and Marshall Avenue residents have started what one calls "bring a Joel" — getting acquainted with every house. Richert has been an adviser.

"The fringes are where the battles are fought," she said. "Day and Marshall have every potential to be wonderful." But she frets over Rev. Philip Church's zoning houses on Marshall Avenue to make room for parking lots. People on those streets better be vigilant, Richert has warned, or churches and developers will continue to eat away at the blocks nearest busy Franklin Road.

The Roanoke Times series "The Invisible Inner City" of which this story is a part, has upset many people in Old Southwest. They say the series has made the neighborhood look less desirable as a place to live. Others, though, say that making neighborhood



Bob Powell recently bought this house at 544 Day Ave. S.W. for \$41,000. The house has 3,480 square feet with 10 rooms and three baths. Powell was burglarized the night he moved in, but has gone on to paint and remodel the house.



Herb Smith holds a picture of the house at 368 Walnut Ave. S.W., which shows how it looked before he restored the porch and converted it back to a single-family home. The house was recently sold.

grew up in Salem and now lives in California, Alaska, Schenectady, N.Y., and Pittsburgh. She is committed to Roanoke's old neighborhoods.

"We're their grandpa," she said. "We're where they came from." She battles Old Southwest's image problems all the time. "I don't know if people think we're over here locked in our houses or what. I'm not afraid to walk the streets of Old Southwest. I live in Pittsburgh. This place is Mayberry."

"This neighborhood has turned itself around from an abandoned, neglected, crime-ridden place to being, for the most part, a wonderful place to live. Old Southwest has worked so hard to be the kind of place where people move in and feel comfortable. With every new family that moves in, it becomes easier."

Prince said City Hall has been paying more attention to neighborhoods in the past year. Workers from practically every city department walked a month near Day Avenue a few days ago to talk about how to make things better.

"If they decide they want a beautiful downtown neighborhood to show off," she said, "I will happen."

Mary Shepp can be reached at 961-3358 or mary@roanoke.com



ROBERT LINKFORD THE ROANOKER TIMES



Five-year-old Deshara Powers of Belwind, W. Va., peeks through a top screen at the 326 Day Ave. S.E. house that her grandfather rented from Farris Rouse.

FROM A4 Southeast

Meanwhile, Williams has heard that Virtum will soon get a new bank branch. "I just get real annoyed when I look at Virtum. I'm jealous," she said. "Why should they get everything?" Williams lived in a house near Montrose Avenue and 16th Street from 1935 to 1941, moved to Norfolk to work as a civilian on a Naval shipyard, then moved back into the same Roanoke house in 1983. Before she left in 1941, she knew everyone on her street. But she doesn't anymore.

When she returned to Roanoke, 40 years had passed. "I was so shocked at how it went down," she said. The old firehouse (on Jamison Avenue) just fell apart. "I had thought it was the prettiest thing I ever seen. It was terrible."

Her neighbors — many of them the same as when she left — had gotten old and weren't able to keep their houses up like they used to. Those who left were replaced with renters whom she seldom gets to know, Williams said. "I just don't get acquainted with the new neighbors. They

don't stay long," she said. The Southeast Roanoke Christian Partnership and the Southeast Action Forum are still working on a plan to work together in the neighborhood.

MacMichael has been attending the meetings, and he says he's beginning to see younger faces and more people attending. That's where the real difference will be made in the neighborhood, he said.

The churches and the community center want to help Southeast

Eastward sets get past the problems that keep them from feeling a part of the community. It will be up to the residents to take it from there. Dorothy Phillips is one Southeast resident who wants to help change the neighborhood. And she thinks there are enough people here to make a difference.

She knows her neighborhood has a lot of problems. She sees the poverty, the decaying houses, the bareness who wander her street. But, she said, "I'm a firm believer that the good outweighs the bad."

D.S. Harrington can be reached at 963-3230 or sharron@roanoke.com

ON LINE

Want to see the complete records on Roanoke's inner city rental housing and how City Hall spent nearly \$50 million in federal grants that were supposed to help poor neighborhoods?

The Roanoke Times has compiled databases of Community Development Block Grant expenditures between 1975 and 1996 and of building code violations in rental properties from 1982 to 1996. You can search both databases on line at: www.roanoke.com/realtime

Just under "the invisible inner city"

WHY IT MATTERS

"They crowd and crowd and crowd about how wonderful the Jefferson Center, the Hotel Roanoke and the Farmer's Market are, as if they have nothing to do with the surrounding neighborhoods."

MARK MATTHEWS
 BOARD MEMBER, OLD SOUTHWEST INC.

troubles public might eventually send statements to help homes and families.

Peggy Orlenton was an Old Southwest renter for more than 20 years while she worked three minimum-wage jobs and saved the money to buy her house on Mountain Avenue. This fall, the divorced mother of three will have been in the house 20 years.

She used to be angry about what she saw as Old Southwest Inc.'s battle with historic preservation.

"I don't care about this ha-

change. She's trying to organize neighborhood gatherings — maybe a picnic for renters and homeowners. "Nobody will feel left out," she said.

She said most renters are good people, but feel unwanted. "You've got to make these people feel important," she said. "Just because you have the money to buy a house doesn't mean you're going to be the best neighbor in the world."

Paula Prince, her neighbor and Old Southwest Inc.'s pres-