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Neighborhood Matters: What Baltimore Learned from the War on Poverty

In 1983, Baltimore teenagers interviewed Mayor William Donald Schaefer for a public access television show called “Street Scenes,” produced by the municipal antipoverty program, the Urban Services Agency. In the seven and one half minute interview, the Mayor addressed a variety of issues related to youth programs, leadership development, and his own path into local politics. When asked what advice he would give to a teenager with mayoral aspirations, Schaefer emphasized the importance of retaining a focus on people and neighborhoods. “Strong emphasis on neighborhoods—because that’s the strength of the city of Baltimore—in the neighborhoods.”¹ The Mayor’s advice underscores a grassroots urban wisdom that emerged, in part, from the Great Society programs and the solutions to poverty that they offered the city. In the quarter century between the “Street Scenes” interview and the present, this wisdom came to be overshadowed by a neoliberal development logic focused on the city’s business core at the expense of non-elite neighborhoods. Why did this neighborhood-based vision of local politics matter in the War on Poverty, and how did the Great Society shape municipal government’s response to the needs of the city’s poorest residents?

The War on Poverty was a complex federal mandate launched by President Lyndon Johnson during his 1964 State of the Union address. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), which coordinated antipoverty efforts that included the creation of Medicare and Medicaid, the food stamp program, employment programs (Job Corp, VISTA, and federal work-study), and education programs (Head Start, Title I), among others. President Johnson’s vision of a Great Society was advanced by the 89th US Congress, which pushed through close to 200 bills

¹ Urban Services Agency, *Street Scenes: Mayor* (Robert Breck Chapman Collection, 1983), <http://archive.org/details/RBC-16mm-02-007>.

that addressed virtually every aspect of American life, including civil rights, education, health, poverty, the arts, the environment, housing, and immigration.²

This study considers the extent to which the Great Society led to changes in Baltimore's municipal governance in the 1970s. Although the most progressive aspects of the early programs in Baltimore's War on Poverty were suppressed through federal policy decisions, what emerged in Baltimore by 1974 was a decentralized municipal service model that operated at the neighborhood level and provided human services in response to citizen demand. The neighborhood-based delivery of human services through a new department known as the Urban Services Agency was a primary take-away from the local War on Poverty. Urban Services met the needs of citizens for services like health programs for seniors, breakfast programs for youth, public preschool programs, supplemental public education in music and art, library and information services, job training programs—all through neighborhood centers, which were known as “little city halls.”

When the Agency was eliminated in 1993 due to systematic restructuring of local government, its functions were folded into 14 neighborhood "hubs." Although these hubs mimicked the decentralized nature of the former Urban Services centers and the Mayor's Stations created under Mayor Schaefer, the new hubs functioned solely as information conduits, referring citizens to services available through the City Housing department. The transfer of direct service provision out of the city's neighborhoods coincided with a larger shift to consolidate municipal resources and management in the downtown business core, effectively neglecting the needs of residents at the level in which they lived and operated—the neighborhood.

Scholarly attention to the War on Poverty has ebbed and flowed since the 1960s. Recent historiography by Bret Weber and Amanda Wallace describes three distinct periods within the literature: initial studies in the early 1970s by political scientists looking to evaluate federal policies, followed by a period of politically-driven misinterpretation and subsequent neglect amidst the conservative ascendance

² William H Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 223–237.

of the 1980s, followed by a re-emergence of scholarly interest around the turn of the 21st century, particularly focused on citizen participation and local case studies.³

During the active planning and implementation years of the Model Cities Program, early scholarly activity was most apparent in political science dissertations and the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. Early community case studies focused on Pittsburgh, Oakland, Detroit, and Seattle. Much of this literature explored the "software" in the War on Poverty.⁴ Types of activity generally associated with software included health and human services, recreation and cultural programs, and a general orientation toward directing resources to programs that focus on people. This emphasis on people included political organizing, citizen participation, and promoting programs that met the health and wellness needs of vulnerable populations like mothers, children, and elders. In this model, communities were made of people.

Software, however, was difficult for resource allocators to quantify, and it also opened the Great Society doors to grassroots activists desirous of radical social and economic change. Teaching poor people to mobilize to change local government was an inherent threat to the existing power structure, and was immediately suppressed by machine Democrats and Nixon Republicans in the late 1960s and 1970s. What replaced software was known as hardware, which focused on investment in traditional urban renewal demolition and construction projects. Model Cities began to reflect HUD's emphasis under Nixon on bricks and mortar projects—an emphasis that would only continue through federal funding of the Empowerment Zones with Hope VI funds through the first decade of the 21st century.

One early work that proved singularly useful was a comprehensive study of African American participation in the Community Action Program in five major American Cities that analyzed data from over 300 field interviews.⁵ In their analysis of varying levels of participation in each city, the researchers took into consideration the power of the political machine in each locale, the general political climate and

³ Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 173–92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 175–6.

⁵ J. David Greenstone and Paul E Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics: Community Participation and the War on Poverty* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1973).

race relations of each city, and the role of labor unions or other political organizing forces. This early empirical study paid particular attention to factors in American political life, including machine and reform politics, which affected black participation in the Great Society during the 1960s.⁶

These early scholarly studies were supplemented by a number of first hand accounts by administration officials—some of which were published at the time, and some of which have only recently been released. Early examples had limited scholarly value and were poorly received in academic circles.⁷ More recent personal accounts have been published as edited interview transcripts from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library's oral history program.⁸ These narratives tell the story of the Great Society from the perspectives of federal policy analysts and White House appointees. It is here that the standard declension narrative of the War on Poverty, including the emotional arc from initial optimism to disillusionment, is created.⁹

By the mid-1970s, Model Cities was largely deemed a failure and subsequently ignored by academics for much of the next two decades.¹⁰ Much of this negative analysis was tied to an explicitly political and policy-oriented analysis of the War on Poverty.¹¹ Common among these critics was a reliance on quantitative, statistical analyses of Model Cities. Such studies overlooked or avoided the people-focused cultural aspects of the program, which would have benefitted from qualitative measures of assessment.¹²

The Conservative ascendance of the 1980s and 1990s is marked by a noticeable scarcity of literature on the Model Cities Program. Having fallen beyond the realm of concern of planner and public policy scholars, Model Cities fell off the radar of most American historians. The overarching conservative ethos of this period discouraged public and scholarly discourse on the Great Society, seen by many as the

⁶ Mary Davidson, "Race and Authority in Urban Politics: Community Participation and the War on Poverty (Book)," *Contemporary Sociology* 5, no. 4 (7/1/76 1976): 532–33.

⁷ Theodore R. Marmor, "Review of *The Poor Ye Need Not Have with You: Lessons from the War on Poverty*. by Robert A. Levine," *The Journal of Politics* 34, no. 3 (August 1, 1972): 1001–3, doi:10.2307/2129313.

⁸ Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ Weber and Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution," 178.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹¹ Ricardo Alfonso Millett, "Examination of 'Widespread Citizen Participation' in the Model Cities Program and the Demands of Ethnic Minorities for a Greater Decision-Making Role in American Cities" (Ph.D., Brandeis University, 1974), <http://search.proquest.com/pqdtft/docview/287996115/citation/141C2FCD000B2C712A/1?accountid=28969>.

¹² Weber and Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution," 179.

last bastion of American liberalism. In their historiographical work on the War on Poverty, social welfare scholars Bret Weber and Amanda Wallace note superficial and often erroneous treatment of Model Cities in history surveys on the 1960s written during this period. They also note the omissions. Particularly pointed is their critique of the *Journal of Urban History*. Started in 1974, this peer-reviewed journal did not publish any articles focused on the War on Poverty until 1992.¹³

Since the 1990s, and especially since the turn of the 21st century, there has been a renewed interest in the legacy of Model Cities, particularly in terms of citizen participation and neighborhood-focused studies. Local studies have included analyses of the War on Poverty in Oakland, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Atlanta, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Alabama, and Texas. While presenting an overall mixed opinion about the War on Poverty, this new wave of writing has introduced important factors into the scholarship, like the relationship between the Great Society and the rise of the Black Power movement, for instance.¹⁴ Other scholars looked to identify policy innovations that emerged from the federal antipoverty programs.¹⁵ Some work even portrayed the War on Poverty in a relatively positive light, pointing out the advances of black politicians as a result of the antipoverty programs.¹⁶

The most recent literature on the War on Poverty favors local, grassroots perspectives. In their 2011 anthology, Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian argue that the War on Poverty as a failure is a top-down narrative, and local perspectives remain largely untold. Other themes include participatory democracy, community control, and the role of women and community activists in the Great Society.¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁴ Robert O Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (JHU Press, 2005); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level*, 1 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980*, First Edition edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Guian A. McKee, "I've Never Dealt with a Government Agency Before' Philadelphia's Somerset Knitting Mills Project, the Local State, and the Missed Opportunities of Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 3 (March 1, 2009): 394, doi:10.1177/0096144208330394.

¹⁶ Kent B. Germany, "Making a New Louisiana: American Liberalism and the Search for the Great Society in New Orleans, 1964-1974" (Ph.D., Tulane University, 2000).

¹⁷ Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, eds., *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

Orleck's own research tells the story of Las Vegas women's activism. Job programs of the Great Society were targeted at young men, according to Orleck, while women were forced to accept governmental oversight and supervision of their roles as mothers in order to receive social services.¹⁸

This newest group of scholars also considers the political gains and losses of the Great Society from local perspectives. In *Freedom Is Not Enough*, William Clayson argues that the War on Poverty didn't fail, as conservatives have said, and it wasn't called off, as liberals have concluded. Instead, it continued to be fought at the local level, where there is "a hidden history of success." Clayson's Texas study takes the idea of the long civil rights movement and applies it to a long war on poverty.¹⁹ Susan Youngblood Ashmore's study on Alabama complicates the consideration of success versus failure. In *Carry It On*, white politicians' ability to co-opt the War on Poverty led to the organic development of Black Power.²⁰ And although black power politics led to gains in the number of African Americans elected to positions of local leadership, that "new political power did not translate into better economic and social opportunities for their constituents."²¹

The attempt by a new generation of scholars, particularly women and scholars of color, to reconsider the legacy of the War on Poverty from grassroots perspectives represents an important shift toward understanding a federal program that was implemented locally across the country. It is within this context that I argue here the War on Poverty was forced to abandon community organizing, but persisted in demonstrating the value of citizen representation and neighborhood-based services in Baltimore's poorest communities. This study challenges the declension narrative of the early Great Society literature and adds to the growing body of scholarship on local antipoverty programs. Although the achievements in Baltimore consistently involved compromise and constraint, the local War on Poverty resulted in the creation of a municipal antipoverty agency that operated for another two decades.

¹⁸ Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Beacon Press, 2006), 6.

¹⁹ William S Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 157, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10389873>.

²⁰ Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 281.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 289.

More than keep local programs going long after federal policymakers had abandoned them, the Baltimore advocates for the War on Poverty integrated its governance structure into municipal government. Two works that study federal antipoverty programs and trace their evolution to the present focus on community participation are dissertations by Mark Tigan and Deborah Jackson in 2005 and 2009. Jackson's work uses Atlanta as a case study to ask, "What is this city like, twenty years after Model Cities?"²² In her research, Model Cities is just one mode of participation, which is studied against other programs, including Community Action and Empowerment Zones. Mark Tigan's research on citizen participation places Model Cities and the Community Action Program within a chronological continuum that includes the transition to revenue sharing and the Community Development Block Grant program under Richard Nixon's New Federalism.²³ My research also considers the organizational history of Baltimore's antipoverty programs from the earliest federal demonstration program to the municipal successor agency, which relied heavily on federal block grants to continue its operations.

By adding Baltimore as a case study to the existing War on Poverty literature, I will demonstrate that despite challenges related to citizen participation, community organizing, white resistance, and political obstacles from the City Council, Baltimore's Great Society programs had an enduring impact on municipal governance through the creation of the Urban Services Agency. Baltimore's black leaders (and white leaders dedicated to citizen participation) worked within the constraints of local politics to apply lessons learned from the Great Society, including the inclusion of poor residents on advisory bodies and the creation and maintenance of almost two-dozen neighborhood centers.

This study will examine the development of three distinct but related antipoverty programs in Baltimore—the Community Action Agency (CAA), the Model Cities Agency (MCA), and the Urban Services Agency (USA)—over a thirty-year period, from 1967 through 1996. My interest is the development of the antipoverty programs, their changes over time, and how they ultimately reshaped

²² Jackson, "Where Do We Go from Here?," 84.

²³ Mark T. Tigan, "Citizen Participation in United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Programs: From the Great Society to the New Federalism" (Ph.D., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2005), chap. 3, <http://search.proquest.com/pqdtft/docview/305413711/abstract/141C2E5CB3B1349E8E1/1?accountid=28969>.

local governance in Baltimore. This is an organizational history that establishes a programmatic framework that will benefit future research on social and cultural histories of the Great Society in Baltimore. I utilize archival sources from the antipoverty agencies and mayoral records from the D'Alesandro, Schaefer, and Schموke Administrations. Additional sources for social and cultural research are discussed in the study's conclusion.

The structure of the study emphasizes organizational development and changes within each of the local antipoverty programs. The first section studies the development and demise of two Great Society programs whose timelines overlapped extensively in Baltimore, the Community Action Program (CAP) and the Model Cities Program (MCP). Although originally planned by federal administrators as successive agencies, Baltimore's CAP and MCP operated simultaneously. Local determination to retain Community Action and corresponding reticence to implement Model Cities allowed core elements of the Great Society vision—citizen representation and neighborhood-based community programs—to persist, despite the formidable challenges of political infighting, racism, federal mandates, insufficient resources, and growing wariness from residents and community leaders.

The second section explores how antipoverty program administrators struggled to retain aspects of the Great Society vision in a new municipal agency, the Urban Services Agency (USA). Created from the merger of Community Action and Model Cities, USA operated from 1974 through 1993, during which time it fought to keep citizen representation and neighborhood-based services at the forefront of its mission. The rise of President Reagan's New Federalism nationally, compounded by the contraction of local city services due to decades-long white flight and a decimated local tax base, culminated in the elimination of USA in 1993. Its nineteen-year run as a city agency demonstrates how the Great Society challenged municipal government to be more responsive to the needs of its poorest citizens. At the time of USA's elimination, it was judged as a holdover from the Great Society, hindered by graft and used as a tool for political patronage to the city's African American population. What was not taken into consideration was that Urban Services had been formed out of two programs that sought the participation of residents of Baltimore's low-income black communities. Regardless of whether or not the Urban

Services Agency is viewed as a success or a failure, it was the result of a decade of struggle to control the terms of the debate in the War on Poverty locally. USA operated for almost 20 years as the legacy of Baltimore's Great Society programs and represents an attempt to better meet the longstanding needs of its poorest residents.

The enduring influence of the Great Society in Baltimore is revealed through this organizational history, which traces the evolution of the local War on Poverty from Baltimore's earliest demonstration program through the elimination of Urban Services over a quarter century later. My study adds to recent histories of antipoverty programs as they were implemented locally and advances the notion of a long War on Poverty.²⁴ By tracing Baltimore's Great Society antipoverty programs from the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s, a history of persistence and incremental reform emerges.²⁵ Through this research, I hope to extend the typical timeframe associated with the War on Poverty and explore how it shaped municipal governance in the 1970s and 1980s.

Succession Programming: From CAA to Model Cities

I share the strong feelings within our Model Cities community that meaningful citizen participation is, and should continue to be, an essential element of the entire Model Cities program. However, without adequate community organization and technical assistance services, this kind of meaningful citizen participation cannot exist.

*-Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro III*²⁶

In December 1967, when it became clear that Parren Mitchell, the head of Baltimore's Community Action Agency (CAA), intended to resign his post, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro III unabashedly begged Mitchell to stay. Brother of NAACP lobbyist Clarence M. Mitchell Jr. and brother-in-law of the first female African American lawyer to practice in Maryland, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, Mitchell was a member of the state's leading civil rights family. A seasoned activist in his own right, he had fought and won a legal battle to attend graduate school for sociology at the University of Maryland,

²⁴ The idea of a Long War on Poverty looks to Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's argument in "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, 2005.

²⁵ Referred to as a "hidden history of success" in Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas*.

²⁶ Correspondence from Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro to HUD, October 27, 1969. BCA Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551.

College Park in 1950, becoming the first African American student admitted there.²⁷ In his attempts to retain Mitchell with the Community Action Agency, D'Alesandro emphasized his support for the anti-poverty agency, stating, "It is my fervent hope that you will remain in this position and continue to play an important role in the crusade to bring a vital segment of our community into the mainstream of national life."²⁸

This recognition of poor, inner city African Americans as "a vital segment" of America and the desire to create opportunities for economic mobility and social integration characterized the Mayor's progressive approach to the War on Poverty. This view, however, was not necessarily shared by the majority of Baltimore's City Council or the United States Congress. They saw community activists as troublemakers and sought to suppress social change through the marginalization of activists as "militants." The attempt to downplay community organizing through the transition from the Community Action Program to the Model Cities Program represented a watering down of the Great Society's mission. What played out on both local and national levels was a struggle to control the terms of the debate and the solutions the Great Society programs offered.

This chapter explores the political and economic factors that shaped Baltimore's Great Society programs in order to understand how those programs evolved into the Urban Services Agency in 1974. As the municipal entity formed through the merger of the Community Action Agency and Model Cities, Urban Services was the legacy of Baltimore's War on Poverty. The trajectories of its parent agencies illustrate the enormous constraints these programs operated under—from political infighting to abject racism to federal mandates to insufficient resources to growing wariness from residents and community leaders. In this chapter, I consider how by slowing down national succession planning efforts, Baltimore's CAA and MCA operated simultaneously—one slow to die, the other slow to develop—and carried core elements of their programs into a new agency that would persist within the local political landscape for

²⁷ Douglas Martin, "Parren Mitchell, 85, Congressman and Rights Leader, Dies," *The New York Times*, May 30, 2007, sec. National, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/us/30mitchell.html>; Stephen J. Lynton, "Resignation Announced by Mitchell: Anti-Poverty Director Says Bureaucracy Impedes His Work," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, June 26, 1968.

²⁸ Correspondence from Thomas D'Alesandro to Parren Mitchell, December 7, 1967. Baltimore City Archives (hereafter BCA), Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 454, Folder 43.

another two decades. Citizen representation and neighborhood centers were two primary take-aways from the local War on Poverty that would have a persistently positive impact on municipal service delivery to low-income residents well into the era of New Federalism. I argue that, although community organization was largely dismantled, citizen participation remained an active component of Baltimore's anti-poverty programs and persisted into the municipal successor, the Urban Services Agency, through the 1980s.

In order to understand the impact of the Urban Service Agency, we must first consider the development of its parent organizations. The War on Poverty in Baltimore encompassed more than just the Model Urban Neighborhood Demonstration project. The latter half of the 1960s was a period of local activity for both the Community Action Agency and the Model Cities Agency. While CAA was created in 1965 as the central coordinating organization for the city's antipoverty programs, its emphasis on community organizing and its support within the African American community made it less politically palatable to the Baltimore City Council. Once federal planning agencies shifted focus to the Model Cities program, many black leaders withdrew from Model Cities in protest.

Baltimore's Mayor D'Alesandro was an important figure in the local fight to retain community organizing and community participation in both the CAA and MCA programs. D'Alesandro's advocacy for citizen participation stands in stark contrast to his mayoral counterparts across the country—including those in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles—who often resented the Great Society programs for the power and resources they diverted from City Halls.²⁹ Despite D'Alessandro's best efforts to maintain the early vision of the Great Society, the shift in federal policy and corresponding resources under the Nixon Administration handed control over to local and state governments and ultimately ended the programs. Although eclipsed by national politics, CAA's groundwork in community organizing and network of neighborhood community centers laid the foundation for long-term municipal programming in Baltimore.

²⁹ Millett, "Examination of 'Widespread Citizen Participation' in the Model Cities Program and the Demands of Ethnic Minorities for a Greater Decision-Making Role in American Cities," 14–16; Greenstone and Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*, 271–278.

Baltimore's Community Action Agency received OEO funding through MD CAP Grant #207 in February 1965.³⁰ On June 13, 1965 the *Baltimore Sun* announced, "War on Poverty Launched Here." The story ran with a large photo of two women, one black and one white, talking in a doorway. In the photo, the white woman speaking and holding a large handbag is identified as Miss Linda Raichlen, a social worker from the University of Maryland. The black woman, identified as Mrs. Hazel Brown, is shown listening and holding a broom.³¹ The article also identifies the original geographic area of the city served by the Community Action Agency—a corridor known as the Gay Street slum area, which would become the locus of Baltimore's civil uprisings in the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination three years later.

While the local papers painted a picture of benevolent middle class reformers, the federal mandate to encourage "maximum feasible participation" of the poor created a space for poor black Baltimoreans to shape the project. Early on, activists associated with the Anti-Poverty Action Agency Committee (APAC) criticized the Community Action Program's board for failing to include the poor.³² Preschool centers, reading programs, youth job programs, neighborhood-based library services, and preventative healthcare for pregnant women were among the initial programs launched in Baltimore. Many of these programs were offered through CAA's growing network of neighborhood centers, which sought to offer residents assistance in close proximity to where they lived.³³

The Community Action Program also faced serious challenges from elected leaders on the Baltimore City Council, who resented the agency's autonomy and considered "people power" a threat to their authority and the power of party politics locally. By December of 1965, City Councilmen accused CAA of poor management and political bias in hiring. Director Parren Mitchell defended all 114 employees hired to date, providing proof that the staff was a mix of candidates from civil service lists,

³⁰ "Contract for Conduct and Administration of Community Action Program Component by Private Agency Contractor." University of Baltimore Archives (hereafter UBA), Model Urban Neighborhood Demonstration Records (hereafter MUND), Series 1, Box 1, Folder 49.

³¹ Charles V. Flowers, "War On Poverty Launched Here: New Office Opens To Serve Gay Street Slum Area," *The Sun* (1837-1989), June 13, 1965.

³² "Rights Units Get Warning: Mazer Says Sniping Could Hurt Anti-Poverty Plans," *The Sun* (1837-1989), August 14, 1965.

³³ J. D. Dilts, "City's Many-Pronged Fight On Poverty," *The Sun* (1837-1989), September 19, 1965.

leaders of neighborhood Youth Corps programs, and mayoral appointments.³⁴ Unable to defund the program, the Council pressed for greater control of funds through the municipal Board of Estimates. Among the programs most vexing to City Council was a free legal services program for low-income residents.³⁵

Criticism and political pressure was also being exerted from national sources. A controversy erupted in the spring of 1966 regarding a report, authored by a staff member from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, published in the *Afro-American* newspaper. The report characterized Baltimore's CAA as slow to get off the ground, lacking the ability to mobilize the poor, and relying on "traditional welfare techniques."³⁶ Funding problems also hampered the War on Poverty locally. Congressional restrictions in November 1966 prevented Baltimore's CAA from expanding its programs during a period marked by increasing unrest.³⁷

These financial constraints, coupled with the political shift away from Community Action as the primary anti-poverty coordinating organization, prompted Parren Mitchell to resign as the head of Baltimore's CAA on June 25, 1968.³⁸ When asked on camera by a WMAR-TV reporter why he was resigning, Mitchell gave a three-part response that summarized his CAA experience in just under 90 seconds:

There were three major areas of concern that prompted me—no, really forced me—to resign. The first is the continuing inadequate funding of anti-poverty programs, both at the city level and at the federal level. Each time this happens, it forces me to raise the question again and again, "Do we really have a commitment in this country to combat poverty?" And I have serious doubts about it. The second major concern was that I assumed to combat poverty—to wage a war against poverty—we would be free from the bureaucratic process. It's gotten worse. We labor under bureaucracy at the city and state and federal level.³⁹

³⁴ Daniel Drossdoff, "Mitchell Denies Poverty Charge: Hits Mismanagement, Political Influence Accusation," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, December 22, 1965.

³⁵ Scott Sullivan, "City Council, Poverty Unit in Harmony: 2-Hour Meeting Held For Purpose Of Ending Differences," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, December 22, 1965.

³⁶ Daniel Drossdoff, "Mitchell 'Resents' Federal Leak Of Supposed Report," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, May 17, 1966.

³⁷ Stephen J. Lynton, "Increase Denied in Poverty Plans: Mitchell Calls Mayor's Talk 'Misleading In That Sense,'" *The Sun (1837-1989)*, July 27, 1967.

³⁸ Stephen J. Lynton, "Agency Picks Carter for Poverty Job: Model Cities Director Is Expected To Win Mayor's Approval," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, August 3, 1968, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/534024147/abstract?>

³⁹ "Fighting Poverty," *Flickr - Photo Sharing!*, accessed September 14, 2015, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ubarchives/6505600751/>.

But most pressing of all Mitchell's stated concerns was the movement away from CAA as the central coordinating agency for anti-poverty efforts. He flatly rejected the succession program model that was being planned nationally and implemented locally in the War on Poverty.⁴⁰ Members of the city's Community Action Commission would follow suit. A week later, on July 2, all thirteen members resigned in protest over what they felt was an abdication on the part of the Mayor in fulfilling his promises to CAA. Their collective resignation announcement describes the challenges CAA faced: "[W]e have been forced to witness a steady reduction in the effectiveness of the program—its philosophy and funds—by vested interests, political machines and outright bigots. Federal OEO cuts in budgets, constant crisis situations concerning viable programs, make it impossible to plan effectively and sustain the people's faith in the program." In the Commission's view, the Baltimore CAA was "a sham and a mockery, which raises people's hopes and then dashes them senselessly." They also believed that Democrats were using the CAA "as a political tool for patronage" for African Americans.⁴¹

Mayor D'Alesandro responded quickly, working to meet the demands of members of the Community Action Commission and imploring them to stay on. By July 18, the Commission released a press statement announcing, " "[W]e are happy to report today that a number of items of agreement have been reached. We feel they will enable the program to achieve its original purposes." Paramount among those agreements was the necessity of a new director with a "background of proven sensitivity to the needs of poor people."⁴² At the Mayor's request, all thirteen members returned to their positions on the Commission. The political stage, however, was set for a showdown between the Mayor, black activists, and City Council regarding the next leader of Baltimore's Community Action Agency. That showdown would center on Walter P. Carter.

Walter Percival Carter was a social worker and civil rights activist who led Baltimore's chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), organized voter registration drives and freedom rides, served as Maryland's coordinator for the 1963 March on Washington, and was involved with protests to desegregate

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ "Position Paper: The Community Action Commission," July 3, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 530, Folder 598.

⁴² *Ibid.*

employment at Baltimore Gas and Electric, Gwynn Oak amusement park, and Howard Johnson hotels.⁴³ In February 1968, Carter was offered a position as the chief community organizer for Model Cities.⁴⁴ In August of the same year, acting on the recommendation of the Community Action Commission, Mayor D'Alesandro nominated Carter to become Mitchell's successor as the head of CAA. Of the nomination, the Mayor said, "I am convinced that he and I are on the same wave length when it comes to the importance of community organization work, and the need for the work of the CAA and the Model Cities Agency to be closely coordinated."⁴⁵

Throughout his political career, D'Alesandro had maintained positive relations with Baltimore's black community. As City Council President, he praised CORE's activism and role in the community.⁴⁶ Once elected mayor, D'Alesandro appointed more African Americans to municipal positions than any of his predecessors.⁴⁷ His efforts to appeal to the black community were especially apparent in the local War on Poverty. The Mayor's advocacy for community organizing, Walter Carter, and the Community Action Agency demonstrated his commitment to growing the ranks of the local Democratic voters base by securing the confidence of as wide a cross-section of African American voters as possible.

A majority of the white elected officials in Baltimore's City Council, however, did not support the War on Poverty. Unlike the Mayor, who sought to build a voter base from the city's growing black population during a period of accelerating white flight, members of City Council looked to represent the interests of their existing constituents, largely working class whites in ethnic enclaves throughout the city. White Baltimoreans negatively viewed the War on Poverty as programs that benefitted only blacks, and their elected representatives did the same. By a vote of 8 to 10, the Council rejected Carter's appointment

⁴³ Harris Chaiklin, "Walter P. Carter: Civil Rights as a Field of Practice," *The Maryland Sentinel*, October 2005.

⁴⁴ Stephen Lynton, "Carter, Civil Rights Offered, Model Cities Post," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, February 16, 1968, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/542529318/abstract?>

⁴⁵ This untitled document appears to be the text of a Mayoral speech that begins with the statement, "It is my pleasure to announce today that I am nominating Walter Carter for the position of Executive Director of the Community Action Agency." BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 529, Folder 594.

⁴⁶ Rhonda Y. Williams, "The Pursuit of Audacious Power: Rebel Reformers and Neighborhood Politics in Baltimore, 1966-1968," in *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 227.

⁴⁷ Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'Alroy Jones, *Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors, 1820-1980: Big City Mayors, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, St. Louis* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981., 1981), 92.

as the head of CAA.⁴⁸ The *Afro-American*, the city's black newspaper, analyzed these events succinctly: "[T]he vote was a manifestation of revenge against Mr. D'Alesandro, and a blatant exercise in rank racism."⁴⁹ The us-versus-them politics of race in Baltimore's Democratic party was abundantly clear in the local press. The *Sun* ran a lengthy article by Robert Erlandson speculating on why the Council opposed the Mayor's nominee. Erlandson characterized the Mayor as having "a propensity for militant Negroes." Councilman William Myers of Baltimore's 6th district complained, "[I]t's about time he started appointing some of our people to some of these jobs." In case this statement left any room for speculation, Myers clarified, "I mean white people."⁵⁰

When it became clear that the Council's opinion would not be swayed, the response from black leaders was swift and unequivocal. Twelve members of the Community Action Commission resigned in protest over Carter's rejection.⁵¹ Walter Lively, Parren Mitchell, and Homer Favor of the Baltimore Urban Coalition also resigned from their posts. Lively identified the City Council's unwillingness to let black citizens choose their own leaders as the root of the problem.⁵²

The political struggle between white control and black control of CAA and Model Cities was not unique to Baltimore. Nationally, this power struggle played out with mixed results. Detroit was a comparable American city whose mayor pursued CAA funding early on and sought to work with the city's sizable black community to implement Great Society programs locally. Despite limitations like civil service regulations and the political interests of the mayor, Detroit is a national example of a large city where African Americans successfully influenced the anti-poverty programs. In Chicago, by comparison, Daley machine control largely suppressed citizen participation in its implementation of the anti-poverty programs. Philadelphia represents a more intermediate example, where representatives of the

⁴⁸ Robert A. Erlandson, "Carter Appointment as Anti-Poverty Chief Rejected by Council: 10-8 Vote Taken After 3-Hour Caucus; Move 'Shocks' Mayor," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, October 1, 1968,

<http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/534048846/abstract?>

⁴⁹ "Revenge And Racism," *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, October 5, 1968,

<http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoreafricanamerican/docview/532349298/abstract/64E3A2C258594B54PQ/1?>

⁵⁰ Robert A. Erlandson, "Who Was the Real Target of the Council's Veto—The Mayor or Carter?: D'Alesandro Calls Action 'a Personal Affront to Me,' but Some Others Disagree," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, October 6, 1968.

⁵¹ "Position Paper: The Community Action Commission," July 3, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 530, Folder 598.

⁵² Robert A. Erlandson, "Who Was the Real Target of the Council's Veto—the Mayor or Carter?: D'Alesandro Calls Action 'a Personal Affront to Me,' but Some Others Disagree," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, October 6, 1968.

poor were included in the programs, and the city's African American community had a clear role in shaping the process, but established political machines reduced the anti-poverty programs to a patronage mechanism.⁵³

By December 1968, when the City Council approved the appointment of Frank J. Ellis as the new head of the CAA, it was clear that community interests would take a back seat to the interest of local politicians. While Walter Carter's focus on community organizing represented the interests of the black community, Frank Ellis' bureaucratic emphasis appealed both local City Council members and federal program administrators. The *Baltimore Sun* ran a story on his "fiscal and administrative efficiency."⁵⁴ Within months of becoming the director of CAA, Ellis made the unilateral decision to shut down four of the program's neighborhood centers.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Walter Carter returned to his position as the chief community organizer for Model Cities. In a January 1969 letter to the Model Cities Board, Carter described his efforts: "[W]e have been attempting over a period of several months to develop sound, cooperative working relationships between the neighborhood development component of the Community Action Agency and the community organization section of the Model Cities Agency."⁵⁶

Walter Carter's work on resolving organizing efforts between the two agencies would be short-lived, however. By April 27, 1969, the papers reported Carter's announcement of his resignation with Model Cities.⁵⁷ Earlier in the month, Carter had been quoted in the *Baltimore News American* voicing frustration with a federal policy shift away from allowing private organizations and neighborhood groups to operate under contract with Model Cities. "They (the Nixon Administration) prefer to give this program to white Democrats in City Halls than to give it to black people," he stated.⁵⁸

⁵³ Greenstone and Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*, 19–39.

⁵⁴ Stephen J. Lynton, "The New Policy at the Anti-Poverty Agency Is to Keep Afloat, but Don't Rock the Boat," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, June 8, 1969, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/539156448/abstract/54E4025CD0F74D59PQ/2?>

⁵⁵ Rhonda Y. Williams, "To Challenge the Status Quo by Any Means," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 79.

⁵⁶ Correspondence from Walter Carter to Model Cities Board Members, January 14, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁵⁷ Stephen J. Lynton, "Carter Plans To Quit Model Cities Agency," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, April 27, 1969, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/539175626/abstract?>

⁵⁸ UBA, Health and Welfare Records (hereafter HWC), Series 2, Subseries C, Box 10, Folder 1.

The process of dismantling the War on Poverty during Richard Nixon's presidency would lead to the eradication of the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1974. During his first term in office, however, President Nixon was advised by strategists in his administration to move cautiously against the programs. According to Nicholas Lemann, Nixon appeared initially supportive of Model Cities, while biding his time for re-election to the White House.⁵⁹ He assigned trusted advisors to key posts in the antipoverty programs. Donald Rumsfeld—who would go on to serve as Secretary of Defense under both Gerald Ford and George W. Bush—resigned from his elected position in Congress in 1969 to serve as the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity under Richard Nixon. Nicknamed “the undertaker” by those who considered him a threat to OEO and its programs, Rumsfeld originally voted against the Office of Economic Opportunity’s creation in Congress in 1964. A favored aid to Nixon, Rumsfeld’s tenure at OEO, from 1969-1970, was characterized by reorganization of the agency and the creation of new programs at the expense of existing ones.⁶⁰

As federal policymakers weakened the impact of OEO in favor of HUD’s Model Cities program, at stake in this succession planning was the role of community organizing in the antipoverty programs. In Baltimore, Mayor D'Alessandro tried to simultaneously accept the federal mandate for Model Cities while keeping the confidence of black voters through his ongoing support of Community Action. Locally, this resulted in simultaneous, rather than successive, programs. Model Cities got off to a decidedly shaky start. In January 1968, a HUD regional review expressed concern over lack of state involvement. “It was explained by the City that the State made no effort to support the model cities program. ... This is of course a serious deficiency in the planning process.”⁶¹

Mayor D'Alessandro campaigned vigorously for the program, trying to assure residents and community leaders that decision-making authority rested with them in Model Cities, even if the program had an almost nonexistent community-organizing component. “I believe that the people who live in the

⁵⁹ Nicholas Lemann, “The Unfinished War,” *The Atlantic*, January 1989, 65–66.

⁶⁰ Paul DeLaney, Special to The New York Times, “Pragmatic Aide to Nixon: Donald Rumsfeld,” *New York Times*, November 13, 1971.

⁶¹ “Regional Review Summary; Baltimore, Maryland,” memorandum from Robert Smallwood to Francis Healy, January 2, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 552, Folder 712.

Model Cities area, know better than anyone what the needs and desires of poor people are. And I want every public official and all segments of the community to realize this as well as I do, and to join me in doing something about it."⁶²

Despite these reassurances, many remained deeply skeptical of Model Cities. Civil rights champion, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, submitted her resignation from the Model Cities Board in May 1968. Her letter to the Mayor provides a few subtle clues when it refers her ongoing interest in Model Cities "as Congress intended it," and when she asserts that the critical importance of "self-determination of the people."⁶³ Although Mitchell helped start the Model Cities Policy Steering Board, concerns over lack of community control prompted her to resign from it early on. The Model Cities Policy Steering Board consisted of 30 people total. Of those, 18 were community representatives elected from six community councils. An additional three were at-large representatives elected by the community representatives. One representative was selected by the City Council President, while the final eight representatives were selected by the Mayor.⁶⁴ This Policy Steering Board would be an ongoing site of struggle over authority and control of the local Model Cities program.

In December 1968, Mayor D'Alesandro met at Baltimore's CORE headquarters on Gay Street to discuss control of the Model Cities Program. The Mayor spoke for 90 minutes with at least 20 civil rights activists and community leaders, including Margaret McCarty of Rescuers from Poverty, Walter Lively of Baltimore's Urban Coalition, and Walter Carter himself.⁶⁵ The group demanded greater community control of the Model Cities program, including representation of the poor on the governing board.⁶⁶ Although the meeting was considered a resolution of the tensions between grassroots black leaders and

⁶² Transcript of speech delivered by Thomas D'Alesandro to the Model Cities Community Councils, August 13, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁶³ Correspondence from Juanita Jackson Mitchell to Thomas D'Alesandro, May 17, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 467, Folder 151.

⁶⁴ D'Alesandro speech, August 13, 1968. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁶⁵ Stephen J. Lynton, "Negroes Ask Model Cities: Rights Coalition Wants To Dictate Policy, All Appointments In Federal Program," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, February 21, 1968, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/541539507/abstract/CB7B7B97C8B4802PQ/1?>

⁶⁶ "Model Cities Agreement Reached by Mayor, Groups," *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, February 24, 1968.

the Mayor's Office, the struggle to define roles and goals in Model Cities would continue through the duration of the program.

Baltimore's fledgling Model Cities program was further destabilized by changes in leadership and federal policy shifts. Director Robert Ewing announced his departure on the first day of 1969, going on to become the general manager of an Inner Harbor redevelopment project. Leadership of Baltimore's Model Cities was quickly assigned to William G. Sykes.⁶⁷ The frustration over a federal policy shift in April 1969 that excluded private organizations and neighborhood groups as partners eligible for Model Cities contracts, as voiced by Walter Carter to the press, was but one of the serious challenges facing the program. Simultaneously, Mayor D'Alesandro grappled with OEO Director, Donald Rumsfeld, over the withholding of funds for two core programs in Baltimore's Model Cities plan. All federal funds for the technical assistance and community organizing program, known as CO-1, and the community councils, known as CO-2, had been repeatedly delayed.⁶⁸ Washington Green, Jr., who took over the chief community organizer role in Model Cities after Walter Carter's departure, reported:

During the past three months the c.o. [community organizing] staff on several occasions expressed to me their concern about the state of the entire Model Cities Program and the way things seemed to have reached a point of stagnation. They were concerned about the fact that the council participation had sharply declined and though the decline had slowed, it still continued. They were also concerned about the fact that they were finding it increasingly difficult to talk to residents about involving themselves in a program that on paper held out promise for change but in actuality had shown no positive results because of numerous delays. People just were not listening!⁶⁹

By October 1969, D'Alessandro's written correspondence with federal officials duly notes Baltimore residents' growing skepticism of the antipoverty programs and the lack of commitment to community participation and adequate funding by all levels of government. In no uncertain terms, the Mayor reminded Floyd Hyde, Assistant Secretary of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "I have made a commitment to have citizen participation as an integral part of these

⁶⁷ John B. O'Donnell, "Model Cities Head Names to New Post: Ewing Is Made General Manager Of Inner Harbor II Job," *The Sun* (1837-1989), January 1, 1969, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/533692587/abstract/4CAC1E26BE30452DPQ/2?>

⁶⁸ Correspondence from Thomas D'Alesandro to Floyd Hyde and Donald Rumsfeld, October 27, 1969. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

programs and I intend to stick by it. The Federal agencies have made a similar commitment and we expect you to live up to your part of the bargain."⁷⁰

D'Alessandro's persistence with HUD paid off. On December 17, 1969, the top story in the "Inner City Watch," a newsletter produced by Model Cities community organizers, reported: "Our Mayor has kept his word" and "Santa Claus arrived a week early this year. In his pack was \$386,350 in funding for the six Model Cities Community Councils."⁷¹ Mayor D'Alessandro's commitment to community organizing, both through the MCA Community Councils and the Community Action Agency, persisted through the end of his term as Mayor. His support allowed both agencies to continue to develop their programmatic agendas, despite relentless political pressure and accusations of misconduct.

Federal pressures on Baltimore included an unequivocal mandate from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop Model Cities more quickly. In a memo widely circulated to all Model Cities staff, the Model Cities Policy Steering Board, and the Mayor, William Sykes discussed HUD's unhappiness with developments in Baltimore. "They stated very clearly that unless we begin to operationalize at a faster pace, we will not receive the full amount of Federal funding for which we are technically eligible for the second year."⁷²

Indeed, HUD's critique of Baltimore was scathing, particularly in terms of weaknesses in Model Cities' staffing and personnel. Control over staffing was part of a growing internal power struggle between William Sykes and the Policy Steering Board. When confronted with HUD's concerns, Mayor D'Alessandro sided with Sykes, advising the chairman of the Model Cities Policy Steering Board, "Full responsibility for staffing (and the staff) of the Model Cities Agency must be placed with the Executive Director, subject only to the approval of the Board of Estimates as is required of all city employees."⁷³ Sykes' struggles with the board continued through the following year, during which time he petitioned the

⁷⁰ Correspondence from Thomas D'Alessandro to Floyd Hyde, October 24, 1969. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 552, Folder 712.

⁷¹ Editorial in the "Inner City Watch," the Model Cities community organizing newsletter, volume 1, number 2, December 1969. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁷² "HUD Directive" memorandum, January 27, 1970. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 711.

⁷³ Mayor's correspondence to Eugene Chase, March 12, 1970. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 553, Folder 722.

Baltimore City Board of Estimates to turn “full responsibility and authority for the administration of the program” over to Model Cities staff.⁷⁴

Additional federal pressure was also applied to Baltimore’s Community Action Agency during the same period by the Office of Economic Opportunity. “We are concerned with our inability to obtain from the CAA adequate audits. To date we have never received a complete audit for any of the agency’s program years.”⁷⁵ Late financial reporting and “unending discussions” were further vexations to OEO, prompting Acting Deputy Regional Director, Richard Bowman, to chastise the Mayor’s Office. “As you know, we and HUD have been concerned for over a year with the possible duplication of effort by the two local agencies.”⁷⁶ Bowman’s correspondence called for merging the policy steering boards and community organizing efforts in CAA and Model Cities, effectively eliminating two of CAA’s strongest and most citizen-oriented components.

Under these pressures from Federal officials to increasingly merge Baltimore’s antipoverty programs, Lenwood M. Ivey assumed leadership of CAA. A graduate of Howard University, Ivey worked as a social work supervisor prior to joining the fledgling CAA in 1965.⁷⁷ He initially served as the chief of CAA’s neighborhood operations in East Baltimore.⁷⁸ In February 1969, Ivey was appointed one of CAA’s associate directors; by later that year, he was named acting executive director of the agency during a political scandal.⁷⁹ The previous director of the program, Frank Ellis, was indicted on a series of criminal charges related to mismanagement of emergency funds and given a two-year prison term.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Correspondence from William Sykes to the Board of Estimates, July 1, 1971. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 467, Folder 151.

⁷⁵ Correspondence from Richard Bowman to Dan Zaccagnini, March 20, 1970. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 551, Folder 712.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Earl Arnett, “Anti-Poverty Funds: Community Action Agency Director Airs Views and Hopes,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, January 26, 1972. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/536309309/abstract/522BC2D9067D417DPQ/1?>

⁷⁸ Al Rutledge, “Ellis Holds Lead in CAA Post Race,” *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, November 16, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoreafricanamerican/docview/532212056/abstract/BD39EB4A82A5483CPQ/1?>

⁷⁹ “Poverty Agency Fills Key Posts: Gadhia, Ivey Get Staff Jobs; Fetting Put On Board,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, February 2, 1969. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/539208054/abstract/C19B1DE6C0E34AEDPQ/1?>. See also the CAA staff memo from Clarence Blount, Chairman of the Community Action Commission, December 31, 1969. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 496, Folder 355.

⁸⁰ John B. O’Donnell, “Ellis Suspended Without Pay As City’s Anti-Poverty Chief,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, December 10, 1969. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/536593070/abstract/AD0A7340E6EB41A9PQ/1?>; “New Poverty Chief Backed: Ivey, Interim Director, Must Get City Council Approval,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, October 1, 1970. <http://search.proquest.com/hnpbaltimoresun/docview/533898509/abstract/3E4748C9B4324097PQ/1?>

Through their communications with the City, regional and national officials from the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Housing and Urban Development clearly articulated the federal vision of succession programming—one antipoverty program (MCA) replacing the other (CAA). But Baltimore’s dual programs continued to operate simultaneously through the end of Mayor Thomas D’Alessandro III’s term in office in December 1971. The City’s Community Action Agency continued to operate, albeit on borrowed time, and Model Cities continued to struggle to establish clear lines of authority and implement its major programs. The job of merging the two agencies would fall to William Donald Schaefer, D’Alessandro’s successor and the former City Council President who’d assisted the campaign to block Walter Carter’s nomination as head of CAA three years earlier.⁸¹

The first meeting of the joint CAA-MCA Planning Unit took place March 14, 1972. Within two months, the committee produced a preliminary report with recommendations for the Mayor regarding the merger. Among these recommendations were the expansion of the program’s target area and the development of a single citizen participation mechanism.⁸² By September, Mayor Schaefer released his own statement on the proposed merger, in which his stated position was “it would not be appropriate to merge the two agencies at this time.” Schaefer’s rationale for maintaining the two agencies separately included uncertainty over federal funding, reticence to create administrative issues related to a merger, evidence of increased cooperation and decreasing duplication of services between the two programs, and “most importantly, the fact that, after initial growing pains, the two agencies have developed into efficient operations which serve as effective arms of the city government in the delivery of services to residents of their target areas.”⁸³

The Nixon administration’s soft approach towards the War on Poverty programs evaporated overnight after the November 1972 election. According to Lemann, “Once Nixon had been re-elected, there was no longer any need to outfox his critics by keeping the old poverty programs that they had

⁸¹ Rutledge, “Ellis Holds Lead in CAA Post Race.”

⁸² See memoranda from Lenwood Ivey and William Sykes to William Donald Schaefer, March 14, 1972 and May 22, 1972. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder “Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973.”

⁸³ “Mayor’s Statement on Model Cities-Community Action Merger,” September 6, 1972. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder “Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973.”

expected him to gut." Within days of starting his second term in office, Nixon directed top officials to begin the process of dismantling the Great Society programs.⁸⁴ Taking their cue from the feds, despite Mayor Schaefer's stated reticence to merge the programs, plans for a successor agency were underway locally by 1973. Suggestions on a list of potential agency titles clearly indicates the Mayor's desire to situate the successor program within his immediate purview: Mayor's Office of Community Affairs; Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Development; and Mayor's Office of Community Development. Among the questions raised by MCA Director William Sykes were sources of funding after federal monies expired, the status of staff as mayoral appointments or civil servants, and the fate of citizen advisory bodies (CAA's Community Action Commission and MCA's Councils).⁸⁵ The most pressing concern was one of funding. Federal funds were set to expire December 31, 1973 for the Community Action Agency and June 30, 1974 for the Model Cities Agency.

As advisors close to the Mayor weighed in on the merger, some expressed a clear critique of the existing programs. Robert C. Embry, Jr., who directed the City's Department of Housing and Community Development, advised the Mayor, "We should not assume that the agencies should continue to exist just because they have existed... Neither agency is charged with the delivery of a specific service."⁸⁶ Embry addressed the racial politics of the existing antipoverty programs directly, suggesting a significant geographical expansion of services to pacify racist white residents:

Whether intended or not, these programs are seen by both whites and blacks as being designated to help black people. While the years of neglect of our black citizens justify the creation of special programs to deal with their problems, the apparent monopoly by blacks had to lead to the eventual hostility toward these programs by the white majority, and their eventual termination. This is now happening. Consideration should be given to extending any new program to a larger area, if not city wide [sic].⁸⁷

Mark Joseph, a development coordinator for the City, suggested a course of action that emphasized mayoral power and deemphasized citizen participation, particularly over the distribution of

⁸⁴ Lemann, "The Unfinished War," 68.

⁸⁵ "Summary of Planning for New Agency" memoranda from William Sykes to William Schaefer, February 16, 1973. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder "Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973."

⁸⁶ "Comments on Future Administrative Structure of Model Cities and CAA," memorandum from Bob Embry to William Donald Schaefer, April 4, 1973. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder "Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973."

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

financial resources. Joseph also encouraged Schaefer “for as long as possible continue the neighborhood centers,” referring to the network of service centers embedded in residential neighborhoods across Baltimore City.⁸⁸ These neighborhood centers, started by CAA and also adopted by MCA, provided a wide range of personal, social, and community development services to residents of Baltimore’s poorest areas. Services included youth recreation programs, health and wellness programs, senior citizen programs, employment assistance programs, legal services, and referrals to other, more specialized services within City government.

Even while City Hall looked to gain administrative control over resources and strategic direction within the new antipoverty agency, core elements of CAA and Model Cities programs were selected for retention in the successor agency, including citizen participation and neighborhood centers. Community organizing, which held radical potential to challenge existing political and economic power structures, was largely abandoned. However, by using citizen representation on advisory boards in the War on Poverty to identify poor residents’ needs and create programs designed to meet those needs, the City looked to reform its mechanisms for governance. Instead of allowing residents to use federal funding to create independent agencies that could leverage city government, the antipoverty programs offered a narrower and more reformist opportunity to teach local government to be more responsive to the needs of entire communities of underrepresented residents.

In order to implement this reformist agenda, capable coordinators and planners were necessary to incorporate aspects of CAA and Model Cities into municipal government. Mayor Schaefer looked to Lenwood Ivey, whose service in CAA spanned the program’s eight-year existence, to play such a role. Schaefer wrote to OEO in September 1973 announcing Lenwood Ivey's appointment as director of Model Cities, in addition to his existing duties as director of CAA, effective September 1, 1973.⁸⁹ It would be Ivey’s job to merge the two agencies after their federal funding expired. In June 1974, the Baltimore City

⁸⁸ “Thoughts on Model Cities-CAA Merger,” Confidential memorandum from Mark Joseph to William Donald Schaefer, March 9, 1973. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder “Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973.”

⁸⁹ Correspondence from William Donald Schaefer to Astor Kirk, OEO Regional Director, September 12, 1973. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 188, Folder “Model Cities-CAA Merger, 1972-1973.”

Council and Mayor Schaefer passed and signed Ordinance #697, approving the merger of the Baltimore Community Action Agency and Model Cities Agency and creating the Urban Services Agency.⁹⁰

The Rise and Fall of the Urban Services Agency, 1974-1993

On June 30, 1974, Reverend Vernon Dobson, an influential black minister and pastor of Union Baptist Church, appeared in a WBAL-TV editorial that criticized the merger of CAA and Model Cities. Dobson stated, "I've continually opposed the merger of CAA and Model Cities because I felt it was politically motivated and that it would decrease the viability of poor people. And now that the merger has happened, I'm convinced that I was right."⁹¹ He accused the agency of eliminating citizen participation and allowing politicians to run the program. The pastor concluded his op-ed with the statement, "[P]oliticians historically don't seek to empower people who're powerless, but they use powerless people to get and keep their power."⁹²

The following week, Lenwood Ivey of the Urban Services Agency taped his WBAL-TV rebuttal to Reverend Dobson regarding the terms of the CAA/ Model Cities merger. Ivey claimed citizen participation was built into the new Urban Services Agency through ten elected representatives from the Model Cities neighborhoods. Ivey continued, "Under this Administration, the poverty agency has had one guiding principle: To give those we serve every opportunity to participate in the decisions affecting their lives."⁹³

This public exchange between two prominent black leaders illustrates the ongoing struggles for citizen participation in Baltimore's antipoverty programs, even after the Great Society programs had formally ceased to exist. In Baltimore, the Urban Services Agency (USA) was the municipal legacy of

⁹⁰ Quarterly report for April-June 1974, sent by Lenwood Ivey to OEO, dated July 18, 1974. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 200, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

⁹¹ Martin, Patrice. "Focusing On Today." *The Sun* (1837-1989), Feb 08, 1988. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy-ub.researchport.umd.edu/docview/1477649511?accountid=28969>.

⁹² WBAL-TV editorial, June 30, 1974. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 200, Folder 17, "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

⁹³ "Now Hear This," WBAL-TV editorial, July 8, 1974. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 200, Folder 17, "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

Baltimore's War on Poverty. Under the direction of Lenwood Ivey—first named head of CAA, then MCA, then USA—Urban Services would operate a network of neighborhood service centers that remained connected to the citizens it served through geographical proximity. The determination of Baltimore's black leaders to retain core elements of the Great Society infused subsequent programs with a community focus, reminiscent of the original antipoverty programs. Ultimately, local and federal administrators largely phased out community organizing, and citizen participation took a back seat to service provision as Urban Services was gradually transformed by the political mechanisms that shape municipal agencies within city government. Local leaders like Lenwood Ivey did what they could to maintain as much of the Great Society vision as possible, decades after the elimination of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Local War on Poverty programs taught city government how to better respond to low-income citizens' needs at the neighborhood level, reflected in the endurance of the Urban Services Agency through the advent of New Federalism. This chapter will examine the 19-year lifespan of Urban Services, from 1974 through 1993, in order to consider the impact the War on Poverty had in Baltimore.

At the time of its inception, the Baltimore Urban Services Agency inherited 23 neighborhood centers from its predecessor antipoverty agencies. These centers were distributed across the city, with higher concentrations in East and West Baltimore, where the poorest neighborhoods were (and still are) concentrated. The centers occupied repurposed churches, storefronts, libraries, public baths, or (in the case of Dunbar) associated with an existing public high school.⁹⁴ These diverse settings served as multipurpose centers for many programs and classes for children, teens, senior citizens, young mothers, the homeless, and families in crisis. Food pantries, yoga classes, poetry readings, dance performances, legal assistance, home heating assistance, library services, and many more programmatic offerings coexisted in these spaces. The Urban Services headquarters was located at 11 East Mount Royal Avenue, across the Jones Falls Expressway from Penn Station.⁹⁵ From this location in Baltimore's midtown, the

⁹⁴ I've created a GoogleMap with the locations of USA neighborhood centers:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zHgdmg3FD3kU.kKzz4rvCaU-E&usp=sharing>

⁹⁵ Letter to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, July 22, 1974. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 200, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

USA office maintained geographical proximity to neighborhood centers to the east and west, as well as City Hall.

From its very inception, Urban Services administrators were carefully instructed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on how to select Great Society programs for continued funding. Even though USA became a municipal agency within the city government, the majority of the department's budget remained federal. In 1975, 20% of the USA budget was allocated from the city, while 80% came from the Community Services Administration (the successor agency to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity), the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and HUD.⁹⁶ In accordance with HUD's mandate, city-sponsored projects deemed successful were transferred to the corresponding municipal agency. Projects deemed unsuccessful were terminated. Projects that did not map to existing municipal agencies but were identified for retention were slated for federal funding under the new Community Development Block Grant program. The fate of the antipoverty programs varied according to this plan. The Neighborhood Sanitation, Preventive Dentistry, and Iron-Enriched Milk programs were turned over to the two agencies for General Funds. The Lighted House Manpower and Institutional Training projects were turned over to the Mayor's Office of Manpower Resources for funding. A total of 15 programs were terminated. The remaining 14 programs and six community councils, which could not be picked up by other agencies because there was no appropriate municipal corollary, were retained for the Community Development Block Grant program.⁹⁷

Regular interim reports continued to be submitted to HUD, detailing the ongoing efforts to merge programs previously run by Model Cities and Community Action. Early USA program priorities included community services, health, education, crime and juvenile delinquency, recreation, employment, housing, and environmental protection.⁹⁸ The primary delivery mechanism for these programs were the neighborhood centers. Under CAA, the Neighborhood Development Program operated 22 community

⁹⁶ Letter to Senator Harry McGuirk from William Donald Schaefer, February 18, 1975. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 202, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

⁹⁷ Correspondence to Neal Heintz from Lenwood Ivey, February 4, 1975. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 202, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

⁹⁸ "Urban Services Program: Planning Document, Fiscal Year 1977," undated. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

centers.⁹⁹ These centers remained a cornerstone of the Urban Services Agency and stand as a primary example of an important lesson that Baltimore learned during the War on Poverty. These satellite centers provided a mix of direct services and referral services to poor residents in the neighborhoods where they lived. Services included housing weatherization and emergency energy assistance; health projects like CPR training; senior citizens' social and recreational programs and transportation services; youth educational and summer lunch programs; and neighborhood cleanups.¹⁰⁰

In addition to CAA's neighborhood centers, Model Cities also maintained six residentially based satellite centers, known as Community Councils. The six Community Councils operated as independent contractors with MCA, and as a result, had independent identities and staff. These Councils were also seen as centers of black political activity, particularly in East Baltimore, and therefore eyed with concern by City Councilmen and the local media. Lenwood Ivey's decision to eliminate these Community Councils and transfer eligible staff into the municipal Civil Service system was a controversial 1976 decision that was decidedly unpopular with residents and Council staff. Tim Conway, Chair of Foresight Community Council, Inc., voiced his complaints to the Mayor's Office. His correspondence to Joan Bereska, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, stated, "Joan, I think that there are some strong political motivations involved in the decision effecting the Councils. I feel it is morally wrong as well as depriving the citizens of the service that the six (6) Councils have been providing for the last 6 1/2 years because of some person or persons having personal grudges against some of us within the Councils. I am asking you, as the Mayor's Administrative Assistant to intervene and to try to put a stop to such a person or persons from doing to the council personnel what is about to happen."¹⁰¹

The Community Councils had operated as independent, third party contractors under Model Cities. They were also the sites of citizen engagement and participation in the Model Cities Program, so their dismantling had power symbolic and real world implications. Neighborhood-based community and

⁹⁹ Quarterly Report, July to September 1975. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

¹⁰⁰ "Urban Services Agency Neighborhood Centers: Brief Description of Function," undated. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹⁰¹ Correspondence to Joan Bereska from Tim Conway, June 11, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

political organizing that was previously conducted out of the Community Councils was seen as undesirable in the new municipal agency.¹⁰² The Councils' community governing boards were replaced with advisory councils, weakening the power of residents in the decision making process. Community reaction to these changes was swift. Stanley Santos, a longtime East Baltimore neighborhood leader, resigned as Chairman of Community Council A in protest.¹⁰³ Residents penned an open letter to the Mayor, which voiced concerns over the elimination of Councils and the transition of staff into the Civil Service. Chief among their concerns was Lenwood Ivey's handling of moving existing staff into Civil Service jobs. Lack of college degrees among existing Urban Services staff disqualified some for applying to take the Civil Service test for the positions they already held. Although Council staff had been assured that Civil Service standards and qualifications would only be applied to new staff, existing staff felt deceived and angered by the lack of accommodations for them within the rules of the Civil Service. The letter also accused Ivey of being intent upon purging "former Model Cities personnel."¹⁰⁴

Mayor Schaefer's response to these concerns was addressed in writing to all 27 community members, including 5 men and 22 women, 24 of whom resided in the 21217 zip code of the city's central west side. Schaefer explained that the mandate to convert Urban Services staff into the Civil Service system came directly from federal administrators at HUD. This response did not address the community's concerns about educational qualifications for existing Council staff.¹⁰⁵ Despite community objections to ingesting existing Council staff into the Civil Service, the Urban Services Agency continued its development as an official arm of local government. Of the 80 total Council staffers, 71 took the Civil

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Correspondence to Sara Causion from William Donald Schaefer, July 14, 1976. BCA, Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

¹⁰⁴ "An Open Letter to the Honorable Mayor William Donald Schaefer," undated. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 202, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹⁰⁵ Correspondence from William Donald Schaefer to all authors of the open letter regarding USA resident councils, August 4, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 202, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

Service examination, 60 passed, and 56 were placed in Civil Service positions.¹⁰⁶ All six former Councils were then converted into Urban Services Agency neighborhood centers.¹⁰⁷

For the entire duration of the 1970s, the local media was seemingly intent upon reporting financial mismanagement or controversy around accusations of financial mismanagement. This drive to tarnish the reputation of the antipoverty programs served to reaffirm and strengthen white rejection of the Great Society programs as benefitting only blacks. Financial wrongdoing could be used as socially acceptable rationale for curtailing black political power.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, a constant cloud of scrutiny seemed to hover around the Urban Services and its use of public monies. Late in 1974, the *Baltimore News American* reported that two former employees of the Model Cities youth athletics program, Operation Champ, pled guilty to criminal charges for stealing almost \$14,000 through a check-cashing scheme.¹⁰⁹ A year and a half later, the *News American* printed a series of articles and editorials on the Model Cities audits.¹¹⁰ The reports claimed that “unauthorized or unappropriate [sic] spending practices” in the Community Councils led to their discontinuation.

Throughout these investigations and audits, Mayor Schaefer publicly supported Lenwood Ivey’s leadership. This confidence in Ivey as an adept administrator was generally reflected in the media, as well. Ivey was able to distance himself from the financial practices of *previous programs* like Model Cities, playing the role of reformer. But it was only a matter of time before the press would find errors in the workings of the Urban Services Agency. By early 1977, the *Sun* published a story on an Urban Services employee accused of embezzlement, which prompted an audit of the entire agency.¹¹¹ Six months later, the paper reported the theft of \$1,100 with the headline, “City Audit Confirms Misuse of

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum to Senator Clarence Blount from Lenwood Ivey, June 29, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder “Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979).”

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum to Community Council staff from Lenwood Ivey, April 19, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder “Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979).”

¹⁰⁸ This form of racial political harassment is the focus of a study by George Derek Musgrove, *Rumor, Repression, and Racial Politics: How the Harassment of Black Elected Officials Shaped Post-Civil Rights America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁹ Newspaper clipping, “2 ‘Champ’ Ex-Workers Guilty in Bogus Checks,” *News American*, November 20, 1974. UBA, HWC, Series 2C, Box 10, Folder 1.

¹¹⁰ Newspaper clipping enclosures in correspondence to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, March 10, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder “Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979).”

¹¹¹ “Audit Looks for Theft from Job Fund in City,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, January 19, 1977.

Job Funds.”¹¹² A similar article about the misuse of funds from a winter home heating fuel program in 1980 reported that six Urban Service Agency employees were suspended and four were terminated.¹¹³ These instances of theft or fraud in USA’s 19 years of operation appear as isolated instances, rather than widespread graft.

What's striking is that the media by and large ignored all other activities associated with Urban Services, except for a few social events advertised or briefly noted in the *Afro-American*. The slanted reporting printed of the *Sun* and the *News American* continued to damage the public image of Urban Services and tether it to the tarnished legacy of the War on Poverty programs that had been so unpopular with Baltimore's white residents. Urban Services produced some of its own media representation through a public access television program called “Street Scenes,” which aired on WBFF in Baltimore during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These images depict teenagers employed in a USA odd jobs program, black ballerinas training through the Cultural Arts Program, and senior citizens participating in a USA community choir, among other slice-of-life segments. Produced by Urban Services under the direction of Rachel Wohl, “Street Scenes” employed many USA teens in the filming, acting, and interviews of the program.¹¹⁴ This grassroots footage stands in stark contrast to mainstream newspaper coverage of the politics of the program from City Hall.

From its very inception, funding and staff cuts were a way of life for the Urban Services Agency. The Agency was financially dependent on federal monies, and over time, those monies would contract radically, particularly during Ronald Reagan's two terms as President. State and local funds could not adequately supplement federal funds, and Urban Services was forced to lay off staff, close neighborhood centers, and reduce its overall services as a result. Reagan's well-known antipathy toward social programs

¹¹² “City Audit Confirms Misuse of Job Funds,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, June 3, 1977.

¹¹³ David Brown, “10 Face Firings, Suspensions in Fuel-Aid Project,” *The Sun (1837-1989)*, February 21, 1980.

¹¹⁴ Digitized footage of “Street Scenes” is available through the University of Baltimore Special Collections site on the Internet Archive: [https://archive.org/details/ublangsdale?and\[\]=%22urban%20services%20agency%22](https://archive.org/details/ublangsdale?and[]=%22urban%20services%20agency%22)

created significant financial challenges for the Urban Services Agency and its ongoing antipoverty efforts in Baltimore.¹¹⁵

In 1975, Baltimore received almost 31 million dollars through HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program. Of that sum, over 8 million dollars was dedicated to the Urban Services Agency, provided it coordinate services with Department of Housing and Community Development.¹¹⁶ USA funding actually came from all levels of government—local, state, and national. In an environment of shrinking resources, the agency had to limit its priorities and objectives. In fiscal year 1976, USA put forth seven functional areas for prioritization—the top three of which were community services, health, and education. By the very next year, those priorities shifted to education, health, and public safety.¹¹⁷ The removal of community services from agency-wide priorities is a striking move away from the community-focused rhetoric of the former Great Society programs. This didn't mean that USA was taking services out of the neighborhoods—in fact, neighborhood-based day care, library services, transportation, and health screening programs were expanded in FY77.¹¹⁸ However, it was the agency's mechanism for designing programs based on residents' expressed needs that were being deemphasized. The process of becoming a municipal agency involved setting priorities and designing programs without the input of residents.

Further cutbacks from federal sources continued through the 1970s. In 1978, Lenwood Ivey reported that \$338,000 was set for elimination from USA's Block Grant funding, effective April 1, 1979. He proposed to close the funding gap by closing two of the six former Model Cities neighborhood centers on North Avenue and eliminating Block Grant funding for Legal Aid and Direct Search for Talent.¹¹⁹ The Legal Aid program was the primary objection of City Councilmen 13 years earlier, at the very start of the

¹¹⁵ " Mr. Reagan's War on Poverty," *New York Times*, 10/2/1981.

¹¹⁶ Correspondence from Everett Rothschild to William Donald Schaefer, October 4, 1976. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

¹¹⁷ Urban Services Program Planning Document, FY1977, BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 192, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986) - Reports (1975-1979)."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Correspondence to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, October 16, 1978.

War on Poverty in Baltimore. What was it about providing poor residents with pro bono legal assistance that was so unpopular with politicians?

The Direct Search for Talent program was a popular and successful program that sought to identify individual black youth who demonstrated leadership potential and cultivate their skills for upward mobility into the middle class. Although this leadership model has been criticized by scholars who (rightly) point out the abandonment of the democratic ideals of the Great Society in favor of an individualistic approach to cultivate the Talented Tenth, the program was nonetheless a core element of Urban Services' predecessor programs and represented a curious choice for elimination.¹²⁰

In the middle of these cutbacks, the Urban Services Agency announced its physical relocation from its 3-story office at 11 E. Mount Royal Avenue to a 9-story building at 227 St. Paul Place. At that time in 1980, an expected 250 USA employees would work in the new building.¹²¹ This move shifted Urban Services' headquarters out of a mixed-use midtown area and into the central downtown business core, in close proximity to City Hall. What's suspect about this move is the justification for a tripling of the office space the agency would rent, very likely at steeper business district prices.

While USA staff continued to express frustration with Lenwood Ivey's leadership, Mayor Schaefer maintained a friendly and supportive relationship with Ivey. Although Schaefer's opinions about Urban Services are noticeably absent from the records of his office as mayor, his strong relationship with Ivey as a manager are evident. When staff anonymously wrote to the Mayor during a period of budget cuts, Schaefer told Ivey, "I am pleased at the action you have taken to tighten control over the Urban Services Agency. I concur in the things that you have implemented. However, I seriously doubt if that well deserved 'nice man label' evaporates. You, fortunately, are a nice guy."¹²² Ivey, in turn continued to

¹²⁰ See Ferguson, *Top Down*.

¹²¹ John Shidlovsky, "Lease for Urban Services' New Quarters Is Approved," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, May 15, 1980.

¹²² Confidential reply to Lenwood Ivey from William Donald Schaefer, March 9, 1981. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

meet Schaefer's expectations in terms of "developing plans for maximum operations with less funding."¹²³

Less funding was indeed the name of the game. By July 1981, President Reagan's antipathy toward social programs meant major cuts to the Community Services Administration and the Community Block Grant Program.¹²⁴ Ivey, in turn, proposed a re-organization of Urban Services that included elimination of the conservation program from Self-Help Housing; closing of all Cultural Arts centers except Gallery 409, Dunbar, and Cherry Hill; elimination of the Library Services program with Enoch Pratt Free Library; elimination of all Project Champ youth athletics projects except the street program; withdrawal of federal funding from Legal Aid; the closing of the Community Residence Center; and directing more municipal funding to the SAGA senior citizen program, which lost a third of its federal Title XX funding.¹²⁵

In a "Proposed Plan for Revision of the Urban Services Agency," Ivey laid out the reality of what USA faced in 1981: "Recognizing the plan to fold CSA [Community Services Agency] funds into a block grant and the impact the loss of funds (Block Grant and CSA) will have on the city, we are submitting a proposal for the city's consideration that would continue the Urban Services Agency as a social services support agency." This proposed shift would eliminate all but the highest performing neighborhood centers. Ivey also suggested that certain administrative expertise developed within Urban Services—including evaluation, management, neighborhood services, planning, research, public information, and fiscal management—be used to assist other City agencies.¹²⁶ Instead, what transpired was the immediate lay-off of 24 existing USA staff, from modestly skilled workers to professional staff to management. Among the employees terminated were the director of fiscal management, the chief of neighborhood operations, a neighborhood center director, two senior management analysts, an accounting supervisor, an

¹²³ Memorandum to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, June 15, 1981. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹²⁴ Minutes of the Urban Services Commission Executive Session, July 21, 1981. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹²⁵ Memorandum to the Urban Services Commission from Lenwood Ivey, July 21, 1981. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹²⁶ "Proposed Plan for Revision of the Urban Services Agency," undated. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

executive assistant, a youth counselor, and 13 day care social workers, day care clerks, and utility aides.¹²⁷ Many of the administrative functions Ivey had pointed to as unique to Urban Services were, in fact, the exact positions eliminated in the 1981 reorganization.

Political pressure in the mid-1980s forced Maryland Senator Clarence Blount to resign as chair of the Urban Services Commission, which operated as the board of the Urban Services Agency. Blount's resignation came after the Baltimore *Evening Sun* ran a series of investigative articles critical of USA and its board. Blount claimed the media's accusations were minor points about board terms and that "City agencies [had] been targeted by the news media." Although the Urban Services Commission was set up to consist of one third elected officials, one third business people, and one third community representatives, Blount described the board as three-quarters community members.¹²⁸ Like Parren Mitchell, Clarence Blount was one of several black politicians whose political careers had roots in Baltimore's War on Poverty. A former Dunbar High School principal, Blount served as the chair of the Community Action Commission in 1968 before being elected to the Maryland State Senate in 1971.¹²⁹ Senator Blount's resignation from the USA board in 1985 further signaled the agency's break with its past and the increasing distance from its predecessor programs in the War on Poverty.

At the time Blount stepped down from the Urban Services Commission, Lenwood Ivey had terminated 200 of his staff in the previous 3 years.¹³⁰ Cutbacks to HUD's Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant programs had reduced the Urban Services Agency's annual budget by 1.3 million dollars by 1986. In response, Ivey proposed merging neighborhood centers, terminating under-performing staff, not filling vacancies, and using existing staff to cover additional

¹²⁷ "List of Staff Laid Off," undated. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 455, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹²⁸ Ron Davis, "Blount Quitting Urban Services Post," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, January 27, 1985.

¹²⁹ Rhonda Y. Williams, "To Challenge the Status Quo by Any Means," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 83. Sarah Koenig and Stephanie Hanes, "Blount, 'Conscience of the Senate,' Dies at 81 ; Ex-Educator Blazed Trail as 1st Black Majority Leader and Helped Promote City; Clarence W. Blount: 1921-2003: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, April 13, 2003, sec. Telegraph.

¹³⁰ Memorandum to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, March 18, 1985. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 440, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

projects.¹³¹ The *Sun* reported that Community Development Block Grant funds withheld from Urban Services forced the layoff of 21 staff, the elimination of five vacant positions, the consolidation of three daycare centers, and the closure of two neighborhood centers. Ivey told reporters he had to cut half a million dollars from the current year's budget, and those cuts had to come from departments funded with federal Block Grant monies. Since the transition to a municipal agency depended on federal funds to cover services and programs not traditionally designed as part of local government, the department most affected by the dramatic loss of federal funds was the Neighborhood Services department.¹³²

When William Donald Schaefer was elected Governor of Maryland in 1986, the remainder of his term as Mayor of Baltimore was served by the President of the Baltimore City Council, Clarence "Du" Burns. Although Burns became the City's first black mayor, in the eyes of many Baltimoreans, he represented continuity with the Schaefer administration and the Democratic political machine on Baltimore's working class eastside. He was defeated in the mayoral primary in 1987 by Kurt L. Schmoke, who went on to become the City's first *elected* black mayor. Schmoke was a hometown football star from City College high school who graduated from Harvard and Yale and won a prestigious Rhodes scholarship.¹³³ During Mayor Schmoke's tenure, the structure of City government would be reorganized, the size of the municipal workforce would contract, and programs associated with Schaefer and his political allies would face elimination.

Soon after taking office, Mayor Schmoke began systematically analyzing the workings of city agencies, looking for ways to make local government more efficient and effective. Programs that provided "software" were notoriously difficult to quantify and assess. All programs were increasingly pushed to measure their "impact" in measurable ways in order to justify continuation. Urban Services, with its roots in 1960s big government, caught the Mayor's attention. Close by his side was Kalman

¹³¹ Memorandum to William Donald Schaefer from Lenwood Ivey, November 14, 1985. BCA Record Group 9, Series 42, Box 440, Folder "Urban Services Agency (1974-1986)."

¹³² Sarah Koenig and Stephanie Hanes, "Blount, 'Conscience of the Senate,' Dies at 81 ; Ex-Educator Blazed Trail as 1st Black Majority Leader and Helped Promote City; Clarence W. Blount: 1921-2003: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, April 13, 2003, sec. Telegraph.

¹³³ Johnathon E. Briggs and Laura Vozzella, "First Black Mayor of Baltimore Dies; Loved Job and City ; 'Old-Time, Caring Politician' Rose from Locker Room Job to Improve People's Lives; Clarence H. Du Burns: 1918-2003: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, January 13, 2003, sec. Telegraph.

"Buzzy" Hettleman, a City Hall insider whose advisory role to Baltimore's mayors on the Great Society programs date back to 1969.¹³⁴ A Baltimore native and graduate of University of Maryland School of Law, Hettleman served as the assistant to the director of the National Office of Economic Opportunity Legal Services before taking a series of positions in local and state government between 1967 and 1983, including: administrative assistant to the Mayor, director of the Baltimore Department of Social Services, and secretary of the State of Maryland's Human Resources.¹³⁵ Even after his official state biography trails off, Hettleman still clearly had a close advisory role in City Hall. He communicated with Mayor Schmoke at length regarding the state of the Urban Services Agency in the late 1980s. In April 1988, Hettleman delivered an extensive review of the Urban Services Agency to Mayor Schmoke. In his estimation, "I think that Len [Ivey] is overwhelmed by all of the history and the baggage of the agency, but, even more basically, he simply does not seem to be a creative program developer or manager." In addition to this critique of Ivey's leadership, Hettleman laid out a variety of options for the Mayor, including leaving it intact, "spinning off" individual programs to other municipal agencies, or making the USA neighborhood centers part of a network of social service casework centers. Hettleman recommended a formal review of USA's functions, to be conducted by a black leader, and introduced the idea of the neighborhood centers playing a "virtually indistinguishable role" from another neighborhood-based initiative known as the Mayor's Stations.¹³⁶ Five years later, Schmoke would ultimately choose to merge these two programs, as Hettleman suggested.

Mayor Schmoke met to discuss USA's organization and policies with Senator Nathan Irby, the new chairman of the Urban Services Commission. Out of that meeting, it was decided that the Mayor would support a plan to reorganize Urban Services or call for a new leader to replace Lenwood Ivey.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ The earliest evidence of Buzzy in my research is a March 24, 1969 memorandum to D'Alessandro regarding problems with technical assistance in the new Model Cities Program. BCA Record Group 9, Series 26, Box 529, Folder 596. Buzzy's correspondence appears repeatedly in the records of Mayors D'Alessandro and Schaefer.

¹³⁵ Department of Human Resources, Maryland Manual On-line:
<http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/18dhr/former/html/msa15667.html>

¹³⁶ "Urban Services Agency review," memorandum to Kurt Schmoke from Buzzy [Kalman R. Hettleman], April 12, 1988. BCA, Record Group 9 Series 44-4, Mayor's Subject Files, Box 14, Folder "Urban Services Agency, 1988-1989."

¹³⁷ Handwritten draft of memorandum from Kurt Schmoke to unknown recipient, undated. BCA, Record Group 9 Series 44-4, Mayor's Subject Files, Box 14, Folder "Urban Services Agency, 1988-1989."

The Mayor's stated position on Urban Services was one of support. That support, however, hinged on changes to the program to make it more effective. Effectiveness within this context entailed reviewing the wide-ranging USA programs and operations within every neighborhood center to carefully assess overall performance and identify underperforming areas. Programs deemed successful might be transferred to other agencies, with ineffective or outdated services might be eliminated. In April 1989, Schmoke suggested transferring the Cultural Arts Program, as well as parts of the weatherization program, and eliminating the transportation program entirely. Other programs he identified for potential transfer were Sanitation, SAGA, AFRAM, Project Survival, Youth Development, CHIP and Eviction. Central to his vision of the restructured Urban Services was the neighborhood centers. The Mayor continued to regard merging services with the Mayor's Stations as a potential way to strengthen the overall functioning of the neighborhood centers.¹³⁸

Although Senator Irby assured the Mayor that the Urban Services Commission would conduct their own evaluation of USA's programs, Irby requested additional time to conduct an assessment process. Once again, Hettleman intervened, interjecting, " Beside the 'B.S.' nature of this 'process,' the danger is that the Commission will be overly protective and make it more difficult for you to spin-off programs (including Cultural Arts and Weatherization). To avoid this you may have to take a stronger stand on your 'wishes' on the range of programs."¹³⁹ The Mayor, in fact, had already taken a strong stand on his wishes. The month before, in March 1989, Mayor Schmoke asked Lenwood Ivey to step down as Director of the Urban Services Agency, a position he'd held for 18 years.

Public criticism of the Urban Services Agency continued in the press, where Urban Services was declared "a pacification program" and "an ill-defined and ill-performing bureaucracy which has pretended to serve the needs of the city's poor but has seldom delivered creditably."¹⁴⁰ The condemnation of Urban Services was part of a broader project of shrinking local government services and privatizing

¹³⁸ Correspondence to Nathan Irby, Jr. from Kurt Schmoke, April 11, 1989. BCA, Record Group 9 Series 44-4, Mayor's Subject Files, Box 14, Folder "Urban Services Agency, 1988-1989."

¹³⁹ Correspondence to Kurt Schmoke from Nathan Irby, Jr., April 17, 1989. BCA, Record Group 9 Series 44-4, Mayor's Subject Files, Box 14, Folder "Urban Services Agency, 1988-1989."

¹⁴⁰ "Schmoke: Decisions Ahead," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, April 22, 1989.

many former municipal functions. Schmoke wanted to reduce the range of services USA offered and allow federal community development block grant funds to support the operation of recreation centers.¹⁴¹ After the announcement of a 5-cent reduction in Baltimore homeowners' property tax rate, Mayor Schmoke expressed the reality of lowering "expectations of what city services the city will provide," including the closure of fire stations and recreation centers, the privatization of Baltimore's popular Afro-American festival, AFRAM, and the reorganization of Urban Services.¹⁴² In order to assist with the reorganization of Urban Services and search for private funds to support the program's work, Mayor Schmoke re-hired Lenwood Ivey as a private consultant, just four days after his retirement as a municipal employee.¹⁴³

The departure of key longtime black leaders of the antipoverty program, Clarence Blount and Lenwood Ivey, still did not quell the local media's criticisms of the agency. When City Council approved Lloyd Mitchner as the new director of Urban Services in 1990, the *Sun* characterized the agency as part of the municipal patronage system.¹⁴⁴ If USA was, in fact, seen as a throwback to political patronage under the Schaefer Administration, it is unsurprising that Mayor Schmoke looked to make a decisive political break with the past. Some journalists, however, voiced criticisms of Schmoke's decisions. Investigative journalist, Daniel Berger, accused the Mayor of "cutting the meat, saving the fat" by eliminating core services.¹⁴⁵ The Mayor's ongoing review process for restructuring city government was actively considering elimination of funds for art and cultural programs, merging planning and housing agencies, merging Urban Services with Parks and Recreation, merging Transportation and Public Works, and forming a General Services Administration.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Memorandum to Clarence Bishop from Kurt Schmoke, September 12, 1989. BCA, Record Group 9 Series 44-4, Mayor's Subject Files, Box 14, Folder "Urban Services Agency, 1988-1989."

¹⁴² Brian Sullam, "Schmoke Set to Push Ahead with Cost-Cutting Moves," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, June 27, 1989, sec. Maryland.

¹⁴³ Martin C. Evans, "Urban Services' Ex-Chief Rehired as City Consultant," *The Sun (1837-1989)*, July 6, 1989, sec. Maryland.

¹⁴⁴ Martin C. Evans, "Critical of Urban Services, Council Still Confirms Its New Director: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, October 16, 1990, sec. Metro.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Berger, "Cutting the Meat, Saving the Fat at City Hall: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, November 23, 1991, sec. Editorial.

¹⁴⁶ Michael A. Fletcher, "Schmoke Mulls Plan to Revamp City Government Panel Recommends Merging Agencies: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, February 8, 1992, sec. Metro.

For the antipoverty agency, this culture of reorganization culminated in the spring of 1993, when it was announced that Urban Services would cease to exist as an independent agency within municipal government. A newly created Department of Housing and Community Development would incorporate the programs previously run by USA and merge them with the services of a parallel legacy program, known as the Mayor's Stations. At the time of its elimination, the Urban Services Agency had an annual budget of 27 million dollars, only 2.9 million of which came from the City's coffers. The restructuring of municipal government in Baltimore between 1987 and 1993 reduced the municipal workforce by 14 percent, from 29,000 to 25,000 employees.¹⁴⁷

An addendum to the Urban Services Agency story came in 1996, when Mayor Schموke announced the overhaul of 14 neighborhood centers that replaced USA's centers and the Mayor's Stations. These new centers had operated for three years on an annual 5.2 million dollar budget, functioning primarily as referral services to other city agencies. Schموke publicly admitted that the reorganization had proven ineffective, and that the new centers had "failed to meet their mission of providing basic city services."¹⁴⁸ The decision to revert to direct service provision at on-site neighborhood centers represented a return to the concept behind the neighborhood centers run by all three antipoverty programs that emerged from Baltimore's War on Poverty. The mission of the neighborhood centers that developed out of the Great Society were not reflected in other municipal programs. The realization of Urban Services' value came too late to salvage the neighborhood-based direct service delivery mechanism that had emerged from the hard-fought battles of Baltimore's War on Poverty.

As an institutional history, this essay was primarily concerned with changes to the programmatic structures that were developed to help local government better respond to the needs of poor residents. I have argued that the War on Poverty changed local politics in Baltimore. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s, the city's top elected officials were forced to grapple with the demands of the poor who

¹⁴⁷ Eric Siegel, "Urban Services Set to Vanish as Agency: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, May 20, 1993, sec. Metro.

¹⁴⁸ JoAnna Daemrich, "Schموke Orders Overhaul of 14 Field Offices; Goal Is Making 'Hubs' Responsive to Residents: [Final Edition]," *The Sun*, February 20, 1996, sec. Metro.

participated in resident councils and citizen advisory boards and helped create antipoverty programs with federal funds. What emerged from the local Great Society programs was a decentralized municipal service model that operated at the point of need: the neighborhood. The eventual abandonment of this model also closed recreation centers, multipurpose facilities, firehouses, and branch libraries. Today, residents of the city's hardscrabble rowhouse communities continue to articulate the necessity of these programs and demand a return to municipal services at the neighborhood level.

There is still more work to be done to bring the organizational history of Baltimore's War on Poverty together with corresponding cultural, social, and political histories. What roles did activists and women play in Baltimore's War on Poverty? Did the shortcomings of the Great Society radicalize Baltimore's black youth? To what extent does the Black Power movement overlap with or diverge from the War on Poverty locally? Did the federal Empowerment Zones program in Baltimore during the 1990s and early 2000s draw from the lessons of CAA, Model Cities, and Urban Services? How should these antipoverty programs be evaluated, in light of the city's 2015 civil uprisings following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody? The relationship between protest and policy is ripe for further scholarly consideration, and Baltimore provides rich archival sources for future case studies.

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