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"Chance To Excel"

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CA, Feb. 22, 1980.

Chance To Excel 1980.

loyes are paid to work for one citizen as well as a thousand, and taxpayers shouldn't have to make nuisances of themselves to get their money's worth.

WHEN SOME 70 acres of vacant Midtown land is freed from the fading shadow of the Overton Park expressway this city will have a rare opportunity to turn a negative experiment into a positive experiment. Those prime residential sites will present Memphis with a chance to lead and excel in urban redevelopment issues critical to the times.

It would be tempting to view the worth of the land between the stubs of Interstate-40 in terms of money alone; millions of new dollars on the tax rolls as a result of building again on nonproductive cleared lots.

But what is built is equally as important. A string of monotonous "modern" homes or new imitations of "old" houses or instant garden apartments or high-rise buildings would violate the character of the neighborhood and contribute nothing to the city but additional money.

We don't sneeze at new tax revenues. The city needs them now. But thoughtful, quality projects produce tax dollars, too, and pay other dividends in other ways. The city shouldn't be after a fast buck here. Instead, it should see that this relatively small but highly significant part of Memphis is replanned in keeping with the urban development trends of the '80s; denser living, energy efficiency, neighborhood spirit, mass transit as a necessity. The area should serve as a model or laboratory of better urban living and sounder urban policy, and potential redevelopers should have to present firm and detailed plans meeting these sort of specifications as a condition of bidding on any of the property in question.

sidewalk and human scale. In current jargon, small Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in which higher densities and greater economies can be effected to accommodate a new society in which the typical family unit has changed and without sacrificing single-family life style.

The need to seize this opportunity is rooted in the facts of this "age of limits." According to the Urban Land Institute higher density city living represents a 40 per cent savings in energy for the average American family by reducing the heating and cooling losses in detached buildings and shorter travel distances between home, work and public facilities. The National League of Cities says better use of this kind of land, when compared to typical suburban developments, results in 43 per cent less energy consumption, 50 per cent less auto emissions and 35 per cent less water consumption. And a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study indicates there is a 70 per cent savings in tax costs to fund such public services as roads, sewers, lights, police and fire protection.

Memphis has been given an extraordinary asset. What we don't want to do is make ordinary use of it.

THIS DOESN'T CALL for a large prefab