

THE HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL COLEMAN
(Former Director of Model Cities
Program in Hoboken)

INTERVIEWER: ANN GRAHAM

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SIDE ONE, TAPE 1

AG: Could you please first tell me about
your time in Hoboken, when you arrived, how long you have
lived here, where you're from?

MC: I came to Hoboken in October of 1967 to
become the Model Cities Director at that time. I am from
Minnesota, but between Minnesota and Hoboken, I lived in
several places. Just prior to coming to Hoboken, I was
employed with the US Economic Development Administration in
Washington where I had been employed for almost three years
and I and my family at that time, well, we lived in
Alexandria, Virginia.

AG: How did you hear about the job here and
what interested you? Was this a job that was advertised or

something you heard was perhaps being planned and you got involved in it? How did you happen to come here?

MC: While I was working for EDA, the Economic Development Administration, I had one responsibility of reviewing for EDA the economic development components of Model Cities applications that were currently, through 1967, being reviewed in Washington. And, Hoboken's application stood out for its quality and comprehensiveness and it caught my attention. However, it was through a friend of mine who worked for the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs who informed me that Hoboken was looking for a Director for its Model Cities Program and that two or three people had been approached and had been, had declined the offer and would I be interested in going to Hoboken to - discuss the program with the Mayor and other people up there.

AG: What agency in Washington was responsible for Model Cities at that time? Was it EDA? HUD?

MC: HUD was responsible for the Model Cities Program and other agencies were involved, but HUD was the lead agency.

AG: When did Model Cities begin? When did the initiative begin in Washington? And when did the first applications, when did they arrive and was Hoboken among first?

MC: In 1967, HUD invited cities throughout the United States to enter the competition for a Model Cities Program. HUD was going to select 39 cities totally for the Program. This was a very selective program, the Model Cities Program. And so local applications were submitted to Washington, to HUD, in 1967, early -mid 1967. The application for Hoboken was prepared by Hoboken's planning consultant at that time, Ralph Seligman, who was the planning consultant for many years in Hoboken. Hoboken did not have a planning staff of any kind up to that point.

AG: Did Hoboken have a Planning Board?
And, also, how many applications totally did HUD receive?

MC: Hoboken did have a Planning Board, but it - really didn't become involved in the planning or application process. This was essentially prepared by the consultant, approved by the Mayor and Council, and then, during the application process, the Mayor lobbied for it vigorously in Washington.

There was something in the order of 175 or 200 applications submitted from cities in the United States. And, in New Jersey, the three cities who obtained the Model Cities Program were Newark, Trenton and Hoboken, only. Hoboken was the smallest city in the country to receive the award as a Model Cities Program.

AG: At the time that this Program became available and cities could apply for that, what were the criteria, the basic criteria that HUD established for - acceptance of a proposal. And the Mayor obviously was very supportive of this. And, what - encouraged him to be supportive of this? Can you describe the atmosphere in Hoboken at that time. I do realize the extent of the poverty, the extent of the housing problems and economic health - concerns, but what gave the initiative here to pursue this?

MC: The year I came to Hoboken, the Urban League of the United States had published a list of the ten worst cities to live in the United States. Hoboken was on the list.

AG: What other cities were on the list?

MC: Well, Newark in New Jersey was the only other one here in the state, I can't recall now. There were some cities in the South and a few industrial cities, Detroit was one... I - can't recall others right now. But anyway, Hoboken was, as you mentioned, was very depressed, a totally different city from what it is today. And, the Mayor, Louis DePascale, who was a - labor union leader on the docks, on the waterfront in Hoboken. He was the head of the shipbuilders' union, and there was shipbuilding going on up in the Bethlehem Steel shipyard. And he was also the Mayor of Hoboken. He was a World War II battlefield hero with a lot of decorations. In short, he, he was a very strong person, and a very strong leader, and a very strong Mayor. He saw the Model Cities Program as an opportunity for the City to tap into significant federal

funds, which was being promised at the time, to help rebuild the cities. He was an old time Hudson County politician, but he was a good politician in the sense he knew how power worked in Hoboken and Hudson County, and he used it. And for this reason, he really worked very energetically in Washington among the Congressional Caucus of New Jersey. Without his strong support and active work on its behalf, Hoboken would not have been selected. But also, without the quality of the application, Hoboken would not have been selected. So the two together, caught the attention of Washington.

HUD never intended this Program, Model Cities, to be for small cities. It was intended to be for large, urban areas where there were large neighborhoods, or communities within the city, in which they, HUD was going to use the Model Cities Program to, as a demonstration program to show what could be done in a select, few cities around the country that showed very depressed conditions, but also showed a variety and a wide ranging variety of factors, such as vitality and basic housing construction.

So, when I got here, the application had been approved and the next step was for the City to receive a Planning Grant,

which it received in June 1968 to use, to develop the Program, and to describe what we were going to do to raise up the Neighborhood in Hoboken, the Model Cities Neighborhood, roughly one-third of the City at the time (1st St to 4th St.) Upon being approved in Washington, then we would subsequently receive funding in Block Grants, approximately \$5 million a year for a period of five or more years. Later that was extended, but the intention was to use the money to leverage other funding, both public and private, with the realization that \$5 million a year was not nearly sufficient. But, it was given to the City to carry out its Plan and program of revitalization.

And so I became Model Cities Director shortly after the application had been approved. Hoboken was approved as a Model City in 1967 receiving an initial grant of \$131,000 in 1968. We received a with a small amount of money to be used for planning staff and for whatever we needed to do - to develop our action program to submit that to HUD for its final approval, and then to begin program implementation which started in 1969.

AG: I skipped over the issue of criteria by HUD. You mentioned that Hoboken would never have received

this proposal, accepted this proposal because it's a small City, but because of the lobbying on behalf of the Mayor made a great difference. Can you tell me more about the basic criteria and what Hoboken met of that criteria besides its small city size.

MC: The criteria were essentially a - social, economic, housing and physical situation that prevented the residents from living a decent life. We had to make the case for Hoboken that adverse conditions existed and that without significant Federal, state, and private investment into the City, those conditions would not be alleviated. It's important to realize at -- that time, riots in the inner cities were a fact of life around the country. In New Jersey, most of those were in Newark and Patterson, somewhat Jersey City. Up to that time, Hoboken had been spared of any. But in most of the larger cities around the country, there was a lot of ferment. The Model Cities Program was really intended as a response to do something of a significant nature to - deal with those issues.

AG: When you decided to come to Hoboken, and talk to the Mayor in 1967, can you tell me a little bit

about your first impressions of the community and how you imagined this job being accomplished given the conditions that you saw at that time. You moved from Alexandria which had been revitalized by that time. Give me your impressions of that.

MC: My first visit to Hoboken was a shock! It - shook me because I had expected bad conditions, but the total impact of those conditions in one square mile was, more than I had anticipated. And, that was one impression. The second impression was that I was impressed by the Mayor's sincerity. He indicated that this was the first time he had ever gone outside the city to employ anyone except for Ralph Seligman, the city's planning consultant. This was an unusual step in Hudson County for a Mayor to do this. He said that he was looking for the best person he could get who would be willing to come to Hoboken. And, a few others before me turned the job down after they came to the City and saw the situation. And, time was running out for him to hire someone. He told me at my at our first meeting as the Director that he will give me the final say on hiring people for my staff as long as I consulted with him first (and he said no other Director in the City had that freedom); and secondly, he said he did

not expect me to live in the City. If I wanted to live outside in the suburbs that would be perfectly all right. I had a wife and three children at that time, my daughter Suzi being born in March of 1968.

For my part, Alexandria was very nice. My wife and I loved it there. We lived in a beautiful area. And, it was a difficult decision. I was going to George Washington Law School in Washington at night; I was about halfway through. But, my reason for going to work in the Federal Government had changed. I went to work in the Economic Development Administration and our Agency received significant federal funding from Congress, and we were doing some very good projects around the country. But, the Vietnam War changed all that, and by 1967, programs like EDA and the "War on Poverty" Program, another one where I was a consultant for one year were drastically reduced in their funding and so losing the ability to achieve many results was limited. And Model Cities was the first new federal Program to come along, and it came with the promise of a lot of Federal funding.

The decision to come to Hoboken was based not on the Mayor's active interest in recruiting me, but also that I

had a great deal of working experience in the Federal Government and also in the international field before that. I saw the possibility in Hoboken of doing something effective and achieving real progress through the Model Cities Program, in part, because of its small size; it was a more manageable situation, and it wasn't totally impossible in five years or more to make a real impact.

AG: You mentioned that EDA and other programs coming out of the War on Poverty were reduced, the expenses were reduced. What was the initiative to give all this money to Model Cities in that environment at that time?

MC: The riots, primarily, in cities around the country. I think it was really a reaction to that. And also Nixon was President at that time and his administration wanted to put President Johnson's programs out of business (which EDA and the War on Poverty were), and to start a program with his own signature on it. Nixon had control of Congress at that time, and so the Model Cities Program was a Republican creation.

AG: Getting back to Hoboken, did you decide to live here, or in the suburbs? And can you describe a little bit about the political will and support of -- the Mayor. How about the City Council? What was their feeling or support of this Program?

MC: I never considered living outside the City. I knew from my experience (I was thirty-six years old at the time).that I really could never understand the City if I was commuting in and out, and that our family had to live in the City. At first, we rented a house on the 1100 block of Bloomfield. We rented the entire house, all four floors for \$100 a month! We lived there for four years, renting - for one primary reason: we didn't know how long we were going to stay here. Initially, my wife didn't want to come at all, but after three years, we bought a home in Hoboken, a brownstone on the adjoining block, on Garden Street for \$25,000, which the real estate person said I was paying way too much for. By that time, my wife and children came to love the city and the people in it, and we had many good friends here.

At the time I came here, the Mayor was in his second term, a four-year term, and he had had eight out of nine votes

on the City Council. So, almost anything he wanted, he was able to get approved.

AG: He was in his second term at that time. Did he continue to be Mayor throughout this Program or were other, were there changes made? And, how did that affect the Program?

MC: He was Mayor for two terms, from 1965 to 1973. He was defeated at the end of his second term by the single opposition Councilman, who over the years gradually obtained support throughout the City. His name was Steve Capiello.

AG: When you came to Hoboken and began to work on the Planning Grant in 1968, tell me how you started this project, how you began to work on the project and perhaps give me a little bit of background about how the one-third of the City that was chosen, became the area that you worked in.

MC: The first challenge was to recruit a Planning and Program Development Team using the initial Planning Grant of \$131,000 that we received, which was essentially a one year - grant for staffing salaries and organizational work that had to be done. A Neighborhood Planning Committee worked in conjunction with us during the whole program, which was one of the criteria of HUD. I decided to employ a professional team for this initial period, and recruited men and women, young men and women mostly younger than myself. I was 36 at the time; most of these people were just a few years out of college or out of graduate school. I hired an initial staff of approximately ten people who worked with me in several specialized areas of housing, employment, education, social services, recreation and so forth, along with secretarial support.

AG: All the people you hired were non-Hobokeners?

MC: None of the professional people that I initially hired were from Hoboken. I retained Ralph Seligman, Hoboken's Planner, along with two other planning consultants from New York. And the secretarial and support staff were Hoboken and as well as the staff of the

Neighborhood Planning Committee which set up an office and with full time staff of their own choosing, people from the Neighborhood, and from the community. The NPC had a staff of five or six full time people and a professional planner, a consultant of their own choosing.

I wish to relate the hiring of my first person, my secretary. I needed a secretary as soon as possible. I decided to hire a minority person from the community. And so, I put out the word (through various churches and others), that I was looking for a secretary. One of the ministers referred a young woman, a Puerto Rican, who was just out of high school 2-3 years and working as a secretary in one of the factories in Hoboken. Norma was from the Neighborhood, right on First Street. I saw immediately that she had great typing skills. She came to Hoboken as a young child with her family so she spoke English and Spanish, she was smart and she also spoke some Italian. I decided that I was going to hire Norma and I went to the Mayor and said, "Mayor, I have found a secretary." And, he reacted with surprise and said, "What?" And I said, "I found a secretary." And he said, "Who is she?" And I said, "She's a young Puerto Rican girl, woman living on First Street and her skills are

great." He said, "Look some more." I said, "But, why?" And he said, "Just look around some more; your search isn't over yet!" I said to myself, "This is - not a good sign! This is the first person I was going to hire for a very important job, but this was not a good omen!" So, I just thought awhile, and the Mayor called me over to his office in a day or two, and he said, "Hire someone from this list." And, I looked at the list and clearly there were no minority people on the list, although they were all from Hoboken; I think there were about six or eight names on the list. I took the list and I called two women from it. And I didn't know them at all, or any of their political connections, but they both had relatively good skills and would have been, 'ok.', but they were not minorities. I went back to the Mayor and I said, "Mayor, I've interviewed them, but my choice is still Norma." I had decided that, "I had to win this first test, because if I lost this one, it's all over!" He said, "Well, think about it some more." We played this cat and mouse game (I was the mouse, clearly) for a while and my work was falling behind. This went on for almost a month. At one of our meetings, I reminded him of his commitment to me before I took the job, and when he said, I could hire anyone as long as I consulted him. He said, "Well, I've kept my commitment."

And I said, "It doesn't seem that way to me because I really want to hire Norma. I think it is important for the Program." (The Model Cities area was mostly Hispanic, mostly Puerto Rican). "You said, I could hire whom I wanted." And, he said, "Yes. You can hire anybody you want, from that list!" He was serious. This was his idea of 'freedom.' He said, "None of my Directors has even this freedom. I tell them whom they are going to hire." A week or two after that, he called me, "You can hire Norma." I said, "Great!" I won my first victory! This is not going to be an easy job!

Norma started work the next day.

The next day, one of the women who I interviewed from the list also showed up and she said; "The Mayor said you have a job for me." And, so I said, "Ok. This is how it's going to work. I get mine. He gets his!" So I hired two secretaries at first. Some years later, Norma and I were talking, we became good friends and she actually went on from being a secretary to one of the Project Directors in the employment area). She said, "You know I still am angry at you for the hiring process you put me through in the beginning." And I said, "Well, what do you mean? You

weren't even directly involved in it. I was doing all the front-end work." And she said, "I didn't like it when one of the men from the City Hall came to my door and said, 'The Mayor is hiring you, he is selecting you as a secretary in Model Cities.'" I said, "I didn't know that the Mayor sent someone to your door." I said, "I never knew that!" And she said, "That's what happened and I was really angry and upset for a long time."

Norma is currently the Director of Housing in Orlando, Florida at this time! I spoke to her recently.

AG: That's wonderful! You started a great career! It sounds like his views and yours were different on the hiring front! Did that happen in other areas of this before we get into the details of the Program?

MC: Every staff selection was a struggle. For every person I got, there was a concession made. One of the big concessions was the staffing of the Neighborhood Committee, itself. While the Model Cities Neighborhood was Hispanic, the Neighborhood Planning Committee staff was almost all Afro-American. The Executive Director was a leader in the community, Joanne Jackson, a very strong

woman. There were Hispanics on the NPC Committee of course, but the Afro-American community really gave direction to the Neighborhood Planning effort. There was a good reason for that. When the Mayor ran for election, he won by thirteen votes, which his opponent contested and the first election was nullified. A second election was called for. And, Joanne Jackson got a bloc of about three hundred votes from the Black Community to vote for the Mayor in the second election. Mayor de Pascale won by less than 100 votes. So-- Joanne Jackson had free entrée in City Hall. She was a very strong and vocal spokesman for the Black community. She was the person in the Model Cities Neighborhood, whom I had to work things out with, in order to get Neighborhood support. She had free access to the Mayor and she used her power well.

AG: What made the Blacks more powerful at the time than the Hispanics? Was it a language issue, recent immigration, or Blacks living here for a long period? here?

MC: The Black community was a very small part of the Hoboken population. It was simply because of their concentrated power at the elections. They got more

votes for the Mayor than the few thousand Puerto Ricans did. So, it wasn't their numbers, it was their use of power, and their ability to use it selectively and they did so to help the Mayor, who would not have been Mayor except for those few hundred votes from Joanne Jackson.

An aside: the Puerto Rican people and the Black people had both been here a long time. Puerto Rican people started coming here after World War II. Veterans Programs induced returning veterans from Hoboken to move out to the suburbs and starting homes was easy to finance. This left a lot of vacant apartment buildings and homes and many factories in Hoboken used that opportunity to go to Puerto Rico to recruit and to actually transport Puerto Ricans into Hoboken, into apartments owned by the companies themselves. They owned blocks of apartment buildings. For example, on 12th and Willow, there the "Tootsie Roll Flats", a Maxwell House coffee complex--actually General Foods. Company housing like this brought several thousand Puerto Ricans to work in Hoboken factories the factories, the garment factories, Standard Brands, Maxwell House Coffee, on the docks. Norma's father was a dockworker who came this way. So, Puerto Ricans were the group that primarily filled up

the vacancies, occurring by long term Hoboken families moving to the suburbs.

While the Hispanic, and again this was mostly a Puerto Rican population, was 40% or more of the City's population, the Black population was approximately 5% or perhaps 2,000 to 3,000 people. But, in terms of political power, the Hispanics could not get their act together. They were scattered and diffused and competed among themselves, whereas the Black community concentrated its power behind a few leaders and used it where it counted the most. In terms of the Model Cities Program, they were the principal community that I had to negotiate deals with, more so than the Hispanic community.

AG: Why was the Black population of Hoboken small? And, were they hired in Hoboken to work in the factories and the shipyards or, did you see a lot of discrimination at that time? Was there a preference for hiring Hispanics whose power was more diffuse or was that one of the issues?

MC: As I heard it from the Black leaders at the time, the City did everything possible to keep the

Blacks out. Only a small number got into Hoboken; the rest lived in Jersey City (in terms of Hudson County). Whereas the Puerto Rican people who were more docile, and who were glad to accept low wage jobs just to have any kind of employment were the - was the population that filled up - the vacant buildings and obtained jobs more easily. When I came here, the population was about 55% white ethnic, 40% Puerto Rican, and 5% Black.

The white population was about 55% and that was mainly Italian, plus Irish, Slovak, German. And the Italians were - at that time, in political control. Just previous to that time, the Irish had the political power in Hoboken. And, before that, the Germans did. So, it had to do with the waves of immigration that characterized Hoboken over the years.

AG: You mentioned that you had difficulties with staffing and having to hire most of your professionals from out of town. Can you tell me about the staff that you did hire and how that eventually smoothed out when you were able to get things going?

MC: The staff that I hired to develop the initial Model Cities program was only about ten people all together. They were about equally divided between men and women. Two or three of them had just left the Peace Corps and were getting their graduate degrees in New York. One was an Israeli from Israel who had worked over there. I had two Black people on our Planning staff; one had worked in Boston for the Planning Department there. One Hispanic woman, Viviana, was the daughter of Munoz Marin, the first President of Puerto Rico and she was living in New Jersey and doing graduate work. She came to work full time as our Education Planner. Hiring her gave me a lot of support among the Puerto Rican community here, not so much support elsewhere. Our planning team essentially worked with community leaders to develop the Program. And, also Ralph Seligman, one of the consultants, Peter Salins, the Director who had been the Director of the Planning Department of City College in New York. During that first year, we had a small professional, plus all of the secretarial and support staff was local. The Neighborhood had its own staff. With that composition, I had enough good expertise and also, enough political support from the Mayor so that I didn't have to negotiate with individual Council member but just with the Mayor who controlled eight

of the nine council members. That was enough to give me the space I needed to accomplish this task, which as you saw in the planning volumes, was considerable. We worked day and night for about fifteen months to get our Program together and to get it approved in Washington.. In the middle of 1969 our Program was approved by HUD, and we began actual projects and new services in Hoboken.

AG: Just briefly can you tell me about the process of putting that Plan together, and the kinds of conflicts, negotiations, differences of opinion you encountered? How did all of the disparate people from different neighborhoods agree on - this one - Plan. I was very interested to find when I read the Plan document, how you ranked priorities and the weight you gave to effectiveness, to cost effectiveness, to the feasibility of that, and the cost. And, how you in five different Neighborhoods, how did one Planning Council from all five agree about other Neighborhoods. Just a little bit about the process and the citizen participation of that.

MC: The way we approached it was first, to learn from the community what the urgent needs were, as felt by them. And that was channeled through committees

that were set up within the Neighborhood Planning Committee, itself, so that local residents could come to meetings. We had meetings almost every night for a year. And they were discussing what needed to be done and what the problems were from their living experience. During all those meetings, one of my staff was always present and also the NPC had their consultant present working with them because there was always the charge being made that 'you don't listen to us. And...Are we just going to talk and you're going to do what you want anyway, and so there was - a lot of suspicion all around. But, we set up a structure so that we could get that input coming in, in terms of the community urgently felt needs.

We also retained from Princeton, The Opinion Research Corporation as a professional survey organization that carried out, within the Neighborhood, a comprehensive survey of - needs among the population. And that was our pure professional - overlay on top of - the community. And then, my own planning staff who were working not only in the community, for example, Viviana, who was our Educational Planner from Puerto Rico, she was working with the educational system in the City, talking to teachers, and students, and the Board of Education. My staff was

coming up with their own ideas of what the problems were and what should be done. And then I, through the Mayor, was meeting constantly with the City Council and committees on the City Council who were also voicing their opinions, none too delicately, to me of what they wanted me to do. So, it was through all of these different sources that information was, or the needs were discussed, debated, for more than a year as we were pulling together our Program and Plan. And, we had controversy and a stalemate, say with the City Council or - the community, on certain issues of what should be done because now we are talking about money. This was not a theoretical Plan; but was going to be translated into action. Essentially, from the community standpoint, it got down to jobs; employment was the thing that mostly they wanted to see come out of this. We had to have, of course, a broader perspective, dealing with the housing issue and - all the other social issues. Education was a burning issue and we had real "fights" with the Superintendent and the Board of Education on what should be done.

In the end, where a stalemate existed, I made final decisions, "We have to bring this to a conclusion, and this is where I'm coming down on it." I would make sure when I

said that that I had the Mayor with me, or if I didn't, he and I had to work it out between us, even at the cost, sometimes of the support of the Neighborhood Planning Council. I was at meetings, on occasion, at the NPC office, when they were so angry with me that they locked the doors and the big men were getting ready to 'lay me out.' At times, I had City Council members calling me on the phone, and screaming and hollering at me, and it got to be ugly sometimes. And even my own staff, on occasions, wouldn't even talk to me, for days on end because of a decision that I had to make. Sometimes I had to do, not what I preferred to do, but I said, "This is the political situation and I have to make a compromise."

AG: Can you give me an example of one of those stalemates and political compromises?

MC: Yes. Housing. The decision that we came to in housing was extremely controversial both in the Neighborhood, and in the City Council and with the Mayor. We decided, the Planning Team, that what we needed to do was to undertake a housing solution that could have ramifications throughout the whole City. We should not use any money in that first year's \$5 million to build any

housing or fix any housing. We needed more information; we needed more support; we needed to learn how we could find the right mix of investment, and resources and planning to really solve the City's housing problem which was one of very dilapidated and over-crowded tenements and serious housing conditions. So, for that first year budget of \$5 million, our budget for housing was something like \$100,000 for more study. And that drove everybody crazy. They wanted to see something in the ground going up. Newark was building housing and Trenton was going to build housing. Why can't Hoboken? Housing is our most serious problem. And, I was saying, "No, we need more time to get this thing right." I was not very popular. But, of course in retrospect, it was the right decision because we then learned what we could do. And, by the second year, we had obtained approximately \$100 million of outside private investment that was committed to Hoboken to begin renovating the large apartment buildings.

The other thing was, everyone in the City who lived here for a long time (excluding myself and my team) wanted new housing. They wanted all these tenements to be torn down, on Washington Street and everywhere, but we said, "No new housing, we're going to rebuild what we have. This is the

strength of the City." My life was "in jeopardy" for making that decision. Hoboken people didn't understand the value of their housing, to them; good housing was new housing, with a carport like a suburban situation. And so that change of opinion took a long time to come. And it only came after the apartments starting to be completed and whole blocks of housing started to turn around. The construction was good quality, the management was good, and this was starting to have an impact on the City. That was one example and, there were others, but that was probably the most outstanding dilemma we had at the start of the Program...

AG: Was some of the pressure about building new housing and tearing down the old housing, political pressure as a result of developers interested in building new housing?

MC: There were no developers interested in coming to Hoboken. We had to go out and convince the first developer to come to Hoboken. No developer wanted anything to do with Hoboken up until around 1980, some ten years later. We discovered a developer in Newark, called Priorities Investment owned by Joseph Barry and his father.

They were doing good housing rehab work in Newark. We had gone to about seven or eight cities to see what developers were doing. The Barry's were doing the best quality work with the best understanding of how to work with a community. But at first, they didn't want to come to Hoboken; they had a very good thing going in Newark and we had a hard time convincing them. But, they came and talked to the Mayor and others and eventually decided to come to Hoboken. It took us about a year, from the time we started looking, to find the right developer. The Barry's sold their business in Newark and started Applied Housing in Hoboken and with them; we developed a strategy and program to rehabilitate the old, deteriorated apartment buildings throughout the city.

AG: So initially, and for quite awhile, it was renovation and not tearing down and building new housing. But you mentioned that the building we are in now is new, as a result of that time.

MC: Our housing program had several components to it. First of all, the most urgent problem was the tenement buildings. And with Applied Housing getting started, and with an important Federal commitment,

we received \$100 million for major housing rehabilitation within a year or two. Things were starting to move.

The second area of, or component were the homeowners who were very demoralized. You could buy almost any brownstone in the City for \$15,000 to \$20,000 at that time. Many vacancies and "for sale" signs on every block. And they all wanted to sell and go to Secaucus or the suburbs at the time. That's how I rented our first brownstone for \$100 a month. The family had left it in the hands of a real estate person to sell, who couldn't sell it. \$18,000 was the asking price at that time. I didn't buy that house, by the way; I bought another house. But anyway, we had to do something to raise homeowners' morale. This was the genius of Model Cities; we didn't have to use any existing housing programs in Washington. So we could devise our own. And so we designed our own homeowners program called the - Hoboken Municipal Home Improvement Program. It took us around one year of planning, talking to homeowners, contractors, the banks. There wasn't one bank in the City willing to give any loans to homeowners for fixing up their homes. There wasn't one. We found the first lender in Plainfield. It was a small lender-Larson Mortgage Company. We discovered a unique federal program in Washington that

we hadn't heard about. With Larson, we started making 3% loans to homeowners to fix up their homes and, with extended terms. That program started slowly but in five years we had about a thousand, more than a thousand homeowners in the program. They were standing in line to get their applications because we made the process so simple. Owners were approved for loans in 4 hours with their choice of contractors. And so we set up the Hoboken Municipal Home Improvement Program. We trained a staff of cost estimators and loan advisors (about ten people) all Hoboken residents with the exception of the Director who came from New York City. We trained the staff in all the required skills and the program operated for more than 10 years. The same thing worked in the apartment complexes, the tenements.

One big problem we had, had to do with relocation. Every apartment complex was way overcrowded. How can Applied Housing do any renovation? They couldn't do it with the tenants living in place. This was going to be a "substantial rehabilitation"; everybody had to get out for the work to be done. To evict 100 or 200 families in each of these buildings was going to start a riot in the city. No question about it. Applied Housing said, "We can't

move. We're stuck." I went to Washington, with the Mayor and with the Barry's. We met with our two Senators', Congressmen, and top HUD officials. We said, "You've got to give us some additional support so that we can handle this relocation problem so that it will work. Otherwise we can't begin. There is nothing we can do." The Puerto Ricans were already mobilizing. They were expecting to be evicted and lose their apartments. HUD gave us a special Housing relocation grant of \$2 million. We organized a Relocation office staff with all local people, including the Director. We set up the office in the same block as the first project on Willow between Twelfth and Thirteenth, a big apartment building. It was one of the worst buildings with more than a hundred apartments with possibly 500 people called the Tootsie Roll Flats. All of those people had to be relocated. Most of the staff was Puerto Ricans who knew all of the residents. And we were able to give every family \$5,000 cash, (this is 1970) for relocating elsewhere. When the work was done, they could come back. The completed apartments had a maximum of four bedrooms which meant a family of ten persons couldn't get back in. Four bedrooms was the maximum; most apartments had two or three bedrooms. Federal guidelines applied. We couldn't have overcrowding anymore because we were to completely

rehabilitate these buildings. Anyway, if someone had to live somewhere else, they received the \$5,000, plus another \$5,000 and moving expenses to move wherever they wanted to go including Puerto Rico which many families decided to do. Some received \$10,000 in 1970 so that was a lot of money for relocation. Those who wanted to apply to get back in to the building had first priority and there would be no other families let in except or until the relocates were settled. This was a totally Puerto Rican project except for a few white people (elderly people). We didn't have one incident; everyone was happy. And it worked. And so that became our relocation model for using the 2 million from Washington. Once we got the first building and relocation completed it was easier to do subsequent buildings, something like a "rollover." For each of our projects like this we hired only local staff. More often than not, the Director was someone from out of - town, because of their specialized experience, and in managing complex programs.

AG: I know in the Plan you listed many employment activities and how to work with that problem, but I was curious to know what kind of employment. It didn't seem like much employment was available in Hoboken, especially with the demise of - industry at that time. Can

you explain some of the issues that you dealt with and how the employment issue was addressed?

MC: At that time there was a lot of employment in Hoboken; there were a lot of garment shops. Now these were needle trades, but they were mostly all unionized and so the wages were pretty good. The conditions were not all that great, but the... There was also a lot of work on the waterfront. Ships were still coming and leaving from Hoboken. That was on its way out but there was still a lot of cargo and longshoremen were very active. One thing we noted in Hoboken was that for the local people, New York was an "alien" country and the Hudson River was a "wall." It might have been a wall of water. Few people ventured across the Hudson for jobs in 1970.

We had a long-range goal with employment, which had to do with economic development. But we took three specific steps right away: One, for the rehabilitation, for the work, Applied Housing agreed to hire local people: number 1 for laboring jobs and number 2 for entry jobs into the unions. Because of the size of our housing program and the substantial money involved, we couldn't do it without union

participation. We negotiated with the unions including our Congressman and Applied Housing. These talks were difficult, but we insisted that the unions open jobs in the construction trades. That was accomplished and a lot of Puerto Ricans and Blacks got into the union. Not as many as we would have liked; I can't tell you the numbers off hand. I used to know them. But, entry jobs, as apprentices in the construction trade. This was an important victory for us because housing construction was going to go ahead and we had a big commitment to complete more than 2,000 apartments in Hoboken. HUD in Washington gave us one of the biggest allocations in the country.

Number two, local women, most of who worked in the garment and other factories in Hoboken and Hudson County. We established an Office Skills Training Program and on one floor of a vacant factory we renovated it to look like a modern office. Our Office Skills Training Program operated day and night for women to learn typing and office skills and office equipment. And we had fifty women in training during the day and fifty women at night. Each woman received \$50 a week for her baby-sitting costs. The program was run like an office in New York. And - Norma, my secretary, became the Director of that Program. Then

Washington put us out of business. They said we could only do Training Programs operating through the Department of Labor. We had a big to-do about that, and in the end we lost.

AG: Describe the results of the program. Were women hired in New York, or, for secretarial jobs because of this?

MC: I can't remember the details but the success rate was very high. And after a full year of training (and they were going like thirty hours a week), their skills were very good. And we had a regular graduation at the end of the year and we graduated I think a total of about three hundred by the time the Program ended. Many of them got very good jobs in New York and elsewhere. It did work well and it should have continued for many more years, but it wasn't.

One more thing on employment, we also set up a training program with the Maritime Unions in which men could get jobs on ships in the engine room as stationary engineers. Their licenses as stationary engineers also qualified them for operating power units in large apartment buildings. The

Maritime Union provided us with instructors - and space. We were training about twenty-five a year for about five, six years, who went through that Program. Some got jobs on ships and every graduate received their Certification from the State.

AG: Was the Mayor particularly helpful with the - shipbuilding and the - maritime workers because of his role? Did he do, was he President of this Union at the same time he was Mayor and was that considered a conflict or was that normal at the time?

MC: He was an official of the Shipbuilders, the Mayor of Hoboken, and the Hudson County Freeholder all at the same time. That's - one of the perks of becoming elected. That dual kind of job holding was considered normal and good.

AG: Those were the three main training programs. There were other issues that you identified in the report were health, and, could you talk a little bit about the health issues here?

MC: Yes. Health. The one thing that we did was to provide money for the City Health Department, and to help supplement the salaries of the City Nurse, at that time, which was the head of that Department. The other thing we did was we concentrated on women's health and child health. And we established what we called the Hoboken Family Health Services Program. And we established that in Saint Mary Hospital on the ground floor. And we paid for the staff. The outstanding problem for people in Hoboken on health was the hospital. It was - a big issue with low-income people. They could only get attention if they were sent to the Emergency Room, and they had to pay a \$50 fee (something like that, something outrageous) to be seen and they were turned away and sent home if they couldn't. And it was the only hospital that would take care of them except the Jersey City Medical Center, which was really for very, very poor indigenous people. And that was a horror scene over there, Jersey City, yes. Hoboken's only hospital was a real problem for our local neighborhood people and for us. We had great difficulty in attempting to negotiate. And, at first, the hospital administration wouldn't even deal with us, until the Administrator retired. The new administrator came in who was more progressive, more forward looking. And she

embraced the idea of a Family Health Center in the hospital in which we paid for the administrative staff and they provided the medical back up. We decided not to set up our own Health Clinic which many other Model Cities had done. Our motto was, "Don't do something which somebody else can do better." Negotiate working arrangements with existing institutions. And so we couldn't have done it without the change in leadership at the hospital. We set up the first Hoboken Family Health Center and, of course, the medical support was all right there at the Hospital. And, no one had to go to the Emergency Room, except for emergencies.

The other thing in health, which was very important, we decided that we needed to do something about family planning and women's health issues, specifically. My Health Planner, Julie, from New York City left Columbia to come to work for us full time. She came from a medical family; her father was a doctor. And she was very strong on women's liberation. But anyway, Julie said we have to have, basically, a Birth Control Program, but we couldn't call it that because this was a very Catholic city. So, we called it a Family Planning Program to be staffed medically, and with support services for women and teenagers concerning women's health issues such as birth

control methods.. No abortions of course, but a complete health examination from a doctor, women's doctors for the most part. And then, follow up treatment if necessary. But - the idea was to focus on women's health. However, we faced opposition from the Catholic Churches. The Churches' Pastors came to the Mayor and complained about the Program and said it had to be stopped. We had a site and we had our staff all selected, all Hoboken people except Julie Spain who was going to direct it.

[Here, the tape runs out.]

TAPE 2, SIDE A:

AG: Before you continue, MC, about the health issue and your decision to focus on women, it seems to me that many of the innovations and ideas that became a part of this Program were, in many ways, before their time. Thinking about women's health as a priority, about family planning issues, about not tearing down buildings. So, when you finish with the health issues, can you explain a little bit about how these innovations, besides your own ability to think through these issues and your expertise in these areas, but these Programs were not - common, I would imagine, throughout this Model Cities. Could you explain a little bit about that?

MC: Yes. I want to finish the family planning chapter because it was very significant. We had an impasse with the Catholic Church in Hoboken. I asked Julie to "go out and meet with every one of the priests individually and convince them. They don't need to support it but see if you can get an agreement where they will not publicly oppose it." The Mayor had said, "If they oppose it, it's dead. And you can't do it." So Julie met with

everyone one of the priests. One day she said, "We've got it! They're not going to oppose it!" I asked, "How did you do it? She said, "In our program we can what we want as long as we instruct people, not only in contraception but also in God's way." "God's way?" "Yes, the rhythm method." So I said, "Is that all?" "Yes", she said, "that's all". So we started our Hoboken Family Planning Program. Julie was the Director for the first two years. Then she was succeeded by a local woman, a Hispanic, with a health background. Again, our staff was from Hoboken, mostly Hispanics. The program is still operating today.

The Family Health Center is still operating in St. Mary'. But St. Mary's eventually took it over as their own which was the kind of innovation that we had been looking for in the Model Cities all along. I had worked in the Federal Government, and I knew that, and this was true of housing too, in every area, that if we utilize only Model Cities' money and Federal funding and expect our programs to continue, they will not. We have to build continuity into the future and that has to be with other public and private support--especially financing. Unless we have some combination of public and private financing all of our Model Cities' programs will stop in a few years. We were

looking for long-range institutional change that meets our objectives of embracing poor people and providing for people as well as new and permanent services.

So, in housing, that was true and eventually the private sector carried through. There was another housing sector-- senior housing for the elderly and disabled who had no place to go. We built five Senior Citizens Housing projects. For people with disabilities and/or elderly. These housing programs were funded entirely by HUD. None of our many housing programs were financed by Model Cities' funds, except for our support staffing.

There's a building on Jefferson St. between Third and Fourth; it's called Clock Towers. In 1968, it was a vacant factory. It was owned by Keuffel and Esser: the manufacturers of drafting supplies, slide rules, and engineering equipment. Like many factories, the 60's and 70's, not only families were moving to the suburbs but so were the factories. K and E went to Morristown and built a new headquarters, leaving a two-acre block tract with a huge empty building which was deteriorating badly by 1968. The site is across the street from St. Francis Church. It was vacant about five years was vandalized with derelicts

living in it. It was a big mess. The Pastor called me often, "The K & E building is destroying our parish. People are afraid to come to Mass on Sundays." And the City couldn't keep it locked up, because it was so big.

K & E borders on Jefferson and Adams, Third and Fourth. There are a few private houses on one end, but basically it's a two-acre site. I and my team said, "We need to produce housing out of that place. We couldn't find any existing Housing program at HUD that would take a factory building and renovate. There was a new Program called Operation Breakthrough. HUD was going to select some sites around the country for modular housing. We'll try to get Operation Breakthrough funds, and we'll get a new modular apartment building here in the middle of the city. This will save the neighborhood." Unfortunately, HUD said, "Hoboken, you're getting too much. This one is going to Jersey City." So Operation Breakthrough went to Jersey City for some modular housing. We decided to use \$50,000 to do a study of the building itself: engineering, survey work and so forth. WE had approached Applied Housing which had already started on its second and third block of buildings. They went to look at it and they said, "No

way!" We don't want to touch that building. The concrete floors are 3-4 feet thick." It was built by Germans. It was a fortress. Applied Housing said, "We don't know how we could deal with the costs of trying to put in all the utilities, and there are too many questions marks." We hired a consulting firm, a specialist in engineering and housing from Philadelphia for \$50,000. They came up three months later. They came back and said, "It can't be done" I said, "You're fired. That's the wrong answer." Instinctively we knew that it was possible to do. One of my team members, who had experience in New York working on big housing projects, said, "There's a company that's doing a first factory conversion in the Village. Let's talk to them." They came to Hoboken and agreed to be our developer for K& E. Again we piggybacked on their experience and went back to Washington and received a special "set-aside" of housing construction funds. But then Keuffel & Esser let us know that they had a buyer for the building who was going to use it as a warehouse and for garment shops. If we wanted the building, we had to come up with \$500,000 to hold the building for 90 days. Otherwise, they were going to sell it. To make a long story short, I decided to take a gamble, one of many. And I took \$500,000 of Federal Model Cities money, placed it as a deposit on that building

in order to get the time necessary for us to finalize our deal with HUD in Washington. When the Federal auditors in Washington saw that big payment go through, the White House called Mayor DiPascale and said, "What's going on down there? HUD just told us that you used \$500,000 of Model Cities funds to place an option on a building!"

AG: What year was this?

MC: This was 1971. HUD sent an investigator to Hoboken about K & E. My staff said, "You're off to jail, Mike. Good bye!" Most of them were sad. Anyway, the investigator arrived and he was hostile. By the end of the week, we had convinced him. He reported back to HUD, "Let them do it. I think there is a good chance this project will succeed." To make a long story short, we got \$5 million to renovate the building for low and moderate income people: 173 apartments--mostly two, three, and four bedrooms. It's still doing well and it is still low and moderate income. The developer owned the building for several years. That was a requirement we placed on our developers to own and manage their projects. They couldn't sell and get out as so many developers do.

They couldn't just get their money and go and often leave a mess. They had to stay, and manage their housing.

But those were the ways in which we were able to deal with the realities. Model Cities gave us flexibility and support, and we were starting to show some progress. More often than not able to get support for some projects that otherwise could never get funded.

AG: Back to my initial question. You were innovative with both housing and the women's health issues. How were you able to accomplish this?

MC: At that time, we didn't think in terms of being innovators. We were thinking in terms of what will bring the city back to life. How can we open the windows and doors, let in fresh air, bring in new investment, bring in new interest, resolve, and alleviate the problems of the city. And, so just as the issues confronted us, problems or opportunities, my staff said, "How do we make this work for Hoboken, for the long run? How should we proceed? How do we get the support we need? The financing? The support services (public and private) to make this an enduring and lasting improvement? Whether

it was the tenements, the homeowners, an empty factory building, it wasn't hard for me to say, "I can't let this factory become a warehouse that would adversely affect an entire neighborhood." This was a very important neighborhood, only two blocks from St. Ann's and across the street from St. Francis (two important Italian parishes). So, I said, "We have an opportunity here. This is taking a big risk, but I am not taking the risk for myself." I knew a lot about how the federal Government worked. For four years, I was on the other side giving federal grants to communities, multi-million dollar grants in Appalachia and the South when I was working for EDA. I didn't act recklessly or without abandon. I said, "I have my feet on the ground and my objectives are solid. I'm taking some risk. We're moving into an unknown situation, but we're not doing this for the sake of "living on the edge" and certainly not for personal financial gain. Therefore, we're going to proceed with care, but not without some risk as well.

Our Hoboken Home Improvement Program, which became so successful, where more than two thousand homeowners participated when we offered three percent loans while the bank interest rates were 10-12%. Because of some favorable

publicity, the state Attorney General contacted me and said, "You have to stop that program. This is the Constitution of the State of New Jersey. You cannot subsidize interest rates with public funds so your program has to cease." I refused to do anything about it and the Attorney General stopped the City payroll. That got the Mayor's attention, and everyone else. We went off to Trenton, the Mayor, the City attorney, my attorney, my housing consultant and myself. We convinced the Attorney General that our Housing Program was outside the narrow definition of the Constitution, which says that no municipality can give cash grants or gifts to its residents. That was what we were doing, in effect, by reducing the interest rate in the form of a cash grant, but the cash was going into improving the housing. We had conceived this method of financing to encourage homeowners to invest in their houses. This was the first program of its kind in the United States. Later the State Department of Community Affairs published a publication on Hoboken's Municipal Home Improvement Program which they sent all over the state. We created it; it wasn't easy and it was achieved through trial and error. We came up with the one housing solution that would work in Hoboken using Federal

and private funds. This program just ended only about five years ago.

AG: What private money did your receive?

MC: Well, for that program no bank in Hoboken would participate at first, so our first lender was Larson Mortgage Co. in Plainfield, New Jersey. After it started showing some results, the first Hoboken bank joined in, Washington Savings Bank. Then a second bank and a third bank and in five years, several banks wanted to participate. We had changed a perception in Hoboken, that investing Hoboken's housing was not a losing proposition.

AG: So the private funds were bank funds?

MC: It was all bank loans plus federal and state funds- no gifts. And we developed our own formula which had never been done before where we subsidized the interest rate with the difference in the interest going to the homeowner as a cash grant and going into home improvements as a final payment. The bank loan

amounted to roughly two-thirds and the subsidy worked to about one-third. For a \$12,000 home improvement project, the owner was borrowing \$9,000 at 12% and receiving \$3,000 as a cash subsidy. The total amount "loaned" was a 4% effective interest rate. We called it an interest subsidy. Our average home improvements loans were running about \$12,000. The homeowner was paying about \$100 a month on \$9,000 for ten years. The incentives worked. One other thing we learned about was an unknown HUD regulation where under certain circumstances, you can insure the bank loan by the Federal Government. We combined several resources and support that interested the banks where before they would not have participated. Our program enabled them to make their investment do so safely.

AG: When I read the Model Cities documents, it seemed that most of the homes were renter-occupied, not owner-occupied. Who were the homeowners, what was their profile? Were they required (by taking the loan) to renovate their homes, remain in their homes and not sell these homes for a certain period of time?

MC: To answer your last question first: no, there were no conditions. That was an important

policy decision, too. Homeowners were going back and forth about whether to stay in Hoboken or not. Most of the homeowners needed important improvements and work on their homes. We placed no condition on what they did except if they had any substandard housing conditions, that these had to be corrected before, let's say, renovating the basement for an apartment or something else. Homeowners had to take care of health and safety violations and other home improvements , too, which we wrapped together into one project.

For me, a good way to look at Hoboken's housing is to divide the housing into three categories: 1) single (1-2) family homes - 5,000 units; 2) detached tenements - 5, 000 units; and 3) large apartment buildings - 5,000 units for a total of 15,000 units.

AG: These units were in the Model Cities neighborhood?

MC: Early on we came to a conclusion that we needed the entire city to be designated as a Model City by HUD. At first, HUD said, "No. It is legally impossible. At the most, 30% of the city." But Hoboken's

Model Neighborhood boundary came to be extended to the entire city. We went back to Washington and argued our case. Our model Neighborhood won't work because there's no natural dividing line between neighborhoods in Hoboken. The City Planner chose an arbitrary boundary having the characteristics of a Model Neighborhood as HUD wanted but it was an artificial boundary. Our Model Neighborhood did include the worst housing conditions and the highest percentage of minorities and low income families. But we needed to encompass the city to avoid controversy and to unify Hoboken around Model Cities. HUD gave us a waiver and we were the only City in the country so designated. That solved a big internal problem for us since residents were complaining to the Mayor. They didn't see the reason for the dividing line. If I have a home on Fourth Street, I can get a loan; but if I live on Fifth Street I can't. This was really a big problem politically for the Mayor and within the City council. During Year 1, the entire City became a Model City. That's why some of our first big housing projects were uptown. The developers were saying we need to begin in a location free from a lot of community entanglements "downtown".

AG: Thank you for clearing that up.
How did you convince Washington to designate the entire city? Was the small geographic area a factor?

MC: The top people at HUD at that time were working for President Nixon, but they were very sharp. They liked what they were hearing about Hoboken. They liked the Mayor and my staff and the Model Cities Application prepared by Ralph Seligman. I had a good rapport with HUD as well plus other contacts in Washington. On one occasion, Senator Harrison Williams invited the Mayor and me to lunch in the Congressional dining room. Congressman Dominick Daniels was also very supportive. Basically, HUD wanted to give us the best opportunity to make Model Cities successful. And they were bending over backwards to give us support such as funding for relocation which they realized was indispensable to open some space and for a relocation program that the residents would accept. Otherwise we were going to have riots and there would be no chance for Model Cities to work. We found receptive Federal bureaucrats, who were positive, and who wanted Model Cities to work in Hoboken and they saw a success story here. Hoboken was different from Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn and the lower Bronx. This was a

different kind of a city. They liked us. They saw we were real, and Hoboken was a special city. That was a happy day when the Mayor could announce that all of Hoboken was a Model City. We immediately asked HUD to increase our budget accordingly, but we got nowhere on that.

We started with the biggest housing problem which was the tenement. That was the most obvious, the most dramatic, and the worse housing situation in the City. We developed our prototype, our strategy, a good developer and the federal backing to move ahead on a large scale.

The other end of the housing spectrum was the homeowners. That was the Mayor's political base. These are the people who vote. These people were very important to the Mayor and very important to the City, because so many were moving out of Hoboken. We wanted to reverse that trend, to get people to stay, to find reasons for them to stay. Our Hoboken Municipal Home Improvement Program became the foundation of that goal. In return for them investing in their home, we can give them subsidies plus a lot of technical support. They did not have to worry about contractors because our staff was monitoring closely. There would be no work left undone; no contractor could get

paid and walk away. We controlled the whole process in support of the homeowner. "Fly by night" contractors were no problem. They had to qualify to get into our program; they had to be interviewed, agree to the conditions, sign an agreement. They received their final payments after our local staff checked the work. And, most important, is the homeowner happy? And, does the work look good?

AG: For clarification, what is the difference between tenements and apartment buildings at that time?

MC: Well, the tenements, for example, I would refer to our first big project on Willow Avenue between 12th and 13th Streets where 100 families lived upon completion. Before rehab, there were maybe 200-300 hundred persons living in there. The average family size in Hoboken at the time was three persons. There were three people in an average family according to the census and our own surveys showed that to be pretty close. But of course, in tenements there were larger families, and in single family homes there are fewer people. The block on Washington Street between 12th and 13th, on the east side, there were almost two hundred units in that building.

These tenements were low income, bad conditions, and no investment on the part of the owner before Model Cities.

Apartment buildings are the typical four or five story walk-up buildings with "railroad type" apartments—one apartment on each side, two on each floor. So there would be eight or ten apartments in one building. This is where most of our problems came later on. By the time Model Cities ended, we had made much progress with the tenements and with single family homes. But we didn't have a handle on the individual apartment buildings. By 1976, there was still no wave of developers, but a few developers were coming into the City to purchase these apartments.

In 1974-1975, Model Cities was working and we were starting to get publicity in places like the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Christian Science Monitor as well as several television interviews. Many of the reporters and camera people who interviewed us also began to move into Hoboken. Newsweek's first International Editor and his family moved into Hoboken as a result of one of the news stories about Hoboken. But this was also true of other media people. As a result, we were guaranteed favorable running commentary in the media from then on.

But the apartment buildings which comprised a third of the City's housing units were where the problem of evictions and fires occurred. A lot of bad stuff happened there. I continued to live in Hoboken, after I resigned and still live here. By the way, when I left Model Cities- Community Development, 150 people were on my staff with only about thirty from out of town, the rest were all local residents. All of our services programs were staffed by local people.

I resigned in December, 1975, for a number of reasons. One of them was political, second, I was tired, and, third, my personal life was falling apart. I worked eight years, six or seven days a week. And, it was time to leave. The new Mayor and I were not working together as well as I did with the previous Mayor. I was finding it impossible to do what I needed to do. We needed to buy as many apartment buildings as possible and take them off the market. We needed to set up a non-profit housing corporation that would work under "Model Cities"--really Community Development by then. We need to buy a thousand of these buildings because theses are going to be a big problem in the future. We could see a few bad signs of things to come. We knew that the City basically had bottomed out.

With another five years of Federal support, we could get in front of the next housing issue. HUD started Community Development in 1975. Community Development was really a watered-down version of Model Cities. But, there wasn't enough federal funding to do what was necessary to buy up as many apartment buildings as possible and keep them off the private market. And then begin a slow, gradual process of renovation and management that would help the people in place, because these buildings were filled with low-income people living in bad housing conditions.

We needed another five years to make this work and \$5 million a year to leverage for purchasing and rehabilitation. A strong non-profit Housing Corporation could accomplish this. The Housing Corporation did get started, but it got side-tracked on other things. It did build some new housing for Puerto Rican families; about fifty were built, two-family homes for--mostly for Puerto Rican police, firefighters, and this was good. But the problem in housing, we never did anything to speak of. If I had stayed, and if HUD funded us well, we could have solved a good part of this housing issue in five years or so.

I want to make an additional comment about our Model Cities staffing which is, I think, very important. I had a requirement of everyone working for the Model Cities Program at whatever level: everyone had to get to school besides staff training. Everyone had to be enrolled in a certified educational institution and be working on the next level of their education. I set up a counseling unit in Model Cities...with professional counselors--three people, full time, who worked out with every staff person their educational plan. My secretary, Norma, was a high school graduate. She had to go to college; we paid 100% tuition as long as you passed your courses. If you flunked a course, you had to take it again at your own expense. Everyone went to school; everyone had their classes paid. They even turned it on me and said, "What about you?"

AG: You mentioned that you thought about law school.

MC: No. I didn't want to be a lawyer. But, "It applies to everyone, right?" And so, I studied for a doctorate at NYU. I already had a master's degree. Norma got her college degree. This program became so popular and many City employees wanted to come to work for

Model Cities. Of course, we had a hundred and fifty at our peak. And the great majority was local people, and everyone went to school for Associate Arts Degrees for certain trades. It was a requirement of employment. It was called Career and Counseling and they saw to it that everyone got their program worked out and monitored it full time. It was a beautiful program. When the Model Cities program ended, HUD came up with one audit finding, and that was our Career Counseling program. They concluded that this program should not have been done. There was no rule against it. I said, "We were writing a new book." They said, "Yes, but you could not do for Model Cities employees what you couldn't do for the regular City employees." That was their only audit finding amounting to a lot of money. A finding against, you know who was headlines! All of the tuition and all the support were ineligible and the City had to pay it back. We negotiated our way out of that one. But it was not easy. My staff didn't believe me when I said, "Model Cities isn't going to last forever. You're not going to be here forever. When you leave, you need to be qualified to get a better job. That's all it's about. When you leave, you're not going to be dead-ended. You will have more capability and professional possibilities in the future." One of our counselors became the Director of

Admissions at the new Hudson County Community College.

Some persons went to law school, my housing director got his law degree. I didn't get my Ph.D. though.

AG: You didn't get your Ph.D? What were you getting your Ph.D. in?

MC: Public Administration

PART II

AG: This is Part II of an interview with Michael Coleman, the former Director of the Hoboken Model Cities Program. Today is August 13th, 2003. Mr. Colman, can you tell me a little bit about the education goals of Model Cities?

MC: Education was one of our more important priorities. Our education planner, Viviana Borden, the daughter Munoz Marin, the first Governor of Puerto Rico. When Viviana was a visitor at the White House with her father, she recalled occasions there when John Kennedy was President, and of playing with the Kennedy

children. As our Educational Planner, she directed our Education programs with distinction.

We attempted to establish a cooperative demonstration program with the Board of Education within the City. Through various special programs and services, and support we would show that those youngsters on track to dropping out of school at the age of 16 could become achievers, graduate from high school, and go on to higher education. We did not get anywhere with the Board of Education. Instead, we decided to work outside of the educational system, and not within it. We developed programs in the pre-school area similar to Head Start, but also daycare for parents working or going to school. WE contracted with Bank Street College of Education in New York. They trained some of our local people to become teachers in the pre-school programs. We also established on Washington Street, in the center of the City, a Tutoring and Counseling Center. We renovated a vacant storefront and organized a Tutoring and Counseling program for high school students and junior high school students who were having trouble in school and needed counseling and tutoring. The Tutoring and Counseling Center was for students who had dropped out of school. They could come back to this Center and regroup

themselves and finish high school at least. The Center was very popular. We hired college students and the counselors and tutors whom we paid for their time. The Counseling Center was open day and night until late at night and ran six days a week and it was very successful. Ralph Seligman, our Planning consultant, became the director of that center. He coordinated activities and education there. We had some programs to interest students returning to school including a student Pilot training program that we operated out of Teterboro Airport. Besides actual flight instruction the students could see why math and English are important to real life.

A third education component was post high school. We determined in our research, there weren't any real educational opportunities for adults. Stevens, Jersey City State College and St. Peter's College were four year colleges. Most adults in Hoboken wouldn't go to New York or couldn't afford to go to school there. So we started the Hoboken Community College. We rented a mansion on Castle Point Terrace that was vacant. We fixed it up with classrooms. The teachers came from Stevens, Jersey City State, and St. Peter's and the courses were accepted for credit at all three colleges.

This Community College worked very well. It was very popular. We had, at the high point, some two hundred students going there day and night; most of the courses were in the afternoon and evenings. In 1975, when the State set up the Community College System, the Hudson County Community College was integrated within the State system. That was a good demonstration again of how the Model Cities Program worked to meet a need locally which then became institutionalized at a higher level.

AG: Did the students who enrolled have to be high school graduates?

MC: The students didn't need to have graduated from high school. Some of them would be too old to go back to high school, but they needed to achieve a certain level of competence in English, math to qualify for college. There were preliminary course for these adults students just as they have now at Community College for adults to return to school at the college level.

AG: Did they take their GED before they continued to college?

MC: No, GED course were part of the curriculum. Also, our staff assisted many students to obtain college credits on the basis of their life experience. Some of them got a year or more of college credits in this manner.

AG: Do you know how many students that went through this program stayed in Hoboken? Were there better jobs available here?

MC: I may have known at one time, but now I don't recall.

AG: You mentioned that you started a pre-school program to begin education at a stronger level before the children begin public education. I did read in the Model Cities material that one of the most pressing needs in Hoboken was daycare. Were these needs met?

MC: WE did not have sufficient federal or state funding to meet all of the daycare needs in Hoboken at that time.

AG: The Board of Education did not participate in the Model Cities program?

MC: No, they didn't become directly involved. Of course that's changed now, and there are many innovations in the school system such as Charter Schools. Our relationship with the school personnel improved over time. Viviana used to meet often with the School Superintendent, Tom Mc Feeley. He was impressed by her; she was an impressive young woman, and extremely bright.

AG: What are your feelings about why they didn't want to work you?

MC: They didn't want anyone from the outside especially Model Cities directing any school programs.

AG: Were the City and the School District connected in any way at that time?

MC: The City and the Board of Education were complete integrated. In fact, the Mayor was the Secretary of the Board of Education for many years. Everything was interconnected. Basically, Mayor de Pascale supported Model

Cities efforts without his support we could not have achieved any results.

AG: Why was it so difficult for the Model Cities Plan to include the Board of Education?

MC: The educational system was the foundation of political power in Hoboken with a large number of jobs involved. But that was okay, because a lot of good education efforts came about as a result of Model Cities. People began to stay in Hoboken. They began to demand better education. So, it was the beginning. Our educational programs made an impact in the City.

AG: A good beginning is important. We've talked about housing, employment, education and health. Before we go to another area, can you briefly describe the education performance in Hoboken at the time. I do remember reading that 70% of the children read below their grade level and other dismal statistics. Is there anything else you can add to that?

MC: A very high percentage of Hispanic and Black students did not finish high school.

AG: This high school drop out rate then influenced the high unemployment rate among that population. Another issue to discuss is Public Safety. I read that there were not enough police officers at that time. The murder rate was double that of the State. Can you elaborate?

MC: Well, Hoboken was not much different from other cities where people lived in serious conditions and where there was a lot of unemployment. Not any different from Jersey City or Newark around us. I don't remember numbers. I do remember one fact that street crimes taken against people walking on the streets were few. There were very few murders in Hoboken--only one or two murders year in Hoboken at all and usually that was where the people knew each other. Hoboken was a much safer city than Jersey City and Newark and others around us. There was a reason for this which we didn't understand at first. It had to do with the fact that people were out on the streets until late at night, especially in the summers. Hoboken is a very densely populated city. Where you have a lot of people, you don't have crime, because people are watching out for each other. That became an interesting conclusion when you take that reality and improve street lighting, and

improve housing conditions so that people are out on their stoops at night and kids are playing ball in the streets. You have a safe city.

Most of the street crime in the 1970's was car theft and purse snatching-not much violent crime. Once I was mugged coming back from New York at night by a group of teenagers who didn't mean any harm, they just wanted my money. AS it turned out, they were from Jersey City. Hoboken was a city in which individuals rarely had to fear crime. My wife would come home for her citizen meetings at night and walk home and not feel any danger-even late at night.

With regard to Model Cities Public Safety programs, our efforts were in the court system and when people were arrested for crime. We had a Public Safety Planner on our staff, a woman who had a law degree. She was awarded a grant, which is given to outstanding law school graduates and who have outstanding record. A foundation grant paid for her salary while she worked for us for one year. She concentrated on the court system. To make a long story short, we established a pretrial intervention program in Hudson County. There was a need for people who were picked

up for a minor crime or a major crime. There was no way for someone who was just caught up in something minor to be saved from going to jail. We set up a pre-trial intervention program with advocacy and counseling serving not only Hoboken but all of Hudson County. Some years later, our Public Safety Planner was a Professor at Harvard Law School.

AG: Was there any training of police in the community?

MC: There was attention given to policy and community relations. More police were on the streets and there was a community relations police officer assigned to a Community Relations office - an Hispanic. With the City being so small and all police officers coming from Hoboken and mostly living here, we did not have the problems of New York or Newark. There were some complaints from minorities. But minorities were on the police force both Black and Hispanic. And so it wasn't an out of control situation.

AG: Was there any awareness of local data at that time about incidences of domestic violence, rape against women?

MC: I don't really know and can't recall. I don't know how much of that we knew or what we may have done. I can't think of any specifics in that area.

AG: One of the issues we talked about previously is not being able to buy apartment buildings that you wanted. Were these buildings included in the fires that began in Hoboken? Did the inability to buy them influence the problems that came later?

MC: I think that it was clear that the apartment building fires that took place over a period of a few years were mostly intentional and were aimed at getting people out of their buildings. There are laws, protecting people who are tenants who didn't want to leave or couldn't be bought out. And so, some people resorted to fires which were very tragic. A lot of people in Hoboken lost their lives at that time. There were a lot of investigations going on. And then the fires stopped as the investigations started to bring about some results.

I believe that in the years 1975-1985 a policy should have been pursued to acquire and rehabilitate individual apartment buildings throughout the City. A significant number of buildings could have been purchased at reasonable prices at that time. A five floor walk up ten unit apartment building could be purchased for \$50,000- \$70,000. If a few hundred of these buildings had been acquired by the City over that period, I believe that much for evictions, turmoil, and tragedy could have been avoided.

At the time, there about 500 existing apartment buildings/ not big apartment complexes as we talked about before. If even half of those buildings were brought into some kind of protective environment so that the tenants in those buildings could have remained, Hoboken would have benefited.

AG: In 1986, was the focus entirely on housing? Did you examine the development of retail and business concerns?

MC: We had a program for small business loans to help local merchants who had been in Hoboken for many years and

who went through good times and bad times. We provided loans and grants to them. But the City has no rent control laws for commercial properties.

AG: Thank you so much for all of the time you have given to the Oral History project. The interview was fascinating.

MC: Thank you!