

Urban Core Investment Authority – Speaker Comments

The following is a collection of comments and interactions from CRC guest speakers relating to the creation of an Urban Core Investment Authority gathered from the various CRC Meetings' transcripts.

7/31/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Rick Mullaney – Former GC

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Thank you. Mr. Mullaney, real quick, great presentation. I think this was very helpful to a lot of people who didn't really understand and those folks who are out there watching. You really kind of brought home why consolidation was necessary. And in your opinion, though, could you talk a little bit about what do you think consolidation missed in the last 50 years? I know we had the Task Force that reviewed some things a couple years ago, but we've consistently heard that consolidation wasn't kind to the entire community, in particular those communities in the urban core. Can you speak on some of those areas that you believe that you are still concerned about and how that may have impacted some of the things we need to be concerned with.

MR. MULLANEY: It's an important question. I think it's going to go to more policy than structure, but let me try to address it for you. When there was the political campaign to pass consolidation, people were very concerned about its passing, and a lot of compromises were made. Some of those compromises included 19 City Council Members. Some of them included elected constitutional officers, as opposed to appointed constitutional officers. There are a lot of pieces structurally that were part of the conversation. And part of it was representations to underserved areas of the community that there would be investment in underserved parts of the community. That conversation, there is different versions of that conversation as to investment, particularly in minority neighborhoods. If you talked to Mayors Hazouri and Delaney, for example, they will argue that in their administrations they made a significant effort to make those kinds of investments. But I certainly think from a policy standpoint today there is a concern and there is a need to invest in underserved neighborhoods throughout the community. I don't know, and you can have this discussion, whether you believe that it's structural or whether you believe that is something that can be addressed on the policy basis of the leadership that we have. It's a bigger conversation that we can have. But I can tell you that the African-American leadership was somewhat split. Many African-American leaders were strong proponents of consolidated government, such as Earl Johnson, who gave up the opportunity to be the first mayor, black mayor of Jacksonville, instead supporting consolidated government, others were opposed. But many believed, Earl Johnson did, that overall the county and the city would be better served through this structure even though whatever misgivings he may have had. So that's a conversation we can have.

8/16/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Hon. John Delaney – Mayor

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: And I'm going to -- I've tried to condense the list, you know, against the Charter versus -- you know, try to educate -- be as educated as I can and try to educate constituents, people -- citizens who would have concerns about how they can have input here. I've tried to invite as any people to the meetings as possible; but, you know, 9:00 is sometimes going to be not very

advantageous to the public to be here. So the first item is in the spirit of Downtown Investment authority. I know the last time we were here I talked about how we could do things to remedy some of the neglect that's gone on in the urban core through consolidation. I've had ideas about, you know, how do we address things, maybe by standing up in the Urban Core Investment Authority. We have – the Charter allows for authorities to be put in place to address certain issues. And so, you know, some folks would -- recommended that we do something like that.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Okay. And I agree with that. That I do. I think we're on the same page there. But my -- okay. So I'm going to shift gears now. My question is, the first thing I asked -- or had on my list was about the urban core and how the urban core has been left behind because -- you know, through consolidation. As a former Mayor, you know, where do you see possible remedies to address these issues? It's been, you know, 50-plus years now, and people are complaining about, you know, a lot of the infrastructure -- you know, I've been told that development in certain areas of the urban core are virtually impossible. There's no way to attract businesses there. And I don't think anything is impossible. I think that maybe through this process we can identify a way to support -- you know, within the Charter, to help catch up these communities that have been left behind in terms of, you know, development, redevelopment, infrastructure, and so forth.

MAYOR DELANEY: Yeah. One would be a structural thing. The other is more policy. My response would be, the first would be Mayor Godbold created a Northwest Quadrant Economic Development Trust Fund and put some money into it. As part of The Better Jacksonville Plan we put money into that as well. Perhaps that can be given a little more meat and maybe -- I wouldn't call it a dedicated source of funding but -- this is going to be the discretion of council. That's why that slides into policy -- but the idea to help be able to invest in economic development in that particular region. When I was Mayor, I know you would recall, I stopped any economic incentives for any economic development except Downtown and the Northwest Quadrant. And we wouldn't incentivize any other development. And America Online, for example, they were on the Northside. They wanted to move down out near UNF, and we just wouldn't participate in that. But they made their decision that's where they wanted to be. And I think that's more on the policy area. You know, the Mayors after me did not stick with that policy, and the Chamber of Commerce didn't like it either. But I felt --

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Well, why would that? I mean, it seems like that would be an opportunity, to aggressively attack a problem that's been a problem over the years. Why wouldn't administrations want to seek to remedy some of these issues; because --

MAYOR DELANEY: The argument back -- which I rejected. But the argument back is that some businesses don't want to move into that area. And if you do anything that makes them say Jacksonville's not as optimal as St. Louis or Nashville, they'll go to those other cities. At the time, the economy was fairly, you know, vibrant, and it didn't seem to slow anything down. And, you know, then there was kind of the mini recession, 2000/2001; it slowed it down. I left office in '03. But I stuck with that policy all the way through. But that's a policy thing. I don't know structurally how to do it other than to maybe recommend -- much like there's the Downtown Investment Authority, that structure, maybe that can be done for the urban core to try -- you know, try to help provide economic development there.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: So, in your experience, you would sort of recommend like maybe an urban core type investment authority and recommend that future Mayors or future administrations and Councils properly invest in those type of --

MAYOR DELANEY: I hadn't thought about it till you framed it, but I think it makes sense. If we've got an economically depressed portion of town, we need to focus some resources on it. You know, one of the things we also did was -- I mentioned -- and I think I would view that Northwest area as a neighborhood. It's multiple neighborhoods, but, you know, it's a big umbrella -- is we focused extensively on neighborhoods. You know, we funded a neighborhood's department. We focused on first four, then five and six, what we called intensive care neighborhoods where the Sheriff -- Sheriff Glover increased his presence. We focused on infrastructure. We focused on housing. We focused on affordable housing. We focused on putting in sidewalks, putting up streetlights. Not every neighborhood, frankly, wants sidewalks or streetlights, so you've got to respond to the local neighborhoods. But I think there are things like that that could be structural that could help focus -- focus those minds. But, you know, other Mayors -- recessions hit in the -- the massive recession in 2008 and the resources went away, and so some of that was dissolved. Sports Authority was actually subsumed under the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission. You had mentioned that one earlier.

8/29/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Jerry Holland – Property Appraiser

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: So the Chair brought up earlier in his comments about we talked last meeting about maybe a dedicated authority, like something like an urban core investment authority, which would deal with some of these issues. What would be your recommendations or what would you suggest to help turn things around? And would that be an idea that would be useful for this Body to look into?

MR. HOLLAND: Well, you know, there are things in place today that you can see certain areas doing. For example, in Arlington, creating a taxing district, creating an area where -- and, obviously, what's driving that also is Jacksonville University saying, you know, we have been here for years, but the community has deteriorated, the values have dropped. This is our -- we have to bring people from out of state to come here to look at the University, do they want to come where this is at. So what they've done is trying to both change everything from signage to what the businesses look like, trying to make it more attractive. But, in every area, you almost -- it's a very large problem. And it's not in one area. It's in large low income areas. And it's very expensive. I mean, end of the day, it's everything from the -- from cleaning up and beautifying and the businesses that are there and the type of businesses that are there and the crime element that's there. You know, all that fosters into it. But you have to give -- you almost have to break them up into sections, which they are in many ways, and you have to give that focused attention. And it does drive by money, it has to fix it.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: So would your recommendation for something like this be prioritized -- should this be a priority of the City to address these conditions, maybe paying special attention to some of the things that have not been done over the last 50 years since consolidation?

MR. HOLLAND: It would probably -- yes, it is. And I think from a perspective of what would be most successful, as much as some of the urban core would be more needed than anything else, you almost have to start with the areas that are on the tipping, that are moving to the point of being less desirable. And when they're in that tipping point, doing something there so they don't tip. And then, you know, saving that area, and then moving on until you solve that. Otherwise, it's almost like starting in the middle of a forest fire and trying to put it out from the middle. You almost have to start on the outside edges and try your best to save communities from being lost or turned.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: And I just – I would like for you to tell me if -- in your opinion, if you think this should be a priority. And this is why, is because it seems to me, in my opinion, that our community too often looks at issues as ways to solve it from the outside. You know, we develop on the outside, we provide incentives to other areas of town hoping that we'll provide more jobs, those jobs will provide more economic opportunity, and those areas will uplift themselves from the outside. But, in my opinion, I think these should be prioritized from the inside, from the inside out, whether need actually occurs. And we haven't really done a good job of that. We haven't done a good job at all, because if we look back over the history of consolidation, we've sort of let these areas -- most of which I've lived in for most of my life -- just kind of decay on their own with other areas, at the expense of the community. So what I would like to try to find out, from as many people who come to the podium as possible, if this is an opportunity for us to prioritize within our recommendations something that can be done for underserved communities.

MR. HOLLAND: It is definitely worthy of the prioritization. It is definitely – a reflection of the community is not the greatest part of it sometimes, but also the lesser part of it. You know, that's how we get characterized sometimes by our schools. Even though we have many A schools, we get characterized of, oh, you want to go to St. Johns County. They have failing schools also, you know, mostly in low income areas. But from a perspective of it does paint the City as less attractive if you don't fix all of the City. So if you can find a way to prioritize that, I don't have a solution of how you do that within the Charter, you know, or how you address that. There is no doubt that it's an expensive venue. There is no doubt that to fix the cure that has taken literally decades to get where some of these communities have gotten, it is not a quick fix, and that's a problem too. We've kind of thrown in term limits, but it goes back to what Matt was saying, Council Member Schellenberg was saying, is that sometimes if someone has that long-term, you know, plan, they actually stick around long enough to see it all the way through and it changes priorities. That's what we give up sometimes. It's a real question of how do you get that long-term plan that you know can't be fixed in eight years, and who is going to pick up the ball and carry it in the next eight years.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Do you think an independent authority, much like the Downtown Investment Authority -- we pay a lot of attention to downtown. We're invested in bringing back downtown. We've made a lot of incentives, you know, offered a lot of incentives. Do you think an independent authority to address these issues would be appropriate, an appropriate start to something like this?

MR. HOLLAND: I think it has merit, but it comes always back to the funding source and, you know, what is going to be the avenue for that. But it definitely has merit, because it deserves the attention.

COMMISSIONER MILLS: Through the Chair and the Commission, thank you, Mr. Holland, for coming in and speaking with us. I have really been enlightened by a lot of things that you've said. I do agree with you, that, you know, let's do the work, you should prove yourself if you want to be in any position. I also want to piggyback on what W.C. Gentry said about previous promises that were made to the urban core that have not been kept. You said it would be very expensive for us to revitalize that area. And I know that. So that's why I would like to see the Marshall Plan come into play, I'm sure that it won't. But it will take something like a Marshall Plan to be adopted and revitalize that area. Running for City Council in District 10, walking in that area a lot, and seeing the difference from one side to the next, it is an area that can thrive, but there will need to be -- we would have to have a lot of laws put in place to keep it to where it needs to be. I see a lot of investors coming over and buying up vacant properties and not keeping them up. And then you're moving any and everyone in. So it's going to take a lot. But I think those previous promises, when you spoke about those amenities, the schools that are in that area that

are failing, the crime, not just in the urban core, but everywhere in Jacksonville. So the amenities play a big part. I know riding down Soutel, there is only one gas station at the corner from Soutel up to Lem Turner. So those are things that are not -- that will not attract people to move in that area because of the amenities. So I would like to know is there a report that shows the declining of the property tax in the urban core. Is there somewhere I can go and look at that to see and compare it from year to year to see how much the property tax has decreased in the urban core?

MR. HOLLAND: Well, we definitely – we do it by City Council District, which could show you some relationship there. I'll have to look and see what other geographical areas we do it by, you know. So it's difficult if you just pull out an area and say, let me just look at this particular area. But there are some that we can look at. And if you would give me a call, we can probably do some further research for you and help you on that situation. And just to kind of morph on what Mr. Schellenberg was saying, you know, part of that priority is, and I always thought that's where we -- as he mentioned, we kind of lose that power as a Council, is you know, when you get that budget, you pretty much know, here is the budget, here is the millage rate, here is this. And all you're doing is trying to critique each one that comes up there to see if you can find a little extra dollars maybe for one little project, or just at least go through the process and have each of the independent agencies and each of the constitutionals justify their budget, you know. It's very seldom that anyone comes -- rarely comes to the Council and says, listen, it wasn't approved by the Mayor, but we really need this, and then they circumvent that. I can remember back when I was on the Council, at that time a fire chief said, listen, I can't do this, the Mayor won't allow it, but will y'all put this in the budget. And, sure, we wanted to do that, and we added certain things that they wanted. So that does happen at times. But the process he's talking about is does the Council need to formulate the budget for all the constitutional officers and all the budget? No. But what they probably need to look at is what are the priorities in their districts that is affected by the budget that they determine is the value. Part of it really comes down to what is the price tag to do whatever it is you want to do, and what are you willing to pay for that. Meaning are -- is the Council -- you know, the Mayor just says, here is my budget, I present this, and I've kept the millage rate the same, or, in some Mayors, I've lowered it to say I've lowered taxes, but this is my budget. But is the Council willing to stand up too and say, yes, those priorities cost something, and we're willing to either keep the millage rate the same or raise the millage rate, how do we do that, how do we generate that money. The reality is there isn't enough money to do everything. Even in the greatest of times, you know, there wasn't enough money to do everything. There was enough money to do more prudent things, but not everything. The question is, given that Council the ability to weigh in and say, you know, listen, we're going to stand as a body and say this is a priority, you know, and we do want these -- I've always said on a -- I was a District Council person. Those 14 Districts know that area of town better than anybody else. I mean, they've walked those streets, they've gone to the neighborhoods door by door, you know, walked them many times. They know the needs in that community. That's where the information should be going upward not downward. And that's where part of the budget process can help if there is some information going upward, so.

9/6/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Mike Weinstein – Multiple Capacities

COMMISSIONER DENTON: But following up on the topic Mr. Griggs brought up, do you think, given that the DIA has been very effective in downtown development, I think, and has focused resources and agencies and information toward downtown development, do you think, given your vast background in local government, that the creation of something like a DIA for the poor neighborhoods that we just talked about might help not just funnel money into it, because it's not just money that we need, it's

information, expertise, priorities, community involvement and on down the line, would such an agency help make that happen?

MR. WEINSTEIN: I don't know. I would have to really think about that. An agency without resources, you know, won't do anything. You know, we have these tax increment districts all around town, which I as CFO was opposed to, because it takes about \$30 million out of the City budget and isolates them. In going back to -- and the reason I didn't like it goes back to my whole theme. You know, you have Jacksonville -- you have all these different tax increment districts, which lock in money for that tax increment district, which is nice for that tax increment district, but that money can't be used for the top priority of the City, which is a perfect example of what I was talking about before. You know, maybe all that money doesn't need to go into this. What's happened by the airport, the airport tax increment district in the shopping center up there has been phenomenally successful, tremendously successful. It still exists and still gets multiple millions of dollars every year that has to be spent there, has to be. Well, those millions of dollars could very well be used in different areas that need it more. So I'm not a fan of isolating, but -- so I don't suggest that we create another separate entity. It just needs to be a top priority of the community and be dealt with. And it is. I mean, this Mayor has done a lot and continues to do a lot in the budget each and every year with septic tanks, with sidewalks, with roads. I mean, we have -- over the years that I've participated and still now, the Mayor has done a good job with lots of different issues that he has to face. But, again, if we're fortunate enough to get some resources that can be utilized over and above the budget, I would do it in areas that really need the help.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Mike, I just have one follow-up question. I believe it's one follow-up question from Mr. Denton's remarks. He brought up the fact that he asked you about, like, an urban core investment authority. And your response to that was you didn't think that would be a good idea because somebody would have to fund it and you would need, like, a certain entity, like a taxing district area or something like that to fund it. I'm not mischaracterizing that, am I?

MR. WEINSTEIN: Yeah. A little bit broader than that. If it's a priority, it will get the funds. I'm not an advocate of locking up resources, whether it be downtown or the beaches or anything. The Mayor sits down and does a balanced budget to priorities, and the Council, you know, does what they do. I wouldn't limit their flexibility in spending money according to priorities. So I wouldn't dictate -- I mean, again, if it was a high enough priority to do something in the urban core, it should get done anyhow.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: So wouldn't that rationale be true for downtown? Why would we need a DIA if that's the case?

MR. WEINSTEIN: Well, DIA isn't so much the resources, because they tend to be City resources. They are the services that are provided to the outside individuals that want to do things. You know, the DIA sits as the front line to the developers and the people that want to build buildings and change things downtown. The vast majority of the resources that they spend comes from City Council and the Mayor and the grievance and through budget. But, again, I'm not an advocate -- I've always been an advocate as it relates to DIA is running it more like a business. At the beginning of the year, the Mayor and the City Council obligates \$10 million for economic development. And they know that they have these resources to give out and deal with incentives and what have you. And the outside community knows it. Now, if something comes in that's just beyond, you know, the pale, you go back and you fix it. But to treat it like you do all the other agencies and entities, that this is your budget for the year, including your incentives to give out, go and do all that you can with them. Instead, we deal with it project by project. And I'm not a fan of that, just from a budgetary point of view. But DIA is part of the reason, I think, JEDC was torn apart is downtown just is different. It's just different. And it needs to continue to be expanded.

You know, give you just the tax issue. Residential communities don't provide enough ad valorem taxes for the services that they require. Your downtown cores, your employment centers provide more ad valorem than they require in services. So if we're not building up those kinds of entities, then everybody is going to suffer. That's why these other communities that are just bedroom communities have problems more so with their ad valorem because their ad valorem has to be higher to meet the needs that they have, because they don't have the employment centers and the downtowns. So the downtown core helps everybody as it's developed. And that's part of the reason why it has such a dedicated group of proponents. So they're different.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: I would love to have this debate with you offline. But from the perspective that I've been hearing is that entities like DIA are more of a priority to cities than areas like the urban core, who have been behind. And if you mirrored such an agency on authority to address strategically those issues that have repeatedly taken over the urban core, education, health, economic development, you'd have an authority in place to address those –

MR. WEINSTEIN: It would just have to be so different. I mean, the downtown development authority gets its money, to a certain extent, from the ad valorem increases. A tax increment district gets their money from the ad valorem increases. The areas that you're talking about don't have those tax increment district gross. That's why the Arlington one is going to be so difficult. That's why the Mayport -- when we first came into office, they were trying to do a Mayport tax increment district. There'd be no money there for such a long time. So whatever entity you created would still need to go to the Mayor and Council to get any resources at all to do anything. Now, this entity that was created can come up with priorities for the core and be an arm to go to the Mayor and to go to Council and advocate for resources for those priorities. But there wouldn't be any available dollars other than through the normal budgetary process. But, if it's to develop priorities and what have you for that particular area, there is nothing wrong with that.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: I think we have to decide whether the deficiencies of the urban core outweigh the deficiencies of downtown or any other priority and make it a priority if it is, in fact, that important to the community, because our crime rate, unemployment, those things are not single issue ideas. They are collectives, they are strategic. And they have to be addressed holistically. And if we think that we just need to improve education and we'll be fine, we're missing the point. There is a continuum there that goes on that was created and allowed to fester over 50 years, and we have not addressed it. And I think what my point has been since I've been here is that we should be looking at some type of mechanism that addresses that that allows a framework that no matter who -- if the Council, the Mayor, anyone, they can't go outside that framework in addressing and reversing the issues that have been going on for the last 50 years. We've allowed that to happen because we see shiny objects that come up, and we want to be here, we want to have a Superbowl, we want to do all these things. We haven't addressed these issues.

MR. WEINSTEIN: The Council can pass an ordinance that says this percentage of ad valorem must be spent in this particular area. They can always do that. But with ten votes, they can undue it. But they can definitely make their interests known.

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: But what happens in the Charter goes beyond that, and I think that's what we're addressing here so we don't have to rely on the Council to do the right thing, because we're not going to have enough votes between four Council Members and potentially two at-large members to ever do the type of work that's going on unless they spend four years convincing people strategically

that these things are important. You know, people have to come in with these issues as a priority in order to get them done.

MR. WEINSTEIN: You could lock in a certain percentage of some revenue stream to go to certain things, you can do that.

9/26/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Jim Overton – Tax Collector

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: So how do you think -- if we had 11, what would that look like in your mind, how would that -- in terms of representation? Because one of the challenges that we've heard through many of our presenters is that consolidation was bad for the urban core. And if we had 11 or had a different number, whatever that number is, how would we assure that representation for those communities have been left behind are not further underrepresented going forward?

MR. OVERTON: Consolidation has been good in a lot of ways, but to the neighborhoods it hasn't been good, because, you know, we agreed, when we consolidated, that we were going to provide city services to the county line. And, unfortunately, some of the urban core just gets overlooked, because we're always building a fire station way out where the growth is. So it's tended to under-serve certain parts of the community because of it. Particularly in drainage and just curb and gutter traffic, the kind of things that people care about. Parks, people who work in parks, you know, we used to have -- when I was a kid, we had -- there was a guy in the park, you know. He was a coach or something. And he kept the park going and organized games and stuff. We can't afford that. I don't know why we can't afford it, but we can't. And the urban core is part of the town that particularly takes a hit when we don't have people doing that. So, yeah, I don't know what the answer is. If you had 11 councilmen or 9, they would be individually much more powerful. The mayor -- in a strong mayor system that may not be the way to go. We have intentionally a strong mayor system of government here. And so we have -- therefore, we have an intentionally weak City Council, that really has only the budget as the major lever. And, frankly, the Council -- generally speaking, the Council is not properly prepared to work on a budget with the complexity that ours is. It's a big ask to have somebody walk in here and look at that budget and understand it.

10/02/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Dr. Sherry Magill – Jessie Ball duPont Fund

COMMISSIONER GRIGGS: Thank you. And good morning. I certainly appreciate your comments. I want to piggyback off of some of what Mr. Denton mentioned. We've had extensive conversation about the potential recommendation to create an urban core investment authority or something of the like. And I think in order to do that, in order to convince people that this is necessary, the City and stakeholders have to be in a posture of understanding the real priority that has festered over the last 50 years, has grown over the last 50 years. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of information, current information, I should say, that helps to make that argument. The Blueprint that was done in 2014 comes short of presenting any type of plan. All it asks for is that they make recommendations and the City Council perhaps adopt these measures. Who should we turn to now -- because we used to have the JCCI -- that we can depend on to provide the data and best practice recommendations necessary in order to help move this recommendation forward?

DR. MAGILL: So I would choose a small group of not-for-profit leaders, maybe even public health and UF Health, who work across the county in poor neighborhoods, and ask them what data they're using and

what data they're collecting. What we don't have in Jacksonville -- and our efforts in the past were kind of halfhearted and I mean that from the DuPont fund perspective -- was to create what's called a data center. So I mean, if you're a new member of City Council, I do not know how you understand this county. And I don't know who informs your discretion. I do understand lobbying. If we create this urban district initiative, I would urge us to put the welfare of the people at the top of that agenda and not simply economic development. Economic development is critically important, but I think we have to talk about the whole spectrum. So the social determinates of health, again, documenting who is working in that area. But I would talk to the leaders of those organizations. So I can name some: United Way, The Community Foundation, LISC, Paul Tutwiler's group in one neighborhood, but I would talk to all of the CDC chairs, executive directors, and just start with that tiny group. We're thinking about doing this, rather than just doing it, what do you know about these places and what do we not know? And how do we maintain that understanding over time, because that's a big problem that the Blueprint points out.

10/11/2019 – CRC Meeting (Transcript) Hon. Glorious Johnson – City Council

COMMISSIONER DENTON: Thank you for being here. I appreciated your comments. One of the things that we're thinking about as a Commission is whether to recommend creation of what we're calling an Urban Core Investment Authority that would be similar to the Downtown Investment Authority that has been, I think, pretty successful in focusing attention and resources and cooperation on revitalizing downtown, and I believe it's happening all around us. A bigger problem in my mind is northwest Jacksonville, the poorest area of the city. And one of the reasons we're thinking about this, or at least that I'm thinking about it, is to focus -- to coordinate existing efforts and to focus possibly new efforts and resources on attacking poverty, which would deal with education and ultimately crime and all of the social pathologies. The Commission has a letter from Commissioner Gentry that we just got today, I guess, in which he argues that such a -- or suggests that such an investment authority might also begin to address the unkept promises that were made during consolidation for the same part of town. So with your background in city government, could you talk about whether you think that creation of such an authority could be a practical way to address the issues you've talked about, and Mr. Gentry talks about, and that I just talked about?

MS. JOHNSON: I see you looking at me, Charles. That's my good -- Commissioner, I'm sorry, no disrespect, Commissioner. You have a point. I remember -- I tell the young ladies -- Shirley Chisholm made a comment: If you don't have a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. It's time to have seats at the table. And it's time to have people who really care at that table. Not looking for a pat on the back, not looking for underhandedness, but looking to tell the truth and tell what's really going on in that community. I also served as Mad Dad/Mom President, helping when it deals with crime. So I understand what you're saying and I think it would be a great opportunity. It's a start. We don't know what will happen, but it will be a start, Commissioner, that we would get people who we know will be accountable to the community. Some people are chosen because they're popular, but please don't let that popularity fool you. Is there interest in the organization? Are they going to speak on behalf of the people? You can be disagreeable, agree to be disagreeable, but be respectful in your disagreement. So I think it would be a wonderful idea to start something like that so you could actually hear what's going on. And as far as the urban core, some time ago when I was -- I about left or I was still there, there was some movements going on and the urban core has moved a little bit, because where my house is, it's no longer in the urban core. And I live over there by -- well, I had to go with my daughter, but my house is over there by Edward Waters College. And it's not part of that urban core. We need to first find out, okay, you say urban core. Okay, where is the urban core? Because, from what I've seen, it's way over

there in Springfield and some other places that it shouldn't be. Because funds come to the urban core, and it goes somewhere else, and not in that needed community. Ms. Lisska has her history. And she knows that history very well. But I remember when Springfield was trying to get their historic designation and they were taking pictures of our community. And then when we tried to get our history designated, they told us no, the City told us no. It's got to be fairness. It's got to be respect. It's got to be some form of equality in order for us to make some changes. And job opportunities are scarce in those communities. You've got to fight crime, other than going to jail. And I think this would be a beginning. You want to put me on there? I don't know. I'm just saying, uh-uh, just saying. But I thank you for that idea. It is something to start with.