

Atlanta: The Olympic War on the Poor

Given this history of urban revitalization projects and the continuing influence of business interests in determining city policy, it is not surprising that Olympic-justified programs already threaten many poor and homeless citizens. The 1996 Olympic Games will have an impact on many levels, including housing, economic development and civil liberties.

HOUSING

Forced displacement annually affects approximately 2.5 million Americans (Bratt, Hartman and Meyerson, 1986). Whether loss of housing is due to gentrification, urban renewal projects, conversion, or any of the many processes which lead to displacement, victims deal with governments that are concerned primarily with revitalization and that are actively encouraging real estate investors and other business interests to profit from the process. Nowhere is this phenomenon more clearly than in the city of Atlanta as it prepares to host the 1996 Olympic Games.

THE OLYMPIC STADIUM

Several Olympic-related developments threaten to displace residents or to negatively impact the vitality of low-income, primarily African-American communities in Southside Atlanta. The first controversy involves Summerhill (and neighboring Mechanicsville and Peoplestown), the neighbourhood where the Olympic stadium is to be built next door to the already-existing Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, which will be torn down following the Games. Approximately 5,500 residents (92% African American) were displaced from Summerhill in 1966 when the first stadium was built (Washington Post, 7/7/91), and residents have not forgotten the experience. According to neighbourhood leader Columbus Ward, "We do not need the stadium. It will destroy the neighbourhood and force people to move out. The city continues to pick on poor communities, and there's no telling how many houses we'll lose" (AJC, 1990). Even if, as stadium supporters argue, no residents are physically displaced as a result of construction, neighbourhood residents counter that noise, pollution, traffic, and consequent security problems would once again "kill" the community (Los Angeles Times 2/12/91). In fact, there are compelling historical reasons why Summerhill residents believe the stadium should not be built in their backyard. In addition to the building of the first stadium, the 1967 Model Cities project resulted in the loss of 800 housing units. Other neighbouring Southeast Atlanta communities were also victims. The Civic Center construction in 1967 displaced more than 3500 homes in Buttermilk Bottom neighbourhood (despite organized opposition), the 1976 construction of the World Congress Center decimated the Lightning neighbourhood, and highway construction in 1983 resulted in the loss of 200 units of public housing (Atlanta Neighbourhoods United to Fairness Newsletter Spring 1991).

Information from other cities which have hosted Olympic Games underscores the potential devastation for low-income people. The Seoul 1988 Olympics, for example, caused the forced relocation of approximately three million people in Seoul and Incheon, according to *The Sangkyei Don Olympics*, a documentary of Olympic related displacement.

Neighbourhood organizers question whether Atlanta needs another stadium (In addition to Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, construction of a new domed stadium, the Georgia Dome, was just completed) and have suggested that the new stadium, if it is built at all, should be constructed only as a replacement on the site of the old stadium where it would not cause further disruption. The response of Olympic organizers? "We continue to think that this is our best place to put the Olympic Stadium." International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Juan Antonio Samaranch, witnessing a protest against the stadium by the community organization

ANUF (Atlanta Neighbourhoods United for Fairness), responded, Always we have you have problems after getting the Games. But I believe this community must be very happy to have these Games (AJC 4/30/91).

THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

One of the largest controversies involves the proposed building the Olympic Village (to house athletes, etc. during the Games) where now stand the Techwood/Clark Howell Homes an 800 unit, 2734 resident, public housing development (the first public housing project in the nation). Techwood Homes, next door neighbor to both the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and the Coca-Cola Company's world headquarters, has long been seen as an obstacle to the revitalization of downtown. As reporter Cynthia Durcanin observes, Techwood Homes for years has been eyed by developers, but few have been willing to wade into the volatile politics of displacing the poor. But the 1996 Olympic Games have changed all that (AJC 6/24/91). Another report in the Washington Post (7/7/91) notes, When [City Council President Marvin] Arrington, a black who grew up in another of the city's projects, suggested that Techwood be flattened and incorporated into the Olympic village, he was voicing what white developers have dreamed about for years. The planned proposal for the revitalization of Techwood as part of the Olympic Village also includes the conversion of the village into student dormitories after the Games. It is interesting that one of the first proposals for Techwood (by the PATH team) was led by Jerry Cooper, part of a group of Georgia Tech alumni who since September [1990] when Atlanta was selected for the 1996 Olympics have touted ideas for Techwood redevelopment to Georgia Tech's administration and in local business and civic circles. The Tech campus is next to Techwood Homes (AJC 7/19/91). Olympic officials claim they are working with residents, while residents at the same time claim they are being left out of the planning process.

VIEWS FROM TECHWOOD RESIDENTS: THE STORY OF TUFF

It's hard to blame Sammy Barron for distrusting the Atlanta Housing Authority. When Barron, 42, moved into Techwood Homes in August 1989, he found his new one-bedroom apartment in shambles. The bathtub was filled with garbage and hypodermic needles. Piles of trash covered the floor; doors and closets were destroyed.

The previous tenants of Barron's apartment used the place as a crack den, but Techwood management failed to clean it up before Barron moved in. So Barron swept up piles of garbage in order to unpack his belongings. Three days later, Barron's apartment was burglarized. His tv and some other personal belongings were stolen. The thieves entered the apartment through the kitchen window, which unknown to Barron, was open because the lock had been broken months ago. The Techwood/Clark Howell maintenance office knew about the broken lock, but nothing was ever done.

Barron's small apartment is located in a nine-unit building on a side street at the southern end of the Techwood/Clark Howell community. When he moved in two years ago, seven of the nine units were occupied. Today, six units are boarded up, their windows and doors secured with heavy sheets of plywood and bolts. Barron laughs when asked why he doesn't trust Atlanta Housing Authority officials, who assure residents that their best interests are being considered as part of plans to redevelop Techwood/Clark Howell in time for the 1996 Olympic Games.

He has a point. The vacancy rates at the 571-unit Techwood Homes and the neighbouring 623-unit Clark Howell Homes are among the highest of all 45 public housing complexes run by AHA. Boarded up units are everywhere, and there seems to be concerted effort by AHA to rehabilitate the units so new families can move in. Barron says he hears the AHA talk about revitalizing the neighbourhood, but what he sees is a calculated effort to sweep the poor out of sight from

Olympic visitors. The Atlanta Housing Authority wants us to put our future in their hands without giving residents any information. Look around at this place, there isn't any reason to trust them. We need to find out what's going on by ourselves. We must make our own decisions, he says.

Barron is a founding member of Tenants United for Fairness (TUFF), an active, vocal residents group that has injected itself into the planning process for the future of Techwood/Clark Howell Homes. Plans call for the sale of 4.5 acres of land in Techwood, and the razing of 114 units of public housing. In their place, the Olympic Village will be built to house athletes during the Summer Games. The dorms will then be transformed into housing for Georgia State University students.

But plans for Techwood/Clark Howell go beyond these 4.5 acres. From the moment Atlanta received the bid for the 1996 Games, there have been proposals for the revitalization of all of Techwood/Clark Howell and the surrounding area. TUFF has been fighting these plans, not because they don't want to see their neighbourhood improved, but because revitalization means the mass removal of current residents, says Barron.

Joann Murphy, an 18-year resident of Clark Howell and another founding member of TUFF, says the organization was founded because the tenants association wasn't giving residents enough information. We were finding out things about the redevelopment in the area from the newspaper instead of our elected representatives. Our input was not being counted.

In particular, TUFF took issue with Techwood/Clark Howell Tenant Association President Margie Smith, whom members believed was too willing to go along with redevelopment plans without getting approval from residents. TUFF began holding regular meetings to inform residents of their options.

In July 1991, the AHA awarded a bid to PATH, a group of major Atlanta developers, to redevelop the area. PATH's plan called for the destruction of 400 units. Half of the remaining 800 units would be reserved for mixed income housing with a proposed income requirement for residents of approximately \$15,000/year. The plan, in effect, would force most current residents out of the area.

TUFF took a strong stand against the PATH plan, asking questions at meetings and writing letters requesting more information. Murphy says it became very clear that PATH and AHA were not interested in the input of residents.

PATH went to great lengths to persuade residents that gentrifying their community was in their best interests. A small group of Techwood/Clark Howell residents was even flown by PATH to St. Louis to tour a model public housing community that had undergone redevelopment similar to the one proposed for Techwood/Clark Howell.

Barron remembers the trip well, which included carefully arranged bus tours of the housing development. Barron recalls, The officials taking us around would never let us go out on our own to see what was going on. They wanted to control everything we saw. But in private talks with residents, Barron was told that many longtime residents of the community were evicted because they could not afford the new higher rent structures. Barron says the tour was taken to one tenant's apartment, which was filled with expensive furniture. After the tour left, I hung around and asked the woman how she could afford such nice furniture if she was living in public housing. The woman told me that she was paying 30 percent of her income or \$300 a month for her apartment. That meant she was making \$1000 a month, says Barron, who realized that at those rent levels, most Techwood/Clark Howell residents would be on the streets.

Murphy says that the St. Louis trip galvanized many residents into opposing the PATH plan and convinced them that AHA and the Techwood/Clark Howell Tenant s Association could not be trusted. Tenant s Association president Smith was a board member on the PATH team and vigorously supported the plan. It [the PATH plan] was a lie from the beginning and it s been a lie ever since, says Murphy. HUD later rejected the PATH plan for precisely the same reasons that residents like Murphy and Barron had raised mainly that too many current residents would be displaced.

TUFF has been quite effective in making sure the rights of residents are taken into consideration. When the AHA called for a resident election to approve the sale of the 4.5 acre tract of land for the Olympic Village, TUFF members successfully lobbied to have three key conditions attached to approval.

Before the sale is completed, AHA is now required to put in place a replacement housing and relocation plan approved by residents of Techwood/Clark Howell, to insure that the replacement of a community center and store does not result in the loss of additional housing units, and to insure that the property be sold for no less than fair market value.

TUFF with the help of Atlanta Legal Aid filed a lawsuit against the Techwood/Clark Howell Tenant Association Margie Smith to prevent her from granting approval of any redevelopment plans without getting residents approval at an open meeting. TUFF was also successful in forcing the tenant s association to hold new elections of officers under the supervision of a court-appointed master.

Techwood/Clark Howell residents have been embroiled in a fight for their community ever since the area was targeted as an Olympic impact area. TUFF members like Murphy say they want to see their neighbourhood improved. They want to see the drug dealers run out and boarded up units rehabilitated, but the improvements must be for the residents, not Olympic visitors: I wish Mayor Jackson would come out of city hall and deal with the real problems and not keep harassing poor people because of the Olympics. We didn t ask for the Olympics to come here and we haven t had any peace since. Residents have been really abused and we can t even get a straight answer from anybody, she says.

While Techwood residents have tentatively approved the sale of 4.5 acres of land for the Olympic Village, they are still waiting for AHA to come up with a housing replacement plan. TUFF continues to pressure AHA for information, refusing to let anyone off the hook until residents are treated fairly. For Murphy, it s become a question of survival: I m not in this fight for a popularity contest, she says. I m in this to keep a roof over my head.

TECHWOOD PLAN FOR PEOPLE REMOVAL

Will there be any Techwood/Clark Howell Homes residents left to enjoy the community improvements planned by the Atlanta Housing Authority? That s a legitimate question being asked by residents who are growing concerned that public housing officials are evicting tenants and boarding up units to make room for redevelopment centered around the 1996 Olympic Games.

As of Jan. 5 1993, 255 of the 571 units in Techwood Homes are vacant and boarded up. That s a vacancy rate of 44 percent, more than nearly three times the system wide average. In adjoining Clark Howell Homes, 129 of the 623 units are empty a vacancy rate of 20 percent. Throughout both communities, the windows and doors of empty units are secured with sheets of plywood and heavy metal bolts. The plywood is painted brown so that passers-by don t notice the huge

numbers of vacant units, residents say. In many instances, entire 9-unit buildings are boarded up; the front doors chained shut and large no trespassing signs posted.

If AHA has ambitious plans for the redevelopment of the area, why all the vacancies and evictions? At a Jan. 5, Techwood Planning Committee meeting, AHA executive director Earl Phillips all but dragged about the increased evictions. Phillips told the assembled residents that in the first two days of that week, 16 families were evicted from Techwood/Clark Howell for what he called rules violations and bad behavior. He stated, We will continue to have evictions based on the legitimacy of violations. All these things are being done to ensure that we have sound, quality people living in this development.

But Phillips would not discuss in detail plans to move new families into the community, saying only that rehabilitation activities would take time due to a tremendous backlog of emergency repairs and the terrible condition of many units.

That explanation doesn't sit well with Clark Howell resident Annie Sharpe, who says evictions and vacancies have risen dramatically since the plans for the Olympics were announced. Earl Phillips is clearing people out of here for the Olympics. He thinks that the less people are here, the less they can fight his plans, she says.

Since last April, vacancies at Techwood have increased by 77 and by 52 at Clark Howell, according to AHA vacancy reports. During that period, only 10 new families were rented apartments. It was also during April that AHA received permission to sell 4.5 acres of Techwood Homes to build the Olympic Village. While it is difficult to prove, it seems that the AHA is silencing critics and getting rid of people who they would have to relocate, all the while assuring residents that they will be the prime beneficiaries of any proposed redevelopment of Techwood / Clark Howell.

With all the homeless people out there, I want to see AHA fix up these units and move people in, says Joann Murphy, a 28-year resident of Clark Howell Homes. But Murphy, who is fighting the redevelopment plan as a member of Tenants United for Fairness (TUFF), says that she doesn't see it happening. Instead, she's afraid that a majority of residents won't be around for the Olympics. She believes if we let it happen to Techwood/Clark Howell, they're going to do it to the rest of the [public housing communities].

WHY THESE NEIGHBOURHOODS?

Given the historical record and these current examples, it is important to ask why particular neighbourhoods (in this case poor, primarily African American neighbourhoods of Southside Atlanta) are consistently chosen as sites for such projects. Studies show that gentrification (or revitalization projects) occur in neighbourhoods close to the central business district, with high proportions of rental units, deteriorated housing, and vulnerable households (Henig 1980). A study cited by Philip Clay found that in 78 percent of neighbourhoods where gentrification was occurring, housing was judged to be deteriorating. According to 1986 data, 35.6 percent of Techwood's units and 24.3 % of Summerhill's are substandard (n.p. data from Task Force). Housing is thus cheaper to acquire, residents have fewer resources to fight development plans, and development has the backing of business and others connected primarily with cleaning up the city. In Atlanta, it is instructive to examine the one case to date in which neighbourhood opposition to Olympic development plans has been successful. Olympic officials decided not to build a tennis complex in Dekalb County's Blackburn Park because of community protest. Why were these residents successful where Southeast Atlanta neighbourhood organizations have failed? Blackburn Park, outside the city, is in an affluent, mostly white neighbourhood.

Residents of threatened neighbourhoods are further distrustful of promises by developers to provide adequate replacement housing and economic development programs for affected communities. Studies of urban renewal consistently document such failures. A 1961 study of urban renewal projects in 41 cities found that 60% were relocated in other slums and that renewal, in fact, may have created ghettos by relocating people into areas which became overcrowded as a consequence (Gans 1965:541). Almost every report indicates that those who are displaced pay considerably more for housing that is often inferior.

Atlanta's record reflects these general trends. Summerhill points out that similar promises of housing, new jobs and economic development made 25 years ago (when the first stadium was built) were never carried through (Atlanta News Weekly). In fact, according to ANUF, the site on which the Olympic stadium would be built was supposed to be a site for housing and economic development under the Model Cities Plan. They further note that those displaced who did receive replacement housing were put into large public housing projects: As a result, many went from poor but socially stable neighbourhoods into unstable, crime-ridden projects (ANUF, np 2). Presently, the city already has a long waiting list for public housing, and when low income units are lost they are rarely replaced (Washington Post 7/7/91).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Very little is certain in the multi-billion world of Olympic finances except that the Games will be very expensive and are already diverting public dollars away from the real needs of the people (BnC 1990).

It is difficult to uncover the real (or at least realistic) story about what economic benefits will be derived from the Games. Based on information from Atlanta and from research in other cities, there are several basic issues: (1) Olympic costs will increase beyond expectation; (2) Olympic revenue predictions are highly speculative; (3) Public dollars will (as has already been discussed) go to support the Games; (4) The Games may have quite negative economic consequences for many in the city; and (5) Corporations (including corporate sponsors and television networks) will make enormous profits (BnC 1990:1-2).

Evaluation of the revenues and expenditures predicted by the AOC (and later ACOG) suggests that some of their estimates are not supportable. One problem is that estimates of tourist expenditures do not consider visitor displacement the lost revenue from potential visitors who choose to stay away from the city because of the Games. For example, a study by the UCLA Business Forecasting Project of the 1984 LA Games found that for every 100 visitors who came to the Games, 30 stayed away, and thus the economic impact from that Olympics was considerably overstated (BnC 1990:9-10). Economist Donald Ratajczak thus concludes for Atlanta:

Without an analysis of the capacity constraints, alternative investments stimulated by the existence of the Olympics, and displacement of activities that would have occurred if no Olympics existed but cannot now occur because the Olympics are using facilities, the \$3.46 billion economic impact in 1989 dollars is questionable (p.3).

Other revenue and expenditure estimates are also misleading according to Ratajczak's report. First, Olympic organizers do not clarify the shares that go to IOC and USOC (the United States Olympic Committee) [p.5]. Second, the AOC's original claim that they will be able to assure a profit because they will know what the revenues will be before expenses are incurred is not convincing. This claim is based on the questionable assumption that massive scale-backs in already initiated construction projects would be possible (p.5). Estimates of US television rights are probably \$100 million too high and are at best offset by \$50 million extra now expected from

European television (p.5). Although merchandise royalties and revenues from other corporate sponsors were not analyzed in detail, Ratajczak suggests these are overestimated by \$20 million (p.6). Sales of Olympic coins are probably also overestimated by \$30 million (p.7). These corrections then place \$40 million of interest income at risk for a total of \$125 million of revenues in 1989 dollars at risk from these sources alone (p. 7). Underestimates of construction costs add at least another \$25 million to the mounting at risk total (p.7). The expected operating budget, according to Ratajczak, may be accurate, although this was the area most seriously underestimated by officials in 1984 (p.8). Based on these calculations Ratajczak concludes the Olympics are probably a break even activity (p.8). Ratajczak also points out that whatever revenues do come the way of the public will go to the state, not the city of Atlanta, in the form of income and sales taxes. According to Ratajczak:

The City of Atlanta is not well positioned to gain any revenue benefits from the games. Thus, the City of Atlanta, which provides sites for the village, many of the venues will need to provide additional services above those financed by ACOG, receives fewer revenue or tax base enhancing benefits from the Olympics than many other governmental entities (p.4).

Another issue is what employment opportunities will, in fact, result from the Olympic Games. Most agree that new jobs will be low-paying and temporary and that new people migrating into the city in the hope of finding employment will more than offset any potential employment gains in the city. Others are pushing for affirmative action and job training programs to be implemented, a promise that employment of poor and homeless citizens will be a priority, and assurance that vending spaces and opportunities for non-profits and small independent businesses will be available (n.p. Task Force for the Homeless Olympic Conscience Agenda). The issue of vending is particularly important because an Atlanta ordinance requires that all street vendors purchase a \$175.00 permit. In the fall of 1991, for example, a homeless man was arrested for operating a shoe-shine stand without a permit (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1991:25). Another concern is for an expected post-Olympic economic bust. In Toronto, consultants warned, As with any major event which produces a sharp peak in economic activity, prudent planning will be required to manage any adverse effects arising from the potential drop-off in economic activity following the Games (BnC 1990:9).

The Toronto coalition Bread not Circuses argues that another fundamental flaw in economic forecasts by Olympic developers is the failure to take into account what would happen if the Olympic Games did not take place. In other words, economic impact analyses predict the consequences of having the Games but present no comparison (or control) situation. As financial analysts for Peat Marwick (the same company that AOC contracted to prepare the economic impact analysis) explains:

This economic impact analysis, like most, does not consider what would occur if the project was not undertaken. Economic impact analyses generally assess the impacts of alternative competing projects; a decision maker choosing among alternative projects requires economic impact analyses of each in order to make rational use of information provided (BnC 1990:10).

In other words, if the claim of the Olympic boosters is that with X dollars of public and private investment, the city (or state, or region) will reap X dollars worth of revenue, then it seems logical to question whether those X dollars of investment used for programs (such as housing subsidies, neighbourhood-based economic development,etc) other than the Olympics could not translate into far greater benefits for the majority of citizens. Thus, while the Olympic developers claim the Games should be supported precisely because of the benefits they will bring, it is unclear what those benefits are and how they compare to alternatives. As the Washington Post reported:

Many, including Donald Ratajczak, the city's leading economist, have said the boosters got caught up in the early hoopla about bundles of tourist dollars and new sports facilities and now grandly but unrealistically envision the Olympics as a catalyst to repair Atlanta's social ills.

Since the Olympics do not address the root causes of widespread poverty in Atlanta, they cannot be a solution.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Olympic guests may rest assured they will not suffer the discomfort of seeing a single poor person in Seoul (from *The Sangkyei Dong Olympics*).

Evidence suggests that holding the Olympic Games in Atlanta poses a serious threat to the civil liberties of many of the city's citizens. According to research on the Los Angeles Games in 1984, there were widespread abuses: (1) All demonstrations were banned until, under ACLU pressure, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) designated restricted demonstration areas far away from press headquarters; (2) Police moved homeless people out of public view; (3) Police were authorized to conduct huge sweeps of arrests, to hold people in jail for 22 hours, and then not to charge them with any violation, and (4) Many people living on the streets were arrested for jaywalking and other selectively enforced offenses (n.p., Task Force for the Homeless).

Atlanta has taken a leading role in a national backlash against homeless people. A sweep of homeless people in 1990 just prior to a visit by the IOC resulted in 100 arrests, and a Habitual Panhandling Statute allows police to arrest people caught panhandling more than three times. According to Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless Director Anita Beaty, homeless people were arrested, and police then figure out what law to use on them this time (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 1991:26). There is also considerable evidence of the selective enforcement of laws (such as littering or jaywalking) against people who appear homeless.

One of the most sweeping anti-homeless bills in the country was passed in Atlanta on July 15, 1991. Called a dry run for the Olympics by Task Force Director Anita Beaty (AJC 6/11/91), the city's ordinance contains three parts: (1) It is unlawful to enter vacant buildings without the owner's approval, and police can arrest someone without the initiation of the owner if the building has a posted notice; (2) It is unlawful for a person to remain on a parking lot unless s/he has a car parked there; and (3) It is unlawful to beg in a way that would make a reasonable person fear imminent harm (n.p. Task Force). Opponents of the bill point out several problems which also make clear the intent of the legislation is to allow the city to indiscriminately arrest people for being homeless. The Olympic Conscience Civil Liberties/Legal Team (Task Force, n.p.) points out that the law duplicates already existing ordinances. They further argue that the parking lot stipulation renders absurd in practice what may be desirable in intent. Hundreds of persons cross parking lots in this city each day without lawful authority. The enactment of this new Code Section would give rise to the most egregious forms of selective enforcement. The begging provision is particularly ambiguous. As the Olympic Conscience team notes, Threatening someone with imminent bodily injury is already a crime. This behavior is called assault. There is no need to confuse laws on assault by adding this prohibition. Police do not have any statistics on how many people are assaulted by panhandlers, and freely admit that their evidence comes from hotel lobbies and people who've attended conferences here. No personal injury was suffered except they were intimidated and frightened (police Lt. Lewis Archangeli reported by AJC 1/18/91). Mayor Jackson argues that the stipulation about abandoned buildings is not designed to kick homeless people out of what may be the only shelter available (local shelters often can't meet demand) but rather to move homeless people into

affordable housing (AJC 6/11/91). However, Jackson's logic is difficult to follow – jail is certainly not a housing opportunity, and, in fact, a police record means a person will have even less opportunity for employment, etc.

The prime supporters of and lobbyists for the bill were downtown business representatives. According to a Task Force for the Homeless analysis (n.p. 1991) of the passage of the ordinances, the business community was successful both in framing the issue effectively and in developing a powerful strategy to ensure the ordinance's passage. Business people played on the desire to improve the city's image in order to attract new businesses, tourists and shoppers to downtown. Evincing again the historical relationship between business and city politicians, the report also points to the city council's trust in the business community as a fundamental reason for the ordinance's successful passage over the objections of the advocacy community.

It is clear, then, that Atlanta is making a concerted effort to remove any undesirables from public view. By the 1996 Olympic Games, Atlanta may well make the claim that there are no homeless people in the city – because most will be in jail.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ANTI-POOR CITY COUNCIL ORDINANCES SINCE 1991

- A set of ordinances (often called the Anti-Panhandling Ordinance) was passed by the Atlanta City Council in July of 1991. It was sponsored by the Public Safety Committee. The main points are as follows:
 - (1) To make it unlawful to enter a vacant building or the land where a vacant building is located without the permission of an authorized agent of the property, provided that the building or property is so marked. Trespassers are to be prosecuted by the police as the property's own agent.
 - (2) To make it unlawful to enter onto a parking lot unless the person's car is parked there or the person has lawful business on the property, provided that is so marked.
 - (3) To make it unlawful to beg or sollicit alms (by spoken, written or printed word or other method) by accosting another or by focusing oneself upon the company of another. Accosting is defined as approaching or speaking to someone in such a manner as would cause a reasonable person to fear imminent bodily harm or the commission of a criminal act upon their person or upon property in their immediate possession. Forcing oneself upon the company of another is defined as continuing to request, beg or sollicit alms in close proximity to the individual addressed after the person to whom the request is directed has made a negative response, blocking the passage of the individual addressed or otherwise engaging in conduct which could reasonably be construed as intended to compel or force a person to accede to demands.
 - (4) The Hotel/Motel Ordinance was passed by the Public Safety Committee and referred to the Finance Committee, where it is currently held. Essentially, the bill would make owners of low-income housing options such as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels and rooming houses responsible for the actions of their guests. As a result, it would discourage the opening of such facilities. Many points of the ordinance are as follows:
 - (1) No person shall operate a hotel, lodging house, rooming house, boarding house, or similar place of business without first obtaining a license to engage in the business.
 - (2) An initial fee and a renewal fee each year will be charged to the business for the license.
 - (3) The operator of the business must maintain records which are available for inspection by police at all times. These records must include the name and address of all residents and guests and must be maintained for seven years after their entry.

(4) The license may be denied, suspended, or revoked for many different reasons. Hazy language is often used here, such as the failure to adequately supervise and monitor the conduct of employees, residents, guests and others on the property

- The 6-month sentence ordinance was referred to the Committee on Council and is currently held there. The main point of the ordinance is to increase the maximum sentence proscribed for City ordinance violations from 2 months to 6 months.
- The window washer ordinance (93-O-0374) was passed by the Public Safety Committee and will be voted on by the Council on Monday, March 15, 1993. The main point of the bill is to prohibit individuals from washing automobile windows on public streets.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Olympic debate was more than just a discussion about a multi-billion dollar sports extravaganza. It was about the future of a city and its people. It was about priorities and control (Shapcott 1991:3).

Olympic related development in Atlanta thus clearly reflects the ability of corporate leaders and their friends in City Hall to mobilize scarce public and private resources for the benefit of a privileged few and at the expense of the real needs of most of Atlanta's citizens (Shapcott 1991:3). However, it is also important to remember that the Olympic Games merely magnify and catalyze already existing processes. The Olympics in Atlanta represent the historically misplaced priorities of a city and also of the nation, where the War on Poverty has become a war on poor people.

The rapid rise in homelessness over the past decade represents broader political and economic trends which have resulted in lack of affordable housing, lack of jobs at livable wages, and declining incomes. Over the same time period, federal assistance programs have been slashed (NLC 1991:10). It is only within this larger context that the full implications of what is happening in Atlanta can be understood.

For the community in Atlanta organizing to provide an Olympic conscience, the battle is a difficult one. The Olympic Games, framed by a media sympathetic to business interests, receive widespread popular support. Thus, to be perceived, as opposed to the Olympics is a dangerous position. However, the Olympic Conscience coalition, following the strategy of Bread not Circuses, might ultimately be successful in setting forth their agenda by stressing two basic and undeniable themes: the growing poverty in the City and the importance of a truly democratic decision-making (political) process (Shapcott 1991:17). Olympic boosters simply cannot appear unconcerned with these issues. Perhaps the most effective strategy for organizers, then, is not to let the City hide its problems rather than solving them. As long as Olympic opposition organizations and their issues are receiving regular attention even if it is primarily negative their issues will remain in public view and will remain on the political agenda. Along these lines, grassroots leaders have tried to view the 1996 Olympic Games as an opportunity for the development and actualization of many of the broader, lasting solutions long put forward by those working on issues of homelessness and poverty (Appendix A):

The Olympics provide us with a unique opportunity to demonstrate that this city is not too busy to care for its poor and homeless citizens. In fact, the spirit of the Olympics demands nothing less. We will all continue to work to end homelessness and make a real impact on poverty so that we can say with authenticity that this is a city worthy of Olympic status, not one hiding its ills from the world (Olympic Conscience Coalition, n.p.).

For the writers of these words, unlike for Olympic boosters, the power behind the rhetoric is an all too visible reality.