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Conclusion

In summary, the Vollintine/Evergreen neighborhood is enjoying a period of comparative good health. It weathered some uncertain times when white flight and blockbusting were prevalent. There has been a racial change, yet the change has not been so drastic that it uprooted the neighborhood. Words of praise can be showered on the good residents of the community who acted to create and maintain a stable, biracial neighborhood where the best can be encouraged in both races. It is well that the neighborhood's residents recognized the need to arouse their sleeping neighborhood organization in 1978 and reorganize VECA for the days ahead. Some very crucial decisions that bear on the neighborhood's future will probably be made during the next two years.

Certain problems have been festering too long and solutions are needed. The nagging traffic problem plagues the city, and how it is resolved is crucial to this neighborhood. It is time for the mayor to use the resources of the city to bring about a consensus on the I-40 Expressway. It was well said by attorney, D'Army Bailey, a VECA homeowner.

Unless and until there is some solution to this construction, the matter will continue to cause controversy in the community. And the uncertainty around the issue leaves open the question of the future of homes in the mid-city area.

We need to put an end to the debate around the completion of the expressway once and for all. The manner of doing that may not please everybody or give each side all it wants. But a solution will save us continuing controversy and remove an everpresent danger to the stability of mid-city neighborhoods.¹

There is a great need to end the West Drive controversy. Litigation has kept the situation dangling for years. Since the Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development is working on an update of the major road plan for the city, the first full scale plan since the 1969 Harland Bartholomew and Associates study, it could look for a new approach to this problem. Surely there is a traffic design which would protect both the rights of drivers and residents. The study is scheduled to be ready in the spring of 1980. Before that time public meetings will be held beginning in January 1980 with hearings scheduled later in the spring. This plan will also incorporate a Mass Transit Plan being worked on by Systems Design, a Washington, D. C. firm.²

Baron Hirsch will be moving from the neighborhood in the next few years. That institution will be missed and some attention needs to be given to its replacement.

The churches in the VECA neighborhood have been very important to its growth and stability. The Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, exhibited great social awareness and concern for contemporary urban problems. Through the formation of VECA and other services they sought to allay the fear and misunderstanding that integration aroused. Many times the ministers moved out ahead of their congregations to deal with the racial transition in the neighborhood. Consistently they have made their churches and services available to the community. Many have faltering memberships today. How appropriate it would be for the community to now join and increase its support of them.

While the ills are fewer than in most urban neighborhoods, they should not be ignored. Deterioration comes stealthily to the unsuspecting, and many residents appear to believe that they are not threatened by problems outside their immediate section. It is not realistic to think of the large, diverse VECA area as one neighborhood in the sense of neighborliness. But it is important to see that by defining a large geographical area and giving it an identity, there is the structure which can be a force at city hall. The racial polarization is self-defeating. The VECA organization should have biracial support so it can tackle effectively the unresolved public policies in the neighborhood.

The VECA neighborhood has many reasons to be optimistic. It has beautiful subdivisions, many over fifty years old. Its housing stock is manageable, affordable and generally in good condition. It has good schools, good transportation, neighborhood churches, and shopping centers. Timing is propitious for this convenient neighborhood, since the trend is back to mid-town areas. It has the people resources to make itself heard at city hall. What it needs is neighborhood commitment and unification. This will make public policy responsive to the neighborhood's needs so that it will work for the neighborhood and write the prescription for a continuously robust and healthy Vollintine/Evergreen community.