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TEXT OF SPEECH--AT DEDICATION OF RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLY HOUSING PROJECT

June 08, 1965

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TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 1965

CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

REMARKS BY MAYOR ROBERT F. WAGNER
AT
DEDICATION OF RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSEMBLY HOUSING PROJECT

West 96th Street
New York City

Tuesday, June 8, 1965
11:00 a.m.

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This ground-breaking is the third housing ceremony in as many weeks in which I have participated within this same 20-block West Side Urban Renewal Area. In fact, all three of these milestones have been marked within the six-block area of Stage I. of the West Side Renewal Area.

Two weeks ago we dedicated the first of three vest-pocket public housing developments now being completed in this area. Last week we broke ground for Goddard Tower. Today we are breaking ground for RNA House.

It is very exciting and gratifying to me, as I think it must be to all of the people of this neighborhood--and of the entire City--to note the quickening pace of the work on this great trail-blazing project---the West Side Urban Renewal Program.

Chairman Herbert Evans, of the Housing and Redevelopment Board, advises me that within the next several weeks, two more community sponsored, moderate-income housing projects will start construction. By the end of this year it is expected that every low and moderate income new development scheduled for Stage I.--in other words, for this six-block area--will be under construction.

These projects, in turn, are only the forerunners of more to come in Stages II. and III. This is going to be an area resounding with the constant cadence of construction and rehabilitation---the sound of new life, new hope and new vitality for this neighborhood.

You should know that all of the construction that is taking place and is going to take place here is based upon a tremendous amount of preliminary work---tens of thousands of hours spent in planning, budgeting, designing, and all of the other essential preparations for carrying out a project of this magnitude.

Housing and urban renewal are like an iceberg. The work you see going on---the demolition, the digging, and construction---are only a small part of the work that is actually done. I would say that 90 percent of the work that goes into a project like this is never seen on the construction site.

Today, we see the visible evidence of the work that has been going on for all of these months. The plans and dreams for this neighborhood are now turning into brick and mortar.

This project---RNA House---is one of the first of the neighborhood-sponsored cooperatives. One other is already under way. Each of them reflects the concern of the institutions in this community--the Upper West Side. This concern is for the revitalization of this neighborhood---to preserve the diversified character of this neighborhood for the provision of housing for the people who live here---including middle-income housing for middle-income families.

This project, along with the others of the same kind, will provide a maximum opportunity for the moderate-income residents of this neighborhood to remain and enjoy the benefits of the renewed Upper West Side. That is the main emphasis in the West Side Urban Renewal Plan. It is the main theme of the efforts being directed by Housing Coordinator Milton Mollen, and by the Housing and Redevelopment Board, under Commissioners Herbert Evans and Walter Fried. Because of our emphasis on this theme, we have given first priority to the construction of low-rent housing in this area. Now that the public housing is well along, the neighborhood-sponsored cooperatives in Stage I. are moving and will have a top priority.

I know it is unnecessary for me to repeat my recent remarks here, detailing the steps we have taken to translate into actuality our basic idea that urban renewal in this area is for the people who live here. Nor is it necessary today to review all of the actions we are taking to insure a balanced, diverse, integrated and healthy community for people of all income levels and backgrounds.

Let me say only that this is our dominating concern. We are keeping this point in mind in all of the decisions we make and in all of the steps we take in the entire West Side Urban Renewal project.

This project is, as I have said, a pioneer project-- a trail-breaking project. Many of the things we are doing in this project are being watched throughout the nation. We, too, are learning as we go along. We are finding out things and we are applying what we are learning to each successive project, in this area and throughout the City.

One of the major lessons we have learned on the West Side has been the value of citizen cooperation and participation in the renewal process. This participation includes the planning as well as the implementation of the project.

Sponsorship of this development by the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly, and of the other three cooperative projects by other fine community groups is a

reflection of really meaningful citizen participation in the renewal program. As all of those who have been involved in this undertaking can bear witness, the City invites and encourages citizen participation. We emphasize it. We do everything we can to solicit and promote it.

This policy is based on my conviction that the best results can be achieved by teamwork---by involving the neighbors and neighborhood institutions in neighborhood undertakings.

I am sure you will be glad to know, as I am, that other housing projects throughout the City are showing the same kind of rapid progress that this project is. We are making real headway against the slums, and against our housing shortage. This is the goal we keep constantly in mind. We are making progress. Yet we are never satisfied and never should be -- with the progress we are making. We should make more. The City will make more.

To achieve our purposes we need the continued cooperation of all elements in the City. Government must show the way, with the help, support, encouragement---and criticism, too ---of neighborhood groups. Here on the West Side we get all of the cooperation we need; nor are we lacking for criticism. We appreciate the cooperation, and the criticism, too.

We all have the same objective and that is the continued development here of a happy, healthy neighborhood as an integral part of our City--in which each family can live with the decency, dignity and sense of human worth that is the birthright of each and every human being.

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