

In 1931 the city of Baltimore passed its first zoning ordinance. Since that time Fairfield has been zoned industrially and it has suffered from it. It is time now that the city correct this mistake by zoning Fairfield residential in keeping with the residential character of the neighborhood.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Fairfield is now and always has been residential in character. It first grew up in the late 1880's as employees of nearby industry established their homes there amid the farmland. At that time 2100 men were employed in nine factories in the area--companies such as the Rasin Chemical Co., the Baltimore Chrome Works, and the Monumental Acid Works. According to the Fairfield Journal, the population was: "Adult males, 62, adult females, 46; under 21, males 51, females 60; total 221." (The Sun, June 26, 1941) On Sundays people came in their horse-drawn carriages to this rural area to enjoy the woods, the fields, and the shorelands along the bay. (It was not until 1918, when the city last expanded its boundaries, that Fairfield became a part of Baltimore. Ironically, one of the arguments for expansion made then by Mayor Preston was that the area would receive better planning, street cleaning, health and sewage disposal facilities.)

Between the two world wars, the tank farms for which the general area is known first began to appear. In 1941-'42 expansion of the Maryland Drydock Company and Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard brought thousands of shipyard workers and their families to the Fairfield-Curtis Bay area.

It was [in response to the critical housing shortage produced by this war-time industrial expansion that the Fairfield Homes were built [in 1942 on property obtained from the B. and O. Railroad Co..] Although they were to be used temporarily as housing for shipyard-workers, the intention was that they become low-income housing after the war.

"When the emergency* is ended three Government-owned housing developments for families of defense workers at Fairfield shipbuilding industries are to be used as low-rental houses for slum dwellers... Accordingly, the three projects to provide a total of 1000 housing units in Brooklyn, Fairfield and Westport, in layout design and construction are 'to follow very generally the pattern of slum-clearance projects' in Baltimore." (The Sun, August 10, 1941)

This residential use of industrially zoned land was deliberately undertaken by the city of Baltimore, and it was intended at the time that it be a permanent change in use. The city had attempted for several years without success to place such a project in the area due to strong public opposition. Now they had their chance.

"Asked for detailed information on the character of construction, the Housing Authority spokesman said: 'We are trying to design them so that construction costs may be held down and still permit erection of brick. That would insure long life.'" (The Sun, August 10, 1941)

*The War had not yet started.

Thus it is a misconception that the Fairfield Homes are merely "left-over" World War Two housing that remains standing unintentionally and by accident. This was not true thirty years ago, and it is not true today. Spokesmen from the Department of Housing and Community Development maintain that there are currently no plans to phase out the project.

After the war employment in the area decreased again. Industry grew little, in spite of the strong impetus that the war years had given. Industrial growth occurred in other parts of Baltimore instead. Old Fairfield was left alone once again. As of now, almost two generations have passed since Fairfield was zoned industrial, and the neighborhood remains obstinately residential.

Meanwhile, construction of the Fairfield Homes had re-inforced the neighborhood's residential character. In the 1950's Victory Elementary School (school 238) was built to serve the children of Fairfield, an official concession to reality. This was a grudging and ambiguous move, however, since the building was specifically designed for easy conversion to warehouse use. Nevertheless, the school helped strengthen the long-range stability of the community, just as one would predict. In the 1960's an addition was made to the school, this time much of it designed for conversion to office space. Clearly the City was undecided about its intentions for the future of Fairfield, maintaining the industrial zoning yet reluctantly providing some residential services.

On December 23, 1965, a nine-alarm fire at the Continental Oil Company in nearby Wagner's Point "injured 32 persons and disgorged a mushroom cloud visible all over Baltimore..." (The Evening Sun, Feb. 11, 1966). Thereafter, Housing and Community Development proposed that both Fairfield and Wagner's Point be "phased out." But nothing much happened.

In 1970 the city revived a promise first made in 1941 to provide Old Fairfield with sewers.

"In fact, 'according to the present schedule' the city plans to extend a \$512,000 sewerage link-up to Fairfield 'beginning within the next several months,' the principal engineer for the Division of Waste Water [Robert B. Lyon] said yesterday." (The Sun, Oct. 19, 1970)

They have yet to make good on this promise, and Fairfield residents are justifiably skeptical. For one thing, it makes no sense from a professional planning point of view to install residential sewers--or any residential capital improvements--in an industrially zoned area. For another, the city concurrently revived the specter of a "phasing out" of Fairfield. In 1971 Old Fairfield was actually included in the Capital Improvements Program as an industrial renewal project--at the same time that the Department of Public Works was promising to install (sooner or later) residential sewers! In the fall of 1971 the Fairfield Renewal Project was then removed from the C.I.P. when it was found to be ineligible for federal assistance and prohibitively expensive to the city as a result.

The history of the city's actions in Fairfield is thus one of contradictions and indecision, based on the inappropriate action of giving an industrial zoning classification to a residential neighborhood. Naturally, the neighborhood has suffered immensely as a result. The M-3 zoning has prevented, is preventing, and will continue to prevent the community from receiving the urban services every residential neighborhood is entitled to. Because of the M-3 zoning, most of Old Fairfield has been left without sewers, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, storm drainage, or adequate street paving and maintenance. Children swim in the water-filled streets after summer rainstorms. People are forced to build their own sidewalks in order to pass from the street to their door. And although H.C.D. intends to keep Fairfield Homes in operation, they seem unwilling to provide them with adequate services either. The facility is badly in need of extensive modernization (e.g. to fixtures, plumbing, wiring, etc.) similar to that given to the other city housing projects during the last decade. H.C.D. admits to this need and claims a desire to undertake modernization, but so far no money has been appropriated nor is any foreseen.

Now let us examine Fairfield as it is now, to see why it still ought to be given residential zoning.

POPULATION

Fairfield has a total population of 1445 residents, 1157 living in Fairfield Homes and 288 in Old Fairfield, according to the 1970 Census. This population is 99.5% black. Old Fairfield experienced a decrease in population of about 20% between 1960 and 1970.

LAND USE

A land use survey of Fairfield shows that the area proposed for R-5 zoning is overwhelmingly residential in use. The only industrial use within the community is a small trucking firm on Tate Street, the Maryland Transfer Company. There are also some small "ma and pa" groceries, some taverns, a laundromat, and several churches.

HOUSING

The 1970 Census found a total of 110 housing units in Old Fairfield, 86 of them occupied. A 1971 survey by the Neighborhood Design Center found 102 units in Old Fairfield. It should be mentioned that census data is reliable only within certain limits, due to difficulties in collection and changes over time. While keeping this limitation in mind, census data will be used throughout this report for comparison purposes.

HOUSING UNITS

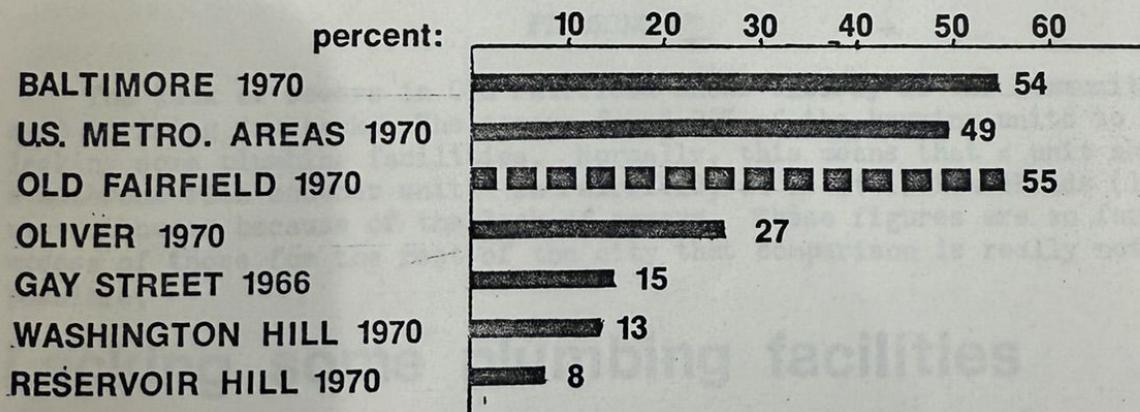
	Old Fairfield	Fairfield Homes
OCCUPIED	86	299
VACANT	24	2
TOTAL	110	301

Source: 1970 Census.

HOME OWNERSHIP

Old Fairfield has a phenomenally high rate of owner-occupancy for a low-income area, roughly 55%. Owner-occupancy is generally regarded by professional planners as a good indicator of the stability of a neighborhood. A high rate of home-ownership is a goal consciously strived for. Most inner city neighborhoods have well under 20%. Fairfield home-owners have a real stake in their community, and as the city has seen after forty years of hoping they would quietly go away, they are quite well established and intend to remain.

OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING



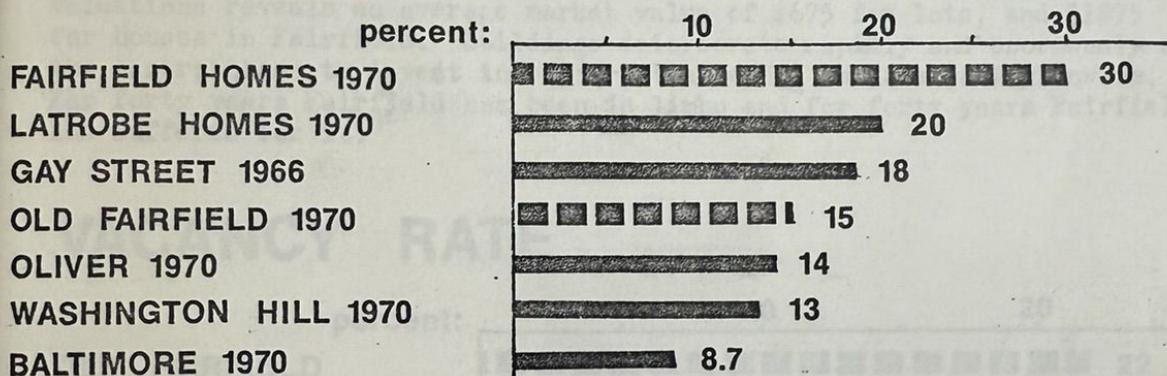
Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

CROWDED UNITS

Old Fairfield has roughly the same rate of crowding (more than 1.0 persons per room) as the inner city, more than the city average, but less than that which is found in housing projects. Fairfield Homes, on the

other hand, has a very high rate of crowding (30%) compared with other projects--Latrobe Homes (20%), McColloch Homes (11%), and Gilmor Homes (16%). This is because residents are reluctant to move from Fairfield Homes when they out-grow their apartments, according to Doris Fleming, social worker at the project. They strongly prefer living in Fairfield. That project has among the lowest vacancy rates and move-out rates in the city's whole public housing system, according to John Felt, a planner for Housing and Community Development.

CROWDED UNITS

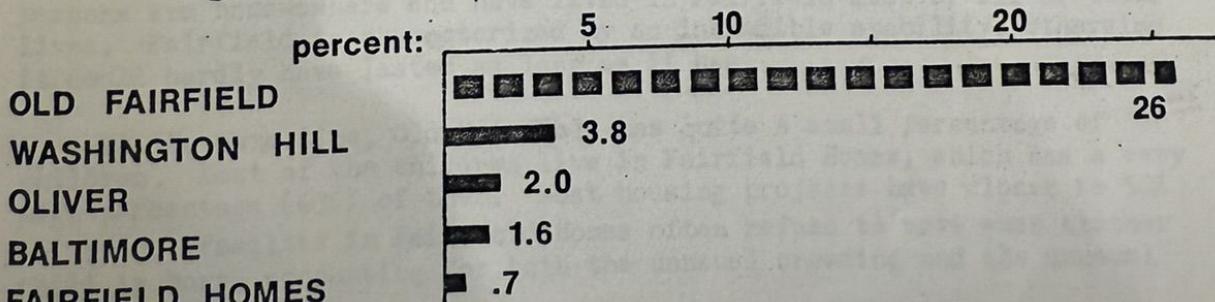


Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

PLUMBING

The lack of sewers in Old Fairfield shows clearly as the community's most striking drawback. The census found 26% of the housing units to be lacking some plumbing facilities. Normally, this means that a unit shares a bathroom with another unit. In Fairfield, at least 15 households (17%) use outhouses because of the lack of sewers. These figures are so far in excess of those for the rest of the city that comparison is really not possible.

Lacking some plumbing facilities

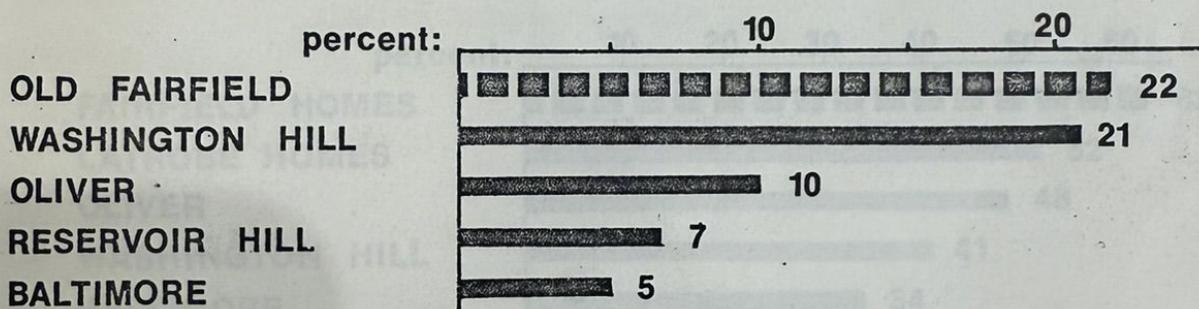


Source: 1970 Census.

VACANCY RATE

Most inner city neighborhoods have a vacancy rate around 10%, roughly double the rate for the city as a whole. The vacancy rate for Old Fairfield is 22%, which is extremely high. This high vacancy rate is quite simply the result of forty years of official indecision over the future of Fairfield, added to the lack of sewers. Nearby Wagner's Point, also zoned M-3 but serviced with sewers, has a lower vacancy rate (12%), but one which is still high. High vacancy rates in the face of an uncertain future are a typical feature of areas being considered for urban renewal, for highway construction, and so on. A classic pattern develops as property values plummet. A survey of assessed valuations reveals an average market value of \$675 for lots, and \$1875 for houses in Fairfield. Buildings deteriorate rapidly and enormously as the owners cease to invest in repairs that would be financially unwise. For forty years Fairfield has been in limbo and for forty years Fairfield has suffered for it.

VACANCY RATE



Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

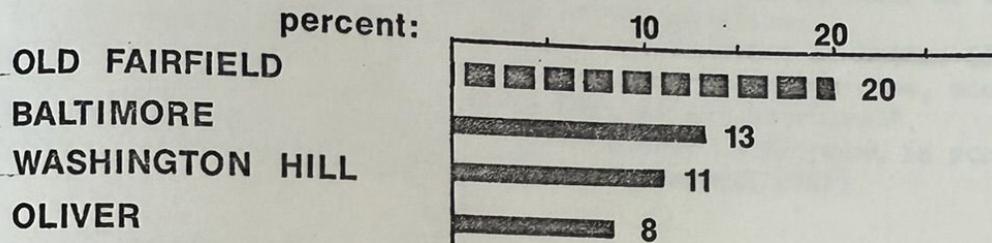
POPULATION PROFILE

Along with its high rate of home-ownership, Old Fairfield has a high percentage of elderly persons (20%). This is much higher than that for Baltimore city or for most inner city neighborhoods. Many of these elderly persons are home-owners and have lived in Fairfield most or all of their lives. Fairfield is characterized by an incredible stability; otherwise it could hardly have lasted as long as it has.

At the same time, Old Fairfield has quite a small percentage of children. Most of the children live in Fairfield Homes, which has a very high percentage (63%) of them. Most housing projects have closer to 50% children. Families in Fairfield Homes often refuse to move when another child is born, accounting for both the unusual crowding and the unusual

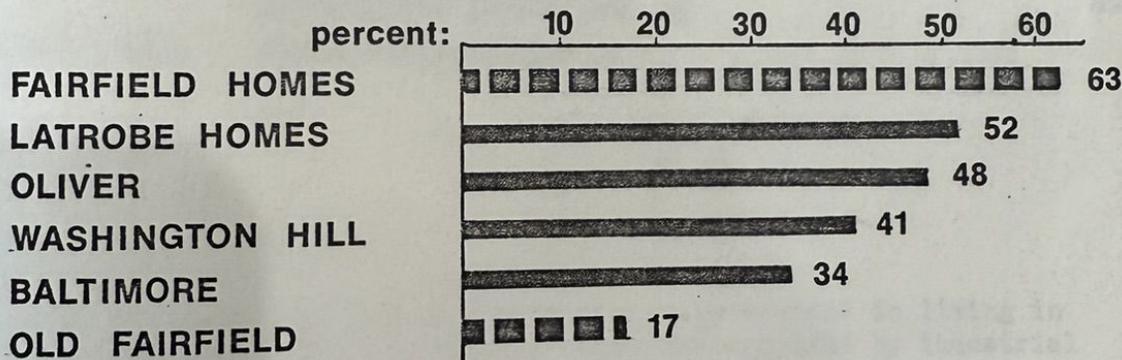
concentration of children. This is because they feel Fairfield is a better place to raise their children than the inner city. It is also true that many people living in Fairfield Homes have relatives in Old Fairfield.

PERSONS OVER 62



Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

PERSONS UNDER 18



Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

Other statistics also support the contention that residents of Fairfield Homes have a desire to stay there. The average length of residence has been increasing (1965--4.72 yrs., 1966--4.95 yrs., 1968--5.71 yrs.) at the same time that the percentage of elderly families (head or spouse 62 yrs. or older) has been increasing (1965--7.3%, 1966--8.9%, 1968--11.2%), according to data from Housing and Community Development.

NEIGHBORHOOD PREFERENCE

The sentiment in Fairfield is overwhelmingly in favor of remaining. A survey reaching half the households in Old Fairfield, conducted by the Neighborhood Design Center, produced these results:

"Do you want to move?" No: 84%, Yes: 16%

"Would you want to live in Fairfield if you had water and sewer?"
Yes: 89%, No: 11%

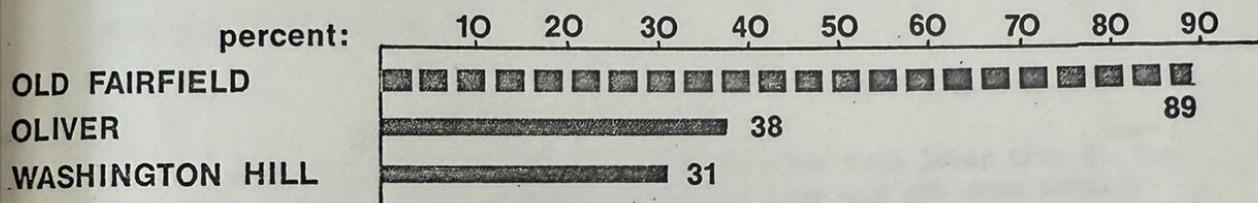
"Would your children hope to eventually establish a home in Fairfield?" Yes: 79%, No: 21%

Inner city residents typically have a much lower rate of preference for the neighborhood they live in. They usually respond in favor of their neighborhood about 30-45% of the time to the question:

"If you had an opportunity to get a better house or better living conditions either in this neighborhood or someplace else, would you prefer to remain here or move to another neighborhood?"

This question is asked by Housing and Community Development in surveys conducted in neighborhoods slated for urban renewal (NDP).

NEIGHBORHOOD PREFERENCE



Sources: See text.

Why is it that Fairfield residents are so persistent in living in a neighborhood with so many drawbacks? They are engulfed by industrial technology but not served by it--few Fairfield residents actually find jobs in the neighboring plants, and part of the air pollution they suffer from is created by the nearby Patapsco Sewage Treatment Plant that does not serve them. Most outsiders are utterly unable to understand why Fairfield residents want to stay there, since it appears to be a bad place to live. It is time to debunk that myth.

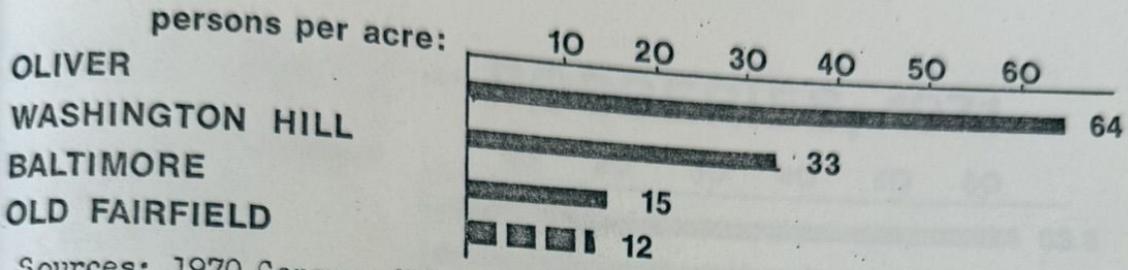
It must be understood that forcing the residents out of Fairfield would put them into worse surroundings, not better. Although it is a low-income community, it is extremely stable. As noted above, there is a high owner-occupancy rate, and most of the families living there have done so for decades, and intend to continue living there.

Fairfield residents enjoy an almost rural environment. Density is extremely low, about twelve persons per acre. The inner city is typically four to five times as crowded. Many in Fairfield grow fresh vegetables in

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their gardens, and it is still common to hunt muskrat in this out-of-the-way section of the city. It would be cynical and cruelly ironic if there were a city policy of forcing the Fairfield residents to move to the inner city at a time when city residents who can afford to are moving out to semi-rural areas themselves. Yet this is precisely the effect of the city's "non-policies" for the area.

DENSITY



The cost of living in Old Fairfield is also much lower than in the inner city. Renters there pay considerably less and get considerably more space than either project-dwellers or inner city residents. Home-owners pay an average of only \$75 a year in taxes.

RENT & SIZE OF DWELLING

	OLD FAIRFIELD HOMES	FAIRFIELD HOMES	LATROBE HOMES	WASHINGTON HILL	OLIVER
AVERAGE RENT	\$47	\$60	\$58	\$66	\$78
AV. NO. OF ROOMS	5.4	4.1	3.8	4.0	5.8

Sources: 1970 Census, HCD.

Perhaps the strongest reason for preferring the quality of life in Fairfield is the comparatively low crime rate they enjoy. Four Police districts, namely Central, Western, Northwestern, and Eastern, contain 38% of Baltimore's residents but are the scene of most of its crime--52.5%

of all burglaries and 62.6% of all robberies, for example. There is a very high correlation between population density and crime rate, since three of these districts--Central, Western, and Eastern--have by far the greatest density in the city. It should be noted that the crime rate for the Central District is somewhat inflated since that district includes the central business district of the city, where many people congregate but relatively few live. Fairfield's crime rate is very low; for example, the robbery rate in Fairfield is about one third that of the inner city. These facts the residents are well aware of.

CRIME RATE - ROBBERIES, 1971

robberies per thousand:

CENTRAL DIST.

10 20 30 40 50 60
63.8

WESTERN DIST.

46.1

EASTERN DIST.

44.6

NORTHWESTERN DIST.

41.7

FAIRFIELD

15.9

Source: Baltimore City Police Department

THE FUTURE

But would Fairfield really have a future if zoned residential? Some would argue that as a residential enclave in the midst of industry, they would be too isolated to obtain adequate commercial services. In actuality, commercial establishments of the local "convenience shopping" type have existed in Fairfield for generations. They have not died out as non-conforming uses under M-3 zoning after forty years, and they would not die out as non-conforming uses under R-5 zoning, since they perform a genuinely needed service to the residents. In addition, close by to Fairfield are the commercial districts in Brooklyn and Curtis Bay, the former readily accessible by a ten-minute bus ride.

It is also argued that from a fiscal viewpoint the land occupied by the Fairfield residents would bring more revenue to the city if it were under industrial use. This assertion means little by itself, however, since any low-income residential area would return more if replaced by industry. The City Planning Department determined that it would cost \$1.5 million for the city to undertake the industrial urban renewal project contemplated. The city can not afford that, so it has to be an irrelevant consideration.

Right now, Fairfield is without most residential capital improvements, such as curbs, gutters, sidewalks, storm drainage, sewers, street maintenance, and in many cases, even streets. As long as it remains under industry,

trial zoning, it is hard to believe that these improvements will ever be granted the community. Residential zoning for Fairfield would clearly establish their right to these urban services for which they have paid their taxes all these past decades. Furthermore, programs for which they are now ineligible could be extended to them. Although clearly one of the city's poorest areas, Fairfield is served by neither the Community Action Agency nor Model Cities because of the M-3 zoning. An ideal area to receive Concentrated Code Enforcement funds because of both high home-ownership and substandard housing, it is similarly ineligible because of the zoning. A mistake of the zoning map drawn in 1931 and the city's subsequent four decades of equivocation in support of that error has caused Fairfield to be left out of the War on Poverty.

Many of the Old Fairfield residents are poor enough to be eligible for public housing if they were forced from their homes. Census tract 2506 has by far the lowest median income of any tract in the city--about \$2600--according to the 1970 census. Thus it should be remembered that the choice for them is not whether to live in Fairfield or in Roland Park or Columbia--the choice is Fairfield, where they may own their own homes, grow fresh vegetables in a garden, hunt muskrat, and walk in their community in safety, or the horror of a housing project in the inner city. If forced to leave their homes, they could not possibly find others with the advantages they now enjoy.

SUMMARY

Although Old Fairfield is now and always has been a residential neighborhood, it was mistakenly zoned M-3 industrial in 1931. In 1942 the Fairfield Homes were built, adding 21 acres more to the 25 acres of land then under residential use. In the 1950's an elementary school was built, further re-inforcing the residential character of the neighborhood.

Despite the drawbacks of a very serious lack of residential capital improvements, Fairfield residents express a very strong preference to remain. This is because of the low density, low cost of living, semi-rural atmosphere, low crime rate, and high rate of residential stability. Fairfield residents are poor, so that they must choose between living in Fairfield or in the inner city. Overwhelmingly they wish to stay in Fairfield.