

Chapter 7

Hough-Fairfax: A Sub-City in Action

Mayor John Coyne of Brooklyn has aptly observed that “transplanted Clevelanders” have left the city for the suburbs “to regain control over their life-styles.” Controlling one’s life-style is also the central question for Cleveland’s neighborhoods and the proposed sub-cities. Let us speculate briefly on how that might occur by examining one proposed sub-city, Hough-Fairfax.

The Hough-Fairfax sub-city suggested in Chapter Six is bordered on the north by Superior Avenue from East 55th Street to Liberty Boulevard. Its proposed eastern boundary follows Liberty Boulevard from Superior Avenue to East Boulevard to the University Circle rapid transit station. Its southern boundary is that rapid transit trackage from University Circle to the Pennsylvania Railroad lines on the west. The western boundary follows the railroad tracks north to East 55th Street and East 55th Street back to Superior Avenue.

Since rail lines form most of the Hough-Fairfax southern and western boundaries, almost all of those border areas are now devoted to commerce and industry. A greenbelt formed by University Circle and Liberty Boulevard abuts Hough-Fairfax on the east. The rail lines and greenery should control land uses on those fringes.

Euclid Avenue is the central boulevard of Hough-Fairfax. Carnegie Avenue and Chester Avenue, one block on either side of Euclid Avenue, carry commuter traffic to downtown. They form a two block wide area on either side of Euclid Avenue which once was a major office, commercial and manufacturing complex, as well as a cultural center. Although the nature of its commerce and industry has changed greatly since 1950, the future of the Carnegie-Euclid-Chester corridor from University Circle to East 55th remains commercial, industrial, and institutional. Five medical institutions—Cleveland Clinic, Mt. Sinai Hospital, University Hospital, Ohio Podiatric College, Women’s Hospital, and a proposed State Rehabilitation Center—foretell a medical center with few rivals in the world.

Hough

Hough is the area of Hough-Fairfax north of Chester. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was a choice neighborhood for the most powerful and fashionable Clevelanders. The best private preparatory schools once were located in Hough. Until the mid-1960s, Wade Park Avenue boasted Cleveland's finest steak house. The past grandeur of the Hough section may be seen even today in some of the apartment buildings that remain on Ansel Road. The future of Hough is still residential.

Hough has lost fully 50 percent of its population and nearly as many buildings since 1960. Hough ranks near the top in all of Cleveland's disagreeable statistics – welfare recipients, crime, abandoned buildings, rate of illegitimate births, and school dropouts.

Hough Avenue and Wade Park Avenue traverse the Hough area between East 55th Street and Liberty Boulevard. Once lined with neighborhood stores, they are now nearly devoid of commerce. As owner-occupancy continues to dwindle in Hough, more vacant land will be created. Indeed, today so many buildings have been abandoned and razed that there are, in some places, many acres of contiguous fields. Hough awaits a new residential face.

There is no reason for Hough to be anything except a residential community. The greenbelt on Hough's eastern boundary is a natural buffer for family life. Existing large lots and the abundance of vacant land offer an unmatched opportunity to create new housing supported by mini-parks, tot lots, and other recreational amenities. No home in Hough is more than a ten minute car ride from an employment center. To realize its residential promise, however, Hough first needs personal safety for its residents and the ability to protect existing real estate investments. The City of Cleveland has so far been able to offer neither.

With Hough unattractive to private investors and lacking municipal leadership, four indigenous organizations have arisen in Hough since 1965 to deal with its problems or decay. All are not-for-profit. As crime and violence have pursued a course of destruction in Hough, those resident led organizations have worked to preserve and restore the community.

In the mid-1960's, there were more people with the courage to tackle Hough's problems than there are today. Then there were at least four other organizations attempting to rebuild parts of



Developers provide special security for new construction in Hough.

Hough. They were composed of nonresident civic leaders or entrepreneurs. All of those outsiders have abandoned the area; and, in one case, two blocks of their remodeled buildings have actually been removed. The only leadership active today on behalf of Hough is based in the community either through residency or through management of enterprises located in the area.

Essentially, all of the planning for a future Hough neighborhood now derives from those four indigenous Hough organizations. One is known as Famicos. Headed by a steadfast Catholic nun, Sister Henrietta, Famicos develops and rehabilitates housing in eastern Hough. HOPE, Inc. is another organization that develops and manages housing in eastern Hough. Founded by a white Protestant minister, its staff and board are today primarily Hough residents and black. NOAH (Neighbors Organized for Action in Housing), also having a church genesis, develops housing in central Hough. The development organization with the greatest financial base is the Hough Area Development Corporation. Funded by the federal government, it has built an enclosed mall shopping center in western Hough and new single-family and multi-family residences. Its board and leadership also either live or work in Hough.

Fulfillment of Hough's residential destiny will be a 50-year project. Such a project requires the continuous and undivided attention of leaders with real power to affect the supporting structure of the community—its street patterns, its open spaces, its police and fire protection, its street lights, its housing code enforcement, its sanitation service, and its recreation programs. All of those are traditional functions of municipal government. Hough's problems are so great that it needs a chief municipal executive with loyalties and time that are not diverted to problems remote from Hough.

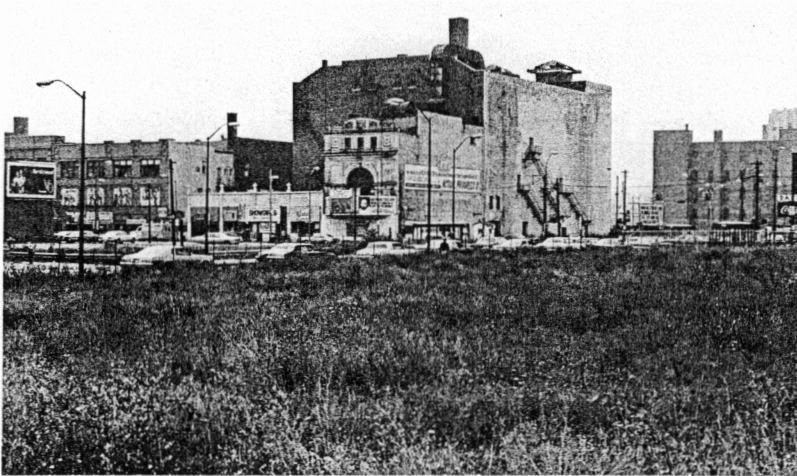
Fairfax

The Fairfax section of Hough-Fairfax is the area south of Carnegie. Fairfax is not yet a wasteland of vacant lots; but its residential structures are old, and vacancies are increasing. Home ownership is common, but its population is heavily in the upper age ranges. The higher incidence of owner-occupancy and the older population make crime a less dominant though not a less serious problem than in Hough. Cedar and Quincy Avenues, its streets for neighborhood retailing, are in substantial decay because of Cleveland's inability to protect against criminals.

One might say that Fairfax is twenty years behind Hough in its stage of deterioration. Fairfax residents are greatly concerned that, as deterioration grows around them, they will be moved out or encroached upon by wealthy businesses located on the borders of the neighborhood. At the same time, the decay on Cedar and Quincy diminish the attractiveness of their neighborhood to new residents and their own property values. For nearly 15 years resident leaders have sought, without success, to persuade City Hall to devise a plan to make Cedar and Quincy a credit to their own better-cared-for homes.

The Fairfax area shares the need of Hough for better police protection and a municipal strategy for revival, but it does not need a massive program of redesign or renovation. The neighborhood needs a program to assure property maintenance and to stabilize the value of residential property.

There are numerous major businesses and institutions with roots in or near Fairfax. Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Karamu House, the YMCA, Cleveland Clinic, and Warner and Swasey are either in Fairfax or adjacent to it. They can support and assist



Euclid Corridor.

such programs but they cannot, for the most part, lead them. Again, the missing ingredient is sustained municipal leadership to draw together in common programs the residents and organizations that now have a stake in Fairfax.

The Euclid Corridor

The main street of Hough-Fairfax—Euclid Avenue and the corridor between Carnegie and Chester—does not lack for local leadership or private enterprise. Cleveland Clinic has expanded at a rapid rate in the western part of the corridor, and University Circle, Inc. has developed a land use plan for the area. But these are private plans, created by private developers, and without a supportive municipal vision.

The central public questions for the Euclid corridor are what should Euclid Avenue, from East 55th Street to University Circle, look like in the year 2000 and how can it support and gain sustenance from the adjacent neighborhoods? Those questions must be resolved soon or the year 2000 will be dictated entirely by the private developers in the Euclid corridor. Unlike Hough and Fairfax, those developers are now much at work, and time is short for public policy-making.

Should Euclid Avenue from East 79th Street to University Circle be a broad boulevard with a center strip of grass, flowers,

shrubs, and trees? Should the Euclid corridor be the major commercial center for Hough and Fairfax? Should Hough and Fairfax be bedroom communities for those who work in the Euclid corridor? If they were, the residential real estate markets in Hough and Fairfax would be buoyed.

Should an express transit system be created in the Euclid corridor from University Circle to Public Square? That is what the Regional Transit Authority proposes. At major stops, RTA planners would develop commercial and apartment complexes. How should such a development be designed to benefit Hough and Fairfax?

Suburbs affect the answers to those questions through city planners and political leaders. They are the spokesmen by whom residential interests are promoted and protected. The sub-city of Hough-Fairfax could exercise comparable control with a full-time effort from a chief municipal executive and a professional planning staff. The energies of those people should not be spread thin by worries about Hyatt Hotels downtown, industrial development along Woodland Avenue, trash collections on Train Avenue, and a one-way street at East 176th and Harvard.

The Small Investor

To a passing motorist, the visible leaders and institutions of Hough appear to be lonely beacons of hope in a wasteland of decaying buildings, broken glass, and vacant lots. In truth, there is hardly a residential block in the Hough section of Hough-Fairfax that does not have a group of residents who are continuing to invest in Hough's rebirth. While the larger, more visible institutions seek government subsidies for new construction projects, the invisible resident investors rely on personal savings, conventional loans, and sweat equity. What they seek from government to protect their investments are good housekeeping and faithful law enforcement at the local level.

The 1300 block of East 65th Street (between Superior and Wade Park), the 7000 block on Zoeter (situated between Wade Park and Lexington), and the 1800 block on East 79th Street (between Hough and Chester) demonstrate the range of resident investors and their needs in Hough.

Helena Poloma has lived at 1359 East 65th Street since 1946. Her home is the original one and one-half story farmhouse in that



Mrs. Gowdy.

19th century subdivision. The original farm property was subdivided into lots 30 feet wide and nearly 200 feet deep. Fruit trees bearing apples, cherries, and peaches still dot the back yards. Like many older sections of Cleveland, some lots contain two houses—one behind the other. From Mrs. Poloma's perspective, the neighborhood has been improving for 35 years.

Only a few vacant lots exist, and Mrs. Poloma points with pride to her newer neighbors who have made substantial improvements in their properties. Some of the single family units were purchased by resident-owners in the 1970s for less than \$5,000—one reputedly for one dollar. In the summer of 1980, they gleamed with fresh paint, aluminum siding, and well-kept yards.

From Mrs. Poloma's perspective, the good citizen award for her block should go to Louise Gowdy, an apartment tenant across the street. If Mrs. Gowdy spots broken glass on the block, she has been known to leave her own apartment with broom and dustpan

to clean her neighbor's sidewalk across the street. In the spring of 1980, Mrs. Gowdy and her husband decided to clear the brush and debris from a nearby vacant lot to plant a vegetable garden. When the clearings were placed on the tree lawn, they called Cleveland's waste disposal department for a pick-up crew. Weeks passed without response. Finally Mrs. Gowdy got the removal job done herself by recruiting members of her church to help load and cart away the clearings.

In mid-August of 1980, the City of Cleveland was a major threat to peace and safety on the block where Mrs. Poloma and Mrs. Gowdy live. A small cave-in had occurred in the center of the street. The city surrounded the cave-in with flashers but did not repair it. After a week, the cave-in had been extended by the pressure of passing cars. Finally, the entire street had to be barricaded. But proper warning signs and detour markers were not placed at the nearest cross streets. As a result, traffic continued to confront the barricades, and some motorists by-passed them by driving onto the sidewalks. The residents, themselves, then barricaded the sidewalks and their lawns. What the neighbors of Mrs. Gowdy and Mrs. Poloma needed was a street department that could promptly and properly barricade the defect, detour traffic, and repair the cave-in, together with a police department that could continue to monitor the warning signs and detour markers.

On Zoeter Avenue in Hough, a few blocks south and east of Mrs. Polomas, neighborhood stand three small frame houses on small lots that would be appropriate for Ohio City's restoration program. These lots are 30 feet wide but less than 75 feet deep. Garages are unfeasible and driveways barely accommodate American cars. Samuel and Lucille McKinney and their immediate neighbors have nonetheless turned their small residences into showpieces. With railroad ties as borders, they have transformed the treelawn into carefully manicured receptacles for shrubs, small flowering bushes, and flowers. The shallow front and back yards have become formal gardens. The exteriors of the houses are tastefully painted.

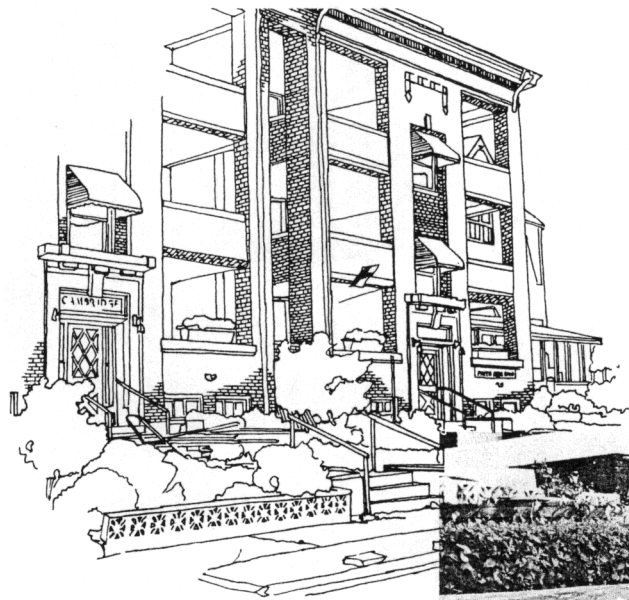
Mr. McKinney has earned his investment capital from years of work at Sohio. One of Mr. McKinney's neighbors is a former Glenville resident who acquired his house for a nominal price from an absentee suburban landlord. A year of sweat equity has brought that house close to the example of the McKinneys.



The McKinneys in their formal garden.

The McKinneys and their neighbors on the south side of Zoeter have continued their investment despite the near total neglect of the residences and buildings on the opposite side of the street. There the tenants and absentee landlords have disregarded even minimal standards. One vacant lot, almost directly across from the McKinney property, was long a parking and dumping ground for junk cars and other metal. What the south side resident investors needed was a city government that would strictly enforce the code against those who violate the laws designed to protect property.

Farther south and east from the McKinneys is the intersection of East 79th and Hough Avenue. Before the summer of 1966, that intersection was the center of night life in Hough, and one corner housed Addison Junior High School. In July of 1966, the intersection exploded in a riot. Anti-poverty agencies operated closeby until the early 1970s. Today not a single commercial or public enterprise exists for 300 yards in any direction from the intersection. The buildings have been leveled, and the land is now open fields.



*The ben Ez investment
in the Hough Area.*



In 1971 Ahara ben Ez acquired a vacant apartment building that the Hough Area Development Corporation had once used as its offices. Since 1971, Mr. ben Ez has purchased at distressed prices four other buildings on the 1800 block of East 79th Street, immediately south of the site where the 1966 riot began. Unmarried, he lives in one of the buildings and rents units to the elderly and the mentally ill.

Mr. ben Ez is a member of no organized church but is motivated by a deep religious conviction that God's will and neighborhood restoration go hand in hand. He has painted white the curbs on the entire block that he occupies. He has planted grass and trees in the treelawns. He has placed white bricks on the edge of the grass to discourage parking. His buildings are painted in white, yellow, and blue which for him symbolize the sun, moon, and steps to heaven.

Mr. ben Ez obtains tenant referrals from the Hough Multi-Service Center and the local community mental health center. His goal is to create an apartment block for the elderly and mentally ill. He is preparing a garden and yard behind one of the residential buildings, and he is also rehabilitating the only commercial structure still standing on the block.

Mr. ben Ez lives entirely off rents from his buildings. He has never received a government grant or loan. He is his own police force, sometimes patrolling the sidewalk at night.

Unless the Hough section of Hough-Fairfax is to be entirely leveled and rebuilt, its rebirth depends heavily on the Polomas, the Gowdys, the McKinneys, and the ben Ezes. They have their own plans for Hough. They need a city government to which they can talk, that understands them, and that will respond favorably.

The present government of the City of Cleveland has difficulty doing that. Neither Mr. ben Ez nor Mrs. Poloma feels comfortable at City Hall. When they have complained about conditions to city workers, they have been told to move to a better neighborhood. But economics, faith, and a love of their neighborhood keep them in Hough.

What a sub-city government would do for the Polomas, Gowdys, McKinneys, and ben Ezes is to increase the likelihood that those who enforce housing codes, fix streets, and patrol the streets would share their love and faith in the community. It would increase the likelihood that the public workers who are supposed to serve them would understand that their goal was to improve the neighborhood—that non-performance would not be acceptable and telling a resident to move to a better neighborhood would be intolerable.

Government in a Sub-City

The central task in Hough-Fairfax is to have a comprehensive and coordinated program of basic services that shape the lifestyle of the community—police protection, recreation, housing development and rehabilitation, business and institutional development, transportation, street design, street lighting, and supportive public services. As long as sufficient money and management are allocated for such needs in Hough-Fairfax, what happens in the rest of Cleveland is at best of secondary importance to the life-style in Hough-Fairfax.

Under a two-tiered system of government, revenues for both capital improvements and operations would be allocated to Hough-Fairfax according to formula by the upper tier of government at City Hall. Allocation by formula would be a major improvement for planning and development in Hough-Fairfax. No longer would money for improvements and services depend upon how well a councilman for the area got along with the mayor, council president, council colleagues on the west side, or a downtown department director. Planners and developers for Hough-

Fairfax could have reasonable expectations that the money to be received would be related to economics and not to outside politics.

The ability to devise and implement a development plan with modest annual amounts of money over the necessary period of development is more important than receiving infusions of large amounts of money in uncertain intermittent spurts. That has been one of the major lessons of the Great Society programs of the sixties. Allocation of municipal funds to sub-cities according to revenue sharing formulas would assure long-term commitments of funds around which sub-cities could create their plans for public improvements and public services. At the same time, the greater certainty of local programs would lend confidence to private investors—whether business, institutional, or residential.

With a small planning staff and the ability to make medium-range projections on funds, the chief executive of Hough-Fairfax could then focus on the task of welding a political coalition for use of the money in an equitable way to benefit the Hough neighborhood, the Fairfax neighborhood, and the Euclid corridor. A sub-city plan would be created in consultation with Hough-Fairfax council members and leaders from the local development organizations. If the Hough-Fairfax plan conflicted with plans for expansion of a mass transit system, negotiations would take place among the sub-city, the central city's planners, and the transit system. The necessary trade-offs would then reflect the interests of each of these groups.

Crucial figures in any development project would be the chief executive and planning commission of Hough-Fairfax and its council members. With power to make planning and budget recommendations, the chief executive would be the dominant figure in negotiations with prospective developers and planning agencies. The chief executive could encourage the developers to provide help for residents beyond the developers' most immediate needs.

The Hough-Fairfax council would have to approve decisions on where to spend money for development in the sub-city. Major decisions about planning in the Euclid corridor, Hough, or Fairfax communities could not be made by one or two individuals in private as now occurs in Cleveland under the prerogative of councilmanic veto. These important decisions would be made in a

wider, more open meeting of a full sub-city council attended by interested residents. The power of both arbitrary politicians and isolated neighborhood activists would be reduced. Balanced views would be more likely to prevail. Policy leadership would come from the mayor or city manager, but those officials would have to maintain support of a majority of the other elected officials. It would be a requirement that no longer exists in Cleveland when decisions are made about neighborhood matters.

Top priorities for any Hough-Fairfax mayor or city manager would be to keep the sub-city safe, clean, in decent repair, and moving forward. Those are not problems of one city department or for city employees alone. It takes civic leadership to generate citizen attitudes which encourage respect for property and people. Elected officials in a Hough-Fairfax city government would be in powerful positions to recruit support for such citizen practices. By controlling the safety and service forces of the sub-city, they could better assure residents that the residents' own good habits would not be undermined by public neglect of sub-city property or by a refusal to enforce standards against recalcitrant private parties.

Since protection of people and property requires that police, building inspectors, and clean-up personnel cooperate around common priorities, local political leadership could better focus the efforts of all of those city employees on neighborhood trouble spots. When a particular area or problem is designated as a local priority, it is less easy in a smaller sub-city for one city department to ignore a street or neighborhood without arousing criticism from workers or supervisors in other city departments. In a sub-city the size of Hough-Fairfax, city employees who are required to keep streets clean would be more inclined to bring pressure for more effective law enforcement by other city employees against those who litter the local streets.

When a cave-in occurs on East 65th Street, Mrs. Poloma and Mrs. Gowdy could reach the mayor of Hough-Fairfax to complain of poor barricading. Mrs. Gowdy could call the mayor when the service department failed to collect the trash she cleared from a vacant lot. Mr. and Mrs. McKinney could reach the Hough-Fairfax mayor to secure code enforcement across the street, and Mr. ben Ez might not have to be his own policeman on East 79th Street.

The person of pivotal importance in the Hough-Fairfax government would be the individual who, in fact, controls the civil

service employees. In suburban government, that individual wears various hats. Some suburbs have a city manager. The top elected official in those circumstances often is a member of council who also holds the title of mayor or council president. The city manager—a professional administrator—is expected to assure that the remaining employees render a full day's work for a full day's pay and that funds are managed efficiently.

If Hough-Fairfax did not expect to find strong management talents among its residents who would run for office, it might adopt a city manager form of government or it might adopt some hybrid form which many suburbs follow. Often, under a hybrid system, the elected mayor is paid as a part-time employee but the city also employs a full-time, professional manager as city administrator. A third system, of course, finds the elected mayor as the full-time chief administrator. Whatever the system, someone must supply political leadership and managerial skill. The choice of system is a matter to be decided according to the assets, needs, and political preferences of the particular sub-city.

The quality of leadership of the Hough-Fairfax mayor or city manager would, of course, depend upon the person selected. Undoubtedly, some sub-cities would select poorly. But others would select well. If Hough-Fairfax made a poor choice, a variety of factors would be at work to correct the situation. First, the functions assigned to the Hough-Fairfax government would permit the executive's performance to be measured in terms that could be evaluated by all residents. Second, performance of executives in some other comparable sub-cities would be apparent to Hough-Fairfax residents. Third, successes of other sub-cities might be observed and copied by a faltering Hough-Fairfax mayor or manager. Fourth, one function of the top tier of Cleveland's government might be to offer management consulting services to sub-city executives. Any failures of the sub-city mayor or manager should, therefore, not be a long-term experience for the residents.

Where the sub-city executive was a success, there would be every reason to expect that person to remain in command for an extended period. That would provide what is so sorely lacking in Cleveland's present governmental structure—continuity of public leadership and policy at the neighborhood level.

In this proposed structure of government, the Hough-Fairfax city government would not displace the existing neighborhood

development organizations, the street clubs, or the area councils. Those organizations, however, could be expected to perform some *new roles more effectively*. If the formula for allocating funds to Hough-Fairfax were fair but did not produce sufficient funds to meet the greater plans for the area, it would be reasonable to expect those organizations to work for tax increases. If the formula were unfair, they would work to change it. If volunteers were needed to *supplement city services*, they could recruit volunteers. Increasingly, annual agendas such as that of the 1980 convention of Near West Side Neighbors in Action would shift from agendas of governmental criticism to agendas for governmental cooperation and neighborhood self-help.

The relationship between Hough-Fairfax and the top tier of Cleveland city government would be important. If the top tier had a council elected from districts, those council members would become advocates for the needs of their constituent sub-cities. Their primary concern would be taxation and devising the formulas for allocating funds. Their role would be comparable to the Ohio legislature in public school financing. The Hough-Fairfax mayor would need to develop a favorable relationship with the central council representative for Hough-Fairfax's district and with other Cleveland officials concerned with taxation and formula-making.

The Period of Transition

Perhaps the most difficult period in the evolution of Hough-Fairfax or any other sub-city would be in the initial years of its administrative autonomy. Could Cleveland change in one fell swoop from a unitary city government to a system of federated sub-cities? Probably not. There would have to be a period of transition. That transition might be effected in discrete stages.

Stage One might be that of allocating city personnel to administrative districts that corresponded to the sub-city boundaries. Such a step would not require a change of the city's charter and might not even necessitate legislation. Allocation of personnel and budgeting for administrative purposes could be done within the existing central city government before any functions were, in fact, transferred to the sub-cities.

A more far-reaching form of administrative reorganization would be to create a chief administrator for each administrative

“sub-city”. Just as the military has a separate commander for separate theaters of operation, so the City of Cleveland might designate a deputy mayor for each “sub-city”. That deputy would be the commander in chief of all city service departments within the yet to be created sub-city. The city in that way would administratively function as a two-tiered government even though the sub-city political structure had not been established.

By initiating such administrative reforms in advance of political reform, the city could test some of the administrative problems of restructuring without altering the basic political structure. If administrative problems proved themselves to be excessive, the altered structure could be changed again with less difficulty. If the expected administrative benefits were apparent, administrative success would signal readiness for political restructuring.

In Stage Two, the political restructuring would occur. Sub-city councils and boards would be created and a chief executive not answerable to the Mayor of the City of Cleveland would be established. This stage would require a change in the city charter. Planning for it could begin in Stage One, and even during Stage One citizens advisory boards could be established at the neighborhood level.

In Stage Three, the sub-cities would assume all or part of the contemplated functions of the lower tier of government, depending upon their readiness. At a minimum, the sub-city would assume planning, zoning, and certain law enforcement functions. In this stage, each sub-city might acquire a staff of housing and building inspectors, officials empowered to issue permits and licenses, a legal staff for handling prosecutions and advising the sub-city government, and a record-keeping and clerical staff.

Stage Three might cover the period in which specific service functions such as waste collection, police protection, road repair were assumed by the sub-city. The sequence in which these functions would be assumed would await further analysis. Factors that might have a bearing could be the availability of work or storage facilities, union contracts, and the difficulties of selecting administrative personnel.

In the final stage, the sub-city would be managing all functions according to the ultimate scheme of two-tiered city government.