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# Harold Washington's Chicago: Placing a

by Larry Bennett

Harold Washington served as mayor of Chicago from May, 1983, until his death by heart attack on November 25, 1987—the city's first Black mayor. During Washington's frequently tumultuous four-and-one-half year tenure, he led a "rainbow" political coalition of Blacks, Hispanics, and whites, while articulating a philosophy of governance emphasizing economic justice, procedural reform, and citizen participation. Washington brought into his administration a variety of neighborhood activists and opponents of the city's regular Democratic party organization. During his term of office, the city government inaugurated a long list of new programs, sought to reshape previously defined local policies, and encountered intense criticism and bitter political opposition.

The Washington administration's agenda matched several of the programmatic aims and accomplishments of the governments in "progressive cities" such as Hartford, Conn.; Cleveland; Berkeley and Santa Monica, Calif.; and Burlington, Vermont. By examining the intentions, accomplishments, and failures of the Washington administration, we can locate it within this emergent trend in local govern-

nance. Furthermore, the experience of the Washington years in Chicago offers some important clues regarding the opportunities and risks confronting progressive political movements in other American cities.

## THE CONTEMPORARY URBAN PROGRESSIVE AGENDA

In order to place the Washington record in a broader context, we should consider what contemporary progressives have done in other American cities. Pierre Clavel's *The Progressive City*, the most comprehensive examination of contemporary urban progressivism, defined the overall shape of this movement as one committed to "programs emphasizing public planning as an alternative to private power, and to grassroots citizen participation as an alternative to council-dominated representation."<sup>1</sup>

In essence, the uses of planning and participation, not as polarities but as complementary components of governance, anchor Clavel's interpretation of progressive movements in city politics.

Clavel's approach to the uses of citizen participation is consistent with the ideology of participatory democracy that has grounded much neighborhood activism in American cities since the 1960s. However, his characterization of planning has a more unique meaning and deserves special attention.

Clavel departs from orthodox planning models in his assumption that planning will lead to creative solutions

requiring institutional innovation. Often, these innovations grow from the involvement of citizens in the development of policy and the guidance of program implementation. This is the point at which planning and participation become complementary. Furthermore, Clavel's concept of planning incorporates an inclusive understanding of community that is not typically associated with the professional or technocratic meanings of the term.

Three substantive aims consistently appear in Clavel's analysis of progressive administrations and in the discussions of their movements by progressive activists. The most important of these is economic equity. As municipal governments are constrained from directly redistributing income and wealth, the pursuit of economic equity is carried out by indirect means. For example, Norman Krumholz, Cleveland's city planning director from 1969 to 1979, has written of his staff's intention to provide "more choices to those who have few, if any choices."<sup>2</sup> In Cleveland during the 1970s, this commitment took shape in efforts to enhance mass transit access for the city's poorest neighborhoods, to sustain low utility charges within the city, and to plan cooperatively with neighborhood organizations. As leader of Hartford's dominant city council faction during the 1970s, Nicholas Carbone used development negotiations to guarantee jobs for Hartford residents and storefronts for small-scale entrepreneurs.

The second substantive aim of con-

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Finally, accepting the proposition that contemporary urban progressivism is a national movement, one can also ask what a particular progressive administration, contribution to the enhancement of the movement. In a particular city, were progressives able to analyze problems in a fashion that sheds light on the conditions in other cities? Did they arrive at replicable solutions? In the next section of this article we turn to the remainder of the question of "institutional innovations".

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to power can become a double-edged sword once progressives are in power. While mobilized neighborhood activists and organizations are a key source, the demands of day-to-day life will be mobilized neighborhood activists and organizations are a key source, the demands of day-to-day negotiations can produce conflicts between progressive officials and neighborhood activists. How well progressives can produce outcomes that sustain their base of supporters in the neighborhood determine their success.

Willing resistance from orthodox politicians and political groups is a consistent feature of the politics in the cities governed by progressives.

augmentation of neighborhood planning councils, city services tailored to the needs of particular neighborhoods, and service delivery incorporating neighborhood services as service delivery hood residents as service deliverers.

This agenda is readily distinguishable from the objectives and practices of mainstream urban politics, political parties, and interest groups, and I will use it as a framework for reviewing the Washington administration record. In essence, what did Harold Washington try to accomplish and how well did his administration meet its objectives?

However, the progressive agenda so deviates from politics as usual in most cities that additional issues complicate the evaluation of progressives in government. For instance, will full resis-

tance from orthodox politicians and progressives in the cities is a consistent feature of the politics in the cities governed by progressive mayors. To overcome this resistance, countermajority urban progressives try to match popular mobilization. However, the neighborhood mobilization that brings progressives

A third aim of progressive planning is to issues of economic justice but crucially connected to the failures of past urban policy, is the maintenance of neighbourhoods. Many 1980s urban progressives experienced the disarray of 1990s towns neighbourhood effects of 1990s urban renewal and expressway construction, or have witnessed the more subtle neighbourhood disruption produced by the inner-city gentrification of the 1980s. These experiences, combined with a faith in the urban neighbourhood as a locus of community culture, and political participation, have led progressive administrators to try to enhance neighbourhoods.

Cleavel's words, "a more experimental view of property rights." In Berkeley and Santa Monica, for example, progressive ordinances led the local campaigns that resulted in the adoption of rent control measures led the local campaigns that resulted in the adoption of rent control ordinances. In Santa Monica as well as Hartwood, progressive administrators took advantage of municipal oversight of land use and access to federal funds to elicit concessions from real estate developers. These concessions included affirmative action hiring commitments, inclusive zoning provisions, and the participation of city governments in private development that due to the public officials assumed that due to the public development as an equity partner in development as an equity partner in development. In both cities, municipal governments had the responsibility to balance public costs of development against the responsibility to develop private development.

# Progressive City Administration in Context

By reviewing these planning activities, we also have touched on some of the Washington administration's actions to increase citizen participation in the policymaking process. The administration's special task forces, without exception, included nongovernmental participants along with agency representatives and elected officials. Mayor Washington always insisted on minor tasks for these Washington administrators. For their implementation of the many of the Washington administration's programs depended on the work of local residents and their organizations. Chicago is a city rich in neighborhood associations. These block and neighborhood associations, like many of the Washington administration's many other implementation tasks, were headed by women. For their implementation of the neighborhood associations, in addition to neighborhood groups, in addition to neighborhood associations, like many of the Washington administration's many other implementation tasks, were headed by women.

As well as playing a part in several of the programs and initiatives described above, the department of Planning established a Neighborhood Planning Unit to work with community organizations to work with neighborhood associations, the admistration's philosophy of the neighborhood planning, given the city's very serious resource constraints, was—whenever possible—to build on the organization's capacities of existing neighborhood groups. Examples of this approach were the planning worksshops during 1985 and 1986 in the heterogeneous Rogers Park neighborhood on the city's far North Side. Participants included local businesspeople, homeowners, landlords, and tenants. The objective was to formulate neighborhood improvements that could upgrade the physical facilities that were deteriorating.

In an innovative program aimed at neighborhood economic development and housing upgrading, the city joined with the local electrical utility to finance the Chicago Energy Savers Fund, which supported energy conservation rehabilitation by landlords. The program was administered by a private group, the Center for Neighborhood Technology. Each of these cases demands a thoughtful assessment of neighborhood economic needs, a sensitivity to the relations between investment, housing, and neighborhood quality, and administrative creativity.

Although the administration's aggressive approach to development negotiations expressed a departure from past city government, it followed a precedent established in preceding, it followed a practice, it followed a precedent established in other progressive cities, notably Harry Harrod and Monica.

The city's departments of Housing and Economic Development also rededicated their operations to developing a departmental approach to development that emphasizes efficiency and Santa Monica. The city's departments of Housing and Economic Development also rededicated their operations to developing a departmental approach to development that emphasizes efficiency and accountability. This followed a precedent established in from past city government practice, it followed a precedent established in other progressive cities, notably Hartford and Santa Monica.

By the spring of 1984, the Chicago government administration released "Chicago Works Together," an economic development plan that phased out job creation as the chief criterion for assessing development initiatives, "balanced growth" (among others), neighborhood development, downtowns and the neighbor- hood, economic sectors and be- tween downtown and the neighbor- hood, neighborhood development, citizen participation in policymaking, and a "regional, state, and national" and a "regional, state, and national" policy agenda. Discussed in conjunc- tion with these broad commitments were dozens of specific programs. At the time of its release, critics suggested that the development plan was platitudinous, and one can iden- tify various commitments that remain unfulfilled. Nonetheless, "Chicago Works Together," represents an exercise in agenda-building quite unique in the annals of Chicago municipal government, and it provides a useful baseline for judging the accomplishments of the Washington administration.

THE WASHINGTON RECORD

To the degree that progressive cities have adopted a "more experimental" direct.

council's opposition majority, thinking ahead to the 1987 election, was ill-disposed to let the mayor claim responsibility for neighborhood street improvements, sidewalk upgrading, and the like. The administration won support for its proposal by convincing opponents that it would high income wards, that they too would receive (and could claim responsibility for) plenty of asphalt, concrete, and bricks. On the plus side, this \$170 million public works investment represented predominately neighborhood investments that go directly to the usual municipal spending, unlike the usual downtown. The portionately to the down side was that poorer neighborhoods benefited little more than affluent ones.

During Washington's term of office, there was extreme resistance to his programs from a majority City Council action and from his administrative apparatus.

The Washington administration is matched by a similarly ambiguous record in mixed citizen participation issues. In 1964, Black mayors in other major American cities downtown. Also, like newly elected black growth in neighborhood away from business districts jobs and promoting business districts claimed some success in re-arrangement. On the positive side, the administration as an agent of economic redistribution by a similarly ambiguous record is wo proposals.

erated preliminary support for each proposed solution, but in the face of developer opposition to a linked development fee and some resistance by Black residents to a plan that would have been implemented in majority white neighborhoods, the administration hedged on the mayor's commitment to the SON/SOC's reaction to these developments.

The Washington administration worked with SON/SOC in refining both of these proposals, but ultimately found itself outflanked by the neighborhood organization. Mayor Washington had off-

SON/SOC is a coalition of neighbor-hood organizations on the Southwestern and Northwestern Sides, which, during the first two years of Washington's mayoralty, defined and publicized an ambitious set of neighborhood-oriented programs. Notable among these were a "linked development" initiative, by which downtown construction would be tax-exempt to finance neighborhood improvements, and a "home equity insurance" proposal to protect property values in neighborhoods experiencing substantial decline.

From the administration's standpoint, the tasks of seeking to work with anti-discriminatory neighborhood activists was a task of seeking to work with anti-discriminatory neighborhood activists was demonstrated by its lengthy negotiations with the Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City Coalition (SONSOC).

Citizen organization of this recession, many neighborhood associations met to citizen participation and open government. Mayor Washington, whose personal commitment to citizen participation and open government was rarely questioned, however, his administration stopped short of proposing a systematic mechanism for citizen participation such as a neighborhood council for overseeing city delivery, service delivery, and receiving citizen complaints. The extensive reason for not implementing a systematic neighborhood council was this sort was fiscal: in a giant and financially strapped city such as Chicago, organizing and maintaining a citywide network of neighborhood associations would be time-consuming and expensive. In fact, members of the administration's staff were aware of the error of community organizations in many parts of the city, and also aware of the error of administration by Harold Washington and his administration. Some of the mainly white areas of the South, Southwest, and Northwest Sides some of the mainly black areas of the city, and also aware that in parts of the city, and also aware of the error of administration by Harold Washington and his administration. In fact, members of the hood councils would be time-consuming and expensive. In fact, members of the hood councils would be time-consuming and expensive.

misstatements's use of such groups to package applications for loans, to monitor the expenditure of funds, or to directly provide services not only built their organizational capacity but stretched scarce municipal dollars.

# THE WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION AND URBAN PROGRESSIVISM

This neighborhood record is not per-  
fect. The Washington administration  
did not move to establish a systematic  
means for neighborhood consultation,  
much less control over local municipal  
spending or administrative practice.  
Furthermore, and in spite of Harold  
Washington's many well-received vis-  
its to neighborhood festivals and spe-  
cial events across the city, residents in  
many white and more affluent neigh-  
borhoods perceived disregard by his  
administration. Nevertheless, spend-  
ing data, a variety of successful neigh-  
borhood projects, and the generally  
favorable assessment by community  
activists suggest that Washington's re-  
cord as a pro-neighborhood mayor is  
unsurpassed in the history of this city.

hoods that previously were neglected in favor of downtown areas, more than \$300 million was spent on neighbor-hood public works improvements, and neighborhood residents "in the way" of big projects such as the new stadium were not simply pushed aside.

Major Washington's czars of economic planning are nothing if not imaginative. Other older cities that have suffered severe losses of jobs, population, and tax base are creating new ways to lure commercial investment. Chicago is creating new ways to discourage it.

Industrial site was cleared North Side industrial site was cleared for the developer's community need \$2.5 million to upgrade a nearby industrial space, the Chicago Tribune informed:

On rezoned. In 1987, after the administration reached an agreement changing permit requirements in which a developer in which a zoning change permitted commercial development on an abandoned North Side industrial site was cleared for the developer's community need \$2.5 million to upgrade a nearby industrial space, the Chicago Tribune informed:

For example, in 1986 the City Council approved a "Tenants Bill of Rights" that gave added leverage to renters in their dealings with landlords. This legislation is a far cry from rent control, and its antecedents preceded the Washington administration. In the City Council's two years of passage. Also, in the last two years of Washington's tenure, work began on the establishment of Palmened Manufacturing Districts, areas in which zoning provisions would be adopted to project industrial uses from commercial and residential encroach- ment.

During the Washington years the city's boom presented the administration with what became its standard technique for regulation: investigation, the development project and the financing of fixes- dealalowers. The Washington adminis- tration routinely took advantage of inves- tigation to elicit publicity useful in con- cerns.

view of property rights," they have, as a rule, encouraged their sharpest critics, landlords, and newspaper editors, to come — from development interests, finance — to sue the city. This was also true in Chicago during the 1980s, where, as Mark Kam observed of Santa Monica in the early 1980s, "local residents do not have the same anti-capitalist class consciousness."<sup>7</sup>

Washington forged and held together a coalition that included Democratic party-bred Black politicians with little stomach for major reforms and white "independents" with a primary interest in proceeded rural reforms and more effective management.

These successes demonstrate that Harold Washington was a great leader of Chicago's neighborhoods. However, it is not clear that his mayoralty produced a coherent progressive program. For instance, Washington's government did not stop the erosion of Chicago's industrial economy. Instead, the industrial decline continued while the economy and sought to derive public profit from this trend. This, in fact, may be a reasonable policy in Chicago, but the Washington administration never admitted to making this choice; consequently, there was little faith in the Chicago's administrative competence. This ambiguity in the Washington administration seems to plan-tations relative communities to plan-ning and participation and how these two practices were to be related. The administration's philosophy of plan ning might be characterized as the following: study problems before taking action; assess the resource constraints of action; affective consequences of action; and work outside the bureaucracy (not-and work through neighborhood organizations) if program implementation can be expedited. This approach allowed the Washington administration to imple-ment its fiscal policies before taking advantage of fiscal constraints in a narrowly-gauged use of participa-tion, primarily as a consultative mechanism rather than a representative one. What the administration did do, except by care-fully orchestrated neighborhood "road-shows", featuring various departments and their task forces, commissions, and the like. While the administration did not attempt to do, even begin to im-plement its fiscal policies, it also resisted representation, was to consult citizens at large. The Washington administration did not estimate neighborhood participation at all, except in its ap-plications to problem-solving was partic-ularly problematic. Once large-scale goals were set in 1983 and 1984, the administration managed to have considerable them in members of the administration do not seem to have recognized that

lement, which included Democratic party-bred Black politicians with little stomach for major reforms and white "independents" with a primary interest in procedural reforms and more effective management. As a practical five-management, Washington's greatest politician, he presided over an administration that was not uniformly committed to the progressive measures described here. In short, whatever parts of the progressive coalition he led to the mayor, he held in together this coalition; and his long achievement may have been his forcing and holding together some odds.

Despite these constraints, the Washington administration managed to introduce a large body of new programs and upgrade the quality of administration to a number of city agencies. For example, each of the major departments in the Development Subcabinet, Economic Development, Housing, and Planning, directed more attention to neighborhood-level problems and could apply resources to neighborhood problems more effectively than in previous administrations. Beyond gains in administrative practice, Beyond gains in administrative practice, many of these groups also possessed improved organizational resources. Many of these groups also had access to greater fiscal and technical resources across the city than did other organizations earlier in government and were better served by this administration. At the end of the Washington years, neighborhood residents of Chicago played a larger role in government and more minority goals of urban progressives—minority practice—and more central to the neighborhood problems more effectively than in previous administrations. Beyond gains in administrative practice, many of these groups also possessed improved organizational resources. Many of these groups also had access to greater fiscal and technical resources across the city than did other organizations earlier in government and were better served by this administration. At the end of the Washington years, neighborhood residents of Chicago played a larger role in government and more central to the neighborhood problems more effectively than in previous administrations.

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resources and improved capacities for problem-

organization across the city had access to greater fiscal and technical

## At the end of the Washington years

files of urban progressives. He also demonstrated how planning can join its traditional land use focus to an emphasis on economic development. Like governing progressives in other cities, Harold Washington and his administration found that linking planning to participation was more difficult. In part this was because of Chicago's size and the municipal government's fiscal constraints. But, in addition, Washington's administration, from the start, encountered hostile neighborhood mobilization in some parts of the city. The city's long-standing racial polarization undermined the administration's ability to win over these neighborhood critics. Yet it is equally true that Harold Washington and his supporters did not find a way to bridge this divide, which confronts progressives in most of the country's large, ethnically diverse cities. ■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Pierre Clavel, *The Progressive City: Planning and Participation, 1969-1984* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Krumholz, "A Retrospective View of Equity Planning in Cleveland, 1969-1979," *Journal of the American Planning Association* (Spring 1982), p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Clavel, *The Progressive City*, p.10.

<sup>4</sup>James L. Greer, *Capital Investment in Chicago: Fragmented Process, Unequal Outcomes* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Center for Urban Research and Policy Studies, 1986).

<sup>5</sup>Patricia Wright, *Impact of Federal and State Urban Development Action Grants on Chicago* (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, Center for Urban Economic Development, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Mark E. Kann, "Radicals in Power: Lessons from Santa Monica," *Socialist Review* (May/June 1983), p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>"Chicago Builds New Barriers to Growth," *Chicago Tribune* (Nov. 24, 1987), p. 18.

<sup>9</sup>Although agreements between the city and the sports franchises were reached after Harold Washington's death, the groundwork for the settlements was set during his tenure. Patrick Barry, "Deal-Making Begins as West Side Stadium Gets Nod," *The Neighborhood Works* (July 1987), pp. 9-11; Cheryl Devall and Tim Franklin, "Bears Plan Gets Cool Reception," *Chicago Tribune* (June 15, 1988), pp. 1, 4; Ben Joravsky, "The Stadium Game: Who Loses if the White Sox Win?" *The Reader* (April 22, 1988), pp. 3, 43; John Kass, "Despite Agreement, White Sox Aren't Safe at Home Yet," *Chicago Tribune* (July 3, 1988), p. 12.

## PHILANTHROPY FOUR VIEWS

**Robert Payton, Michael Novak,  
Brian O'Connell and Peter Dobkin Hall**

Philanthropy in the United States has long been an important factor in the process by which our culture is shaped and public policy is formed. In addition to such traditional activities as support for science, the arts, education, hospitals, religion, and the poor, philanthropy has supported the causes of the environment, population control, zoos, and even animal rights. However, until quite recently, there has been very little scholarly attention to this important feature of American culture.

The contributors to this volume address a variety of historical, philosophical and public policy issues that emerge from an examination of philanthropy as it is practiced in the United States. Robert Payton surveys a variety of philanthropic activities, and concludes that philanthropy should have a central place in the philosophical curriculum because it raises important questions of value, meaning, and purpose. Michael Novak and Brian O'Connell, in separate essays, argue that philanthropy is essential to the maintenance of a free society: philanthropy allows individuals and groups to accomplish what government cannot, and it contributes to the maintenance of "public-spiritedness." Peter Dobkin Hall provides a detailed historical account of the impact of philanthropy on the formation of public health policy.

#### A Social Philosophy and Policy Center Book

ISBN: 0-912051-20-5 (cloth)	\$19.95
ISBN: 0-912051-21-3 (paper)	100 pp. \$12.95

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