

The Fresno Bee

Founded 1922

CARLOS K. McCLATCHY, editor, 1922-1933

Wednesday, Nov. 7, 1973 . . .

Vol. 103, No. 18441



Published each afternoon
and Sunday morning

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Editorials

City Council Should Face Up To Deterioration In East, Southeast

Judging from their testiness, the spokesmen for the Area 3 Neighborhood Council felt a symbolic sting recently when they tried to address the Fresno City Council before dinner and were fobbed off to the after-dinner session, when many were unable to return.

That is the way it has been with Area 3, they believe—put down, let down, and far down the city's priority list.

Area 3 comprises much of the aging east and southeast sectors south of McKinley Avenue—about 12 square miles, of which almost seven square miles are inside the city.

John Hobbs, chairman of the Area 3 Neighborhood Council, got right down to it at the council meeting:

"East Fresno is approaching a critical stage of deterioration and blight . . . This City Council must face up to the priorities of this city. This council must stop spending millions of dollars for city sprawl . . ."

The immediate issue was the allocation of more than \$4 million in federal grants in the last year of the so-called Planned Variations-Model Cities program. Area 3's bitter complaints apparently had some effect. The council later decided to set aside a total of about \$750,000 for a community center and a boys club in East Fresno.

Worthwhile as they are, such projects are not an adequate response to the economic and social impairment in the area, a trend which was identified by city planners a decade ago and exhaustively documented in recent years.

Last year the city's analysts wrote what a reporter described as a "tale of two cities" (north and south of McKinley) and called for "innovative revitalization or rebuilding efforts" in the old neighborhoods.

Early this year the planning staff produced a preliminary plan for upgrading Area 3 with a variety of urban renewal activities for which a policy commitment has not been forthcoming.

The Inner City Community Action Center followed up with a grim report on depressed conditions in East Fresno whose poor—many of them of Mexican descent—too often are "hidden, silent and unconsolated."

The city's analysts then repeated their warning of the previous year about the deterioration being left behind by the city's surging northward expansion, with its drain on the city's resources for public services. The report called McKinley the "Mason-Dixon line."

How many warnings does the City Council need?