

PUBLIC HEARING
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
APRIL 27, 2006

Anniston City Manager George Monk:

I am George Monk, City Manager for the City of Anniston. I commend the Commission for taking this initiative. Substandard structures are nuisances. It is as simple as that. This action is probably a regrettable necessity of government. It is regrettable that we cannot rely on homeowners to keep their property up, but reality is they don't. Our experience in Anniston, which I guess more densely populated than any community in the County, has been that property falls into disrepair, it is heir property, as it is referred to from time to time, often times the property has been bought for taxes, and there is practically no one that you can reach out to with your police powers and force compliance to bring this property back to acceptable standard. As a result you have pockets of areas that are creating a nuisance condition, which I think the law defines as a state of inconvenience or harm to neighbors. Our experience is that it breeds such immediate problems as rats and rodents and unsightliness. It brings down in the long run property values in your areas. Unseemly behavior does and can take place in some of these structures. And that is just the reality of it. The ability of a governmental body to get on to those who should be responsible is limited. Our experience -- we allocate \$200,000 through the City's general fund and we also have an additional \$100,000 inside our own Community Development Block Grant program for demolition. We do some of that and we have to contract some of it. We are involved in some equipment now and are doing a lot of it in-house. We hope to take down in excess of 80-100 structures this year alone. We have stepped it up considerably. And we are getting back a lot of positive feedback from the community. Again, it is a regrettable necessity. But I do commend the Commission because I know this is not just in the city, but county-wide, and in all the municipalities. This is a wonderful way to help our community as a whole —our wider, broader community. If we can be of any help to you guys, based upon the experiences that we have had over the years with this, we offer it to you. I know the Mayor will join me is saying that it is always a pleasure to work with you guys and we have a wonderful working relationship with this Commission, which is a pleasure. I think we all have our eyes on a certain goal across the community. Thank you.

Mary Waldrep

I am Mary Waldrep and I live in the Wellborn community. We appreciate the Commission and we appreciate the work that you have done. We know that we will have a better and a prettier community if this is accomplished. It is a needed thing—so desperately needed. I commend you and your leadership.

Anniston Mayor Chip Howell:

Good morning, gentlemen. I just echo what George has indicated. Let me put it in perspective as far as the dilapidated structures that exist. The 2000 census indicated that just in the City of Anniston over 2,000 structures were substandard and needed to be removed. Putting that again in perspective, at some point in time in the 60's we had over 45,000 people in the city limits and

now we have about 25,000. So that indicates where people have gone and a lot of that is the Fort McClellan issue. As indicated, they do not always take responsibility and it does fall into the heir of property category where there is no one locally to take responsibility for it. West End and in all parts of the county are an extension of this issue. I encourage you to utilize it. We quadrupled our support for funding and also through this new equipment purchased so that we could do some internally over the last three years and we expect it to continue to grow. But even at the rate we are going, we are looking at a 20-year process. And those structures are going to continue to deteriorate even though they were put on the list in 2000, they will again in 2010 and 2020. I remind you that we were the first community outside of Americus, Georgia to declare that we would eliminate substandard housing by the year 2020. Jimmy Carter's project was part of that and the West Anniston Community Development Corporation was part of that. Your involvement in CDBG effort will help us do it. I echo Mr. Monk and everybody here who support it and continue it and get as much money as you possibly can.

Ervin Ferrell:

My name is Ervin Ferrell and I live in the country. I would just like to be brief and to the point. We need to have these dollars to complete this project of all these old homes, particularly in districts 3 and 1 of Calhoun County. We can make these districts 3 and 1 the model districts, and we would just like it if possible to have the half million dollars to do this project. I would appreciate it if you could do that.