

JACKSON AVENUE DEVELOPMENT

by William H. Bailey, Executive Director,
Nevada Economic Development Company,
(NEDCO, Inc.)

Jackson Avenue, the only concentrated area of Black owned businesses in Las Vegas, is presently in great need of financial and technical assistance.

Jackson Avenue, prior to the desegregation of public accommodations in Las Vegas, was a booming entertainment area. Not only did it host the total Black population, it also was the "in place" for white fun seekers. Though it had dirt streets and inadequate parking facilities, it thrived economically . . . There was no other place for Blacks or whites who wanted to socialize with their Black friends and co-workers, to go!

In 1955, the Moulin Rouge Hotel was opened and it started another "boom town" effect on Jackson Avenue. This "integrated" hotel employed some 2,000 workers, people from all over the country, Blacks primarily. The Moulin Rouge opened with such an apparent "bang" that it inspired the construction of other businesses within the Black area and particularly on Jackson Avenue. The Town Tavern, the Cove Hotel, the El Morrocco and a host of well appointed, clean restaurants. The presence of the Moulin Rouge Hotel workers, workers from the various businesses on Jackson, tourists and whites working on the strip provided a viable condition for all places on the "street." However, with the closing of the Moulin Rouge, the demise of the "boom" became apparent. The El Morrocco, which was projected to deal with the middle class workers was opened and lasted through the opening, two years later, of the Cove Hotel.

It was hoped that the Cove would replace the void of the Moulin Rouge Hotel. However, the financial feasibility of the Cove doomed its operation from the beginning. The main problems were the insufficient number of rooms and the internal financial manipulation that took place.

After the first group of operators went broke, the hotel began to go down in relationship to its operation, in service, entertainment, lack of live gaming, etc. As a result, other supportive businesses began to flounder.

The El Morrocco closed its doors, under the original ownership and began its slow, but sure, descent to final closing.

Most of the class restaurants closed their doors and the remaining clubs held on as best as they could.

When your larger business elements close their doors a different element of consumer moves in, prices go down on items of trade offered, dope prevails, prostitution runs rampant, physical assaults, and sometimes murder occurs. Then the general physical condition of the structures reflect a lack of continued maintenance. . . this was the moving saga of Jackson Avenue.

Though the Town Tavern attempted to revive its viable conditions through fresh money and experts with a Los Angeles group of investors, it was short lived and it also closed after a period of time. Finally the last bastion of live gambling on Jackson closed, the Louisiana Club. This club was owned and primarily run by Orientals. It remained open longer than the other clubs due to their ability to support themselves with unlimited, out of town capital and low labor costs.

The "Street" became a visual eye sore, with its empty store fronts and deteriorating buildings.

Nineteen sixty-five through nineteen sixty-nine witnessed the price integration. Blacks, who were spending money, spent it downtown or on the strip because these areas offered more for their money. This was the beginning of the end. Jackson Avenue had no viable home base, even though a few whites and tourists still came to the area. The final blow came in nineteen sixty-nine, when the riots entered West Las Vegas.

From the period of the riots, in 1969 to 1972, Jackson Avenue, became a "skid row." With the exception of a few struggling Black entrepreneurs, the street was dead.

The first spark was the adventure of Operation Life, to propose a social center for the underprivileged of the Westside. Though they have only utilized the first floor of the Cove Hotel, and portions of the second, its input made an impact and started a positive up ward direction for activity on Jackson.

The next injection of activity, though controversial, was the Drug Rehabilitation Center on "D" and Jackson across from the Operation Life activity.

Thereafter, the County Library Board made the decision to place a library in the same area, "D" and Jackson. Though there is a multi-plex of social and business activity on the street and most assuredly out of context with good planning, for a business area, we shall have to live with it.

One factor, does give a ray of hope, to this problem. All of the social and civic activities are located on one end of the street, "D" and Jackson.

Other considerations that must be considered in order to rehabilitate the area, is in recognizing the continuation of the businesses on "D" Street from "Jackson to Madison." Also "E" and "F" from "Jackson to Van Buren." Another thought to be considered should be to extend the business streets to "G," this would replace the loss of the corner of "D" to the social projects.

Rehabilitation has started on Jackson, without direction or assistance of experts, by the people themselves. Various entrepreneurs and organizations have, within the past year, opened two new operations: The Golden Egg; a night club and "The Town Tavern, a night club, gaming area and restaurant. The Muslims have taken an abandoned auditorium and are restructuring it for a "temple," bakery, and meat market on Van Buren off "F" Street.

Recognizing the possibility that the "sleeping giant" is beginning to awaken, I believe it is now the responsibility of the City, County, State and Convention Authority to assist in the rehabilitation of Jackson Avenue. We, at NEDCO, realize the responsibility in this task and have included the rehabilitation of this area as a priority item on our agenda for our next six months scope of work.

However, prior to any significant planning or actual work commencing, there are certain key organizational conditions that must be established namely:

- A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION.
- Committed to support of the elected officials (Especially Black) at all levels of government.
- Committed support from the social organizations of the area.
- A commitment of support from the press.

Of the above items, the most important is the Merchants Association. By establishing this organization, and electing determined leadership, the community and public officials will know that merchants on Jackson Avenue are serious about their future. Once the association is legally formed the other items will fall into place.

The purpose of the brief history of Jackson Avenue is to review where it has been, where it is, and determine, where it is going.

We, at NEDCO, will assist with the management service and technical assistance. We will also identify sources of National assistance from the Office of Minority Enterprise, U. S. Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, HUD and the local banking community. In the next few days, a representative from the Regional SBA Office, will be with our office for the purpose of assisting NEDCO, assess the financial and organizational needs of the area. We will inform you through the Voice Newspaper of the first meeting to start organizing the Merchants Association.

continued from page 2

Yet, as insidious as inflation has become, unemployment, as a by product of this recessionary economy, has also taken its toll. In January of this year, nearly 370,000 persons lost their jobs, placing the total number of jobless Americans at approximately 4.7 million. Today, that figure has increased to nearly six million as the national unemployment rate has jumped to 6.5 per cent. The recessionary state of the economy will undoubtedly push that figure upward in the months ahead.

Thus, as we approach 1975, the state of the economy will continue to be our primary concern. The twin evils of inflation and recession have the unnerving potential of wiping out various sectors of our economy.

As at no other time in history, we are acutely aware of the need for the voice of the excluded to be included in the critical decisions and recommendations affecting Black survival.

In 1974 the National Business League proved that we, as a people, can come together with one purpose in mind. We demonstrated that we can achieve UNITY. Our 74th Convention made it clear that Black America is no longer divided by artificial partitions of age, ideologies, religion, class or caste.

Understanding the need to develop strong recommendations which address the pressing economic dilemma, the conference participants developed and adopted resolutions which have been sent to all points of power in this country which are instrumental in effecting change. These resolutions have found their ways to the halls of Congress and on the desks of executives and administrators who understand that they come as a mandate of the people.

In 1975 Black and other minority businesses will be confronted with a stern test of survival. Certainly while business as a whole is affected, the weight of deteriorating economic conditions falls with particular oppressiveness on the small and minority business communities which are suffering acutely from such conditions as: sky-rocketing interest rates, inaccessibility to equity capital, lowered production and sales, diminished profits, and increased rates of business failures stemming from these and related causes.

It is imperative, therefore, that we move to re-establish equilibrium in U. S. economic growth. That is the challenge for 1975, and the only real hope for regaining even a semblance of political, social and economic stability. We have ahead of us a new year of getting "down to business."

villa capri

1801 No. J St

Move in after 23rs-Free Rent until 1st

1 Bedroom \$100 per mo. Stove, refrig.
2 Bedroom \$115 per mo. carpet, drapes
SEE MANAGER furnished

George McCline 648-2151

USED FURNITURE

At It's Best!


MID CITY FURNITURE

501 N. Main
382-7122

Free Delivery

Financing Arranged

Buy - Sell - Trade




Bob Duckett

ONE CALL PROVIDES EVERY NEEDFUL SERVICE—MORTUARY, LOCAL OR OUT OF STATE, MAUSOLEUM, CEMETERY, CREMATION, MONUMENTS. A PERSONALIZED FAMILY SERVICE

BUNKER'S EDEN VALE

925 LAS VEGAS BLVD. NORTH

Call 385-1441, 648-2524 or 385-1604



O. L. Jefferson

CLINTON WRIGHT

Photographer

Ph. 870-3826

appointments

Any Time • Any Place

PORTRAITS

Babies — Weddings

color post cards

photos for

Xmas Cards

✻

Calendars

Passports, Etc.