

Committee of the Whole, Seattle City Council
Public Hearing, September 9, 1975
Event 3084 (00:27:27 – 00:34:24)

ROBERT "BOB" SANTOS: My name is Bob Santos, Director of the International District Improvement Association. City Councilmembers, on behalf of the residents of the International District, I would like to address these comments to the City Council. In the Mayor's proposed resolution on the King County Stadium, the administration--the administration of the City once again reaffirms its commitment to preserving the International District. But without an adequate plan sensitive to the realities of life and business in the International District, this commitment rings hollow.

Preservation of the International District can be achieved only through a plan that ensures the residents of the District improved housing at a rental cost within the means of elderly Asian and other pensioners. The integrity of the International District lies in its unique residential population and the various ethnic, business and other community services which attract regular customers and clients to the District. There have been, as you know, continued discussion of upgrading the housing and living conditions in the International District. At this time, priority for the project to upgrade housing have been given to the Pike Place area and the Denny Regrade commercial area. This relegates the housing program in the International District to no priority at all, a condition which the International District has experienced for too long.

[...]

For too long, the International District has been relegated to a position of a politically expedient football with a history of insincere commitments for its improvement and preservation. Long overdue for assistance in meeting the health and Social Service needs of the district, the area has finally received an allocation of monies which will permit the partial development of programs. But without the additional support to preserve the community or residents in the District, the proposed programs will lose the very clientele for whom they were designed.

At present, as has been true of inter-city after inter-city across the United States, the residents of the International District-based displacement due to the increased cost of housing should private property owners and hotel owners seek unassisted bank loans. To permit both renovation and the preservation of the residential community of the district, reprioritization must occur. Reprioritization of the International District by the City of Seattle will in turn permit the International District to receive HUD money towards renovation of existing. Currently there are three proposals for the Section 8 Rent Supplement program submitted by International District property owners to HUD. With existing prioritization, these pro--proposals have little chance of being considered. Reprioritization is essential to the future of the District.

The International District is a fragile, but important part of the City of Seattle. In a pluralistic society, steps must be taken to ensure the preservation of each culturally distinct--distinct community.

If we fall victim once again to the blind racist economics, the opportunity to preserve this unique part of the City will be lost to all of us forever.