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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“Seeing The End From The Beginning”

Most of my life has been spent embracing the sub-philosophy of action which I call, “Ready, *Fire*, Aim!” At its best this theory of action has thrust me into avenues of opportunity that simply would not have opened unless a leap was made. Action can serve at times as a prerequisite to causation. “Make something happen!,” is the mantra of this lifestyle. Also the recognition that there is validity in action that unveils truth can be heard in the northern logger’s epigram, “The world is run by people who show up.”

“Ready, *Fire*, Aim!,” is a valuable spur. Sometimes. And sometimes, that spur has goaded me into some unbelievable mess of my own making. There is great truth in the wisdom of our most ancient sages who remind us, “Don’t leap before you look!” You know, a body can get in the most awful jams by just getting on your horse and riding off in all directions at once. And what is more if you try to justify why you fired off before you aimed, by drawing a circle around the errant shot and trying to convince the crowd that you hit the bull’s eye, you just compound your own foolishness. SBCR is too important for that.

So there is a balance. You must act, but not be impetuous. You must plan, but not be caught by the paralysis of analysis. Aristotle was right, there is a “golden mean” to be found. Of course you must build the tower, but you also must count the cost, so Jesus tells us. And that balance brings me to address one of the most asked and one of the most *critical* questions people raise to me.

“What are y’all *aiming* to *do* at Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal?” How great is that?! Our southern colloquialism has perfectly framed the paradigm for combining thought and action, planning and performance. I love being from Shreveport. Because now I always get to answer that question by telling folks what we are *fixin’ to do*.

Years ago we pictured what the optimum neighborhood would look like. We spelled it out. Then we took aim and aligned every step with the realization of that picture. To help us clarify our thinking, we pictured a neighborhood that was set apart from the rest and wondered what we would have to have in order to produce whole and happy human beings. Then, of course, we saw that set apart neighborhood would be just like a little village. And we remembered that the village was the seed bed for healthy community life for thousands of years. It was the field that produced productive human lives. What were the essential elements that built the village and thus can build the neighborhood? We identified them. Then, we took aim. (As you will see, these elements are interrelated.)

Safety. Maslow identified this need as the most critical for human beings. In order to live and function, there must be a sense of security that enables people to pursue even

the rudiments of life much less the higher claims which we feel urging us upward. So we saw that safety and security must be established by aiming at them with rigorous intentionality. Security is a state of mind. A person can surround himself with locks and weapons and *feel* insecure. But safety can be imposed externally in the neighborhood to such a degree that the possibility of security has a chance to grow. Police must bring safety, while caring neighbors can birth security.

Adequate Housing. Simply put, there must be protection from the elements. We are creatures that now live inside and the fragile nature of our constitutions demands a mantle of covering. So another element of this picture must include adequate housing for everyone. And we know that the first step out of poverty is to become a home owner no matter how simple or spare the dwelling.

Health. People, even the ancients, have the need of physical and psychological health as a bedrock element of great living. As we surveyed the picture and took aim, we knew that there had to be a renewed dedication to a functional delivery system of health care even to the least of these. We deliberately have sought and found a wonderful partners who are willing to launch into a new way of bringing health care to the neighborhoods.

Meaningful Work. For people to become whole and fully integrated human beings they must do deeds daily that lend themselves to the greater good. Work brings self-esteem like no other tonic. Talk therapy is limited in helping persons find meaning. While task-therapy is a wonder. So this must be a critical element to fold into the neighborhood.

Transmission of Knowledge (Education). From one generation to the next there must be a way to leave the knowledge gained from one age to another. The capacity to grow is predicated on the capacity to learn. We are seeking to rebuild the “care continuum” of home, school, and church/synagogue so necessary for learning.

Leadership and Culture. We are indebted in many ways to Bishop William B. Friend, but our debt is deepened with the addition of these two elements to our picture. Every village had leadership and every village had a culture. Both of these elements are essential building blocks. Therefore we have been led to suggest that the best kind of leadership is the servant/leader model shown by our Lord Jesus. And the culture that can best facilitate life is the transcendent caring model of family. Everyone is brother and everyone is sister.

And finally, our picture is complete by seeing that **Mutually Enhancing Relationships** are a key element in the building of the village/neighborhood. Only free people can free people. Therefore we must intentionally create the environment of love and caring which can bring each and every person to their greatest capacity to live. This is the specialty of Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal. All of our planning is undertaken to create this platform upon which all of the stand.

From the beginning we have seen and *aimed for this end*. With your help, we will hit it. God Bless You All!