

8/5/2001

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“The Challenge of True Renewal”

Now we have a building. It is a very large building – fourteen stories and a full finished basement. To me it is a skyscraper! The generosity of The Petroleum Tower’s donors is simply wonderful. They wanted this great building to count for something and it will. According to Andy Taft, Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority, “The Petroleum Tower sits on the fifty yard line of downtown Shreveport.” The process of this stunning donation has taken all of us exactly one year from the first approach to the owners to the signing of the Act of Donation itself.

What are we going to do with 135,000 square feet of building? For sure we are going to do *something significant*. The last thing that I want to be like is that pooch that chased a truck and then had the misfortune to catch it! I want to share with each one of you some of my deepest thoughts on this great new leap from today into a new tomorrow.

From the beginning of our mission of community renewal, we knew that we must do more than selfishly seek to renew just one community. We were beckoned to follow a larger cause: *We must find a way to renew many cities*. That is the critical need of the hour. So we must build the model of renewal and then construct a viable method to reproduce that model.

Over the last few years, I have conveyed to each of you the shape that our strategic planning was taking in regards to a training center to fulfill the other-city-replication need of the model taking shape in the neighborhoods of Shreveport-Bossier. All of us recognized that to effectively reproduce our model, then we must bring others to our community to teach them the concepts and the methods of renewal. The physical needs of that necessity were simply daunting.

We needed a hotel with classrooms. To effectively learn not only the clear “notes” of renewal, but to also hear the “music,” people needed to come and stay. They needed classroom time and field work if they were to know how to do renewal. The Petroleum Tower, when completely renovated will provide the home away from home for all of those who have come to be equipped in our methodology, and who, having once been equipped, will help us to learn more from their work and experiences in the renewal of their cities.

I know that this is merely review to you who have followed the development of Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal closely over the past few years, *but it leads me to the main thrust of the clear challenge before us for true renewal which is this:*

We know the exact and applied science regarding the renewal and the renovation of buildings. We know exactly the steps to take, once given the resources, to turn this building, or any building for that matter, into what we wish it to be. We know the experts who will give us the design; the architects. We know the builders, the bricklayers, the plumbers, the electricians, the interior designers, the cabinet makers, and the furniture makers. In short, we know step by step how to completely renew buildings.

Now:

Our goal, our quest, our challenge, our mandate, is to learn and to know and to teach the exact and applied science regarding the renewal of cities!!!

My dear friends, if we can know exactly how to renew buildings, then what is to stop us from learning exactly how to renew cities? Inside of the renewed Petroleum Tower – now named The Renewal Center – the way of community renewal will be taught. It is not exact – yet. But my pledge and commitment to you is that my life will be spent in finding the way to renew a city as an applied, exact process.

Imagine the breakthrough! We need an effort comparable to the Manhattan Project in splitting the atom. I believe that ground zero is right here. We have made huge strides in the process of renewal and with a national scope of experts joining forces, we will prevail.

This is the *something significant* I was referring to above. We have many steps to learn and many more steps to take to become exact. ***But I know the first two steps with absolute certainty and exactitude.*** The first step to take in renewing a city is to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that ***only the love of God can renew a city!*** And the second step is this: ***to trust God's love to live in you and to flow through you to every single human being you meet – no exceptions!***

So the challenge is now clearly given. The issue is joined! We are going to do this together and history will smile. No, it will grin!