

Interview

with

Sherman L. Biddix

June 9, 2006

by David Cline

Transcribed by Emily Baran

The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Transcript on deposit at
The Southern Historical Collection
Louis Round Wilson Library

Citation of this interview should be as follows:
"Southern Oral History Program,
in the Southern Historical Collection Manuscripts Department,
Wilson Library,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill"

Copyright © 2006 The University of North Carolina

Interviewee: Sherman Biddix

Interviewer: David Cline

Interview date: June 9, 2006

Location: Louisville, KY

Length: 1 disc, approximately 53 minutes

DC: This is David Cline recording for the Southern Oral History Program's Long Civil Rights Movement project. I'm here in Louisville. It is June the ninth, 2006, with Mr. Sherman Biddix. And if you could just sort of say hello and introduce yourself for the tape.

SB: Hello, my name is Sherman Biddix. I reside at 3718 Southern Ave in the Louisville, Kentucky Villages of Park Duvalle.

DC: Could you tell me about where you were born and raised?

SB: I was born in the old General Hospital here in Jefferson County. I was raised on a farm about a hundred and forty-five miles southwest of here in southwestern Kentucky by my grandparents. I stayed down there until I was fourteen years old and then I moved back here with my father. My father lived here and I returned here to finish high school.

DC: And which high school did you come through?

SB: Male High School.

DC: Oh, you came through Male?

SB: Yes.

DC: And after high school?

SB: After high school, I briefly moved to Chicago with a relative where I went to work, got a job in the steel mills and I worked about a year. Then, well the draft came along and I

entered the military. From there I ended up in Vietnam and I did my thirteen-month tour and finished my military obligations and then I returned. After the military, I lived in Detroit for a couple years and then Chicago and then I returned to Kentucky, here in Louisville where I now reside.

DC: What branch of the service?

SB: The Army.

DC: You were in the Army?

SB: Yes.

DC: So eventually returned to Kentucky—

SB: Yes.

DC: And what kind of work did you take up?

SB: When I initially returned out of the military, I worked for the government affiliate, the Tennessee Valley Authority, Paradise Steam Plant. I was a material controller down there for years until the first recession hit in the early 80s and they laid off numerous individuals and I had a choice. I was living in the area that I was raised in southwestern Kentucky down in Muhlenberg County. The only work at that particular time of any consequence was working in the coal mines or working at TVA. I didn't want to work in the coal mines at that time. My grandfather had worked in the coal mines for thirty years, but unlike him, I didn't desire that type of work and so I returned to Louisville to seek employment. And I have been here ever since.

DC: And working for—

SB: In Louisville?

DC: Yeah.

SB: In Louisville, I initially started out doing contract work with the utility companies. We were protecting underground infrastructure for all five utilities here in Louisville up until last year, when the company that I worked for was sold to another company and I chose not to relocate. So now I do what is called containment work for the automotive industry on a contractual basis.

DC: You now live at the Villages of Park Duvalle, but can you tell me about where you lived before you moved here and how that came about?

SB: Okay, I initially, let's see. I've lived in, primarily, the west end of Louisville for the majority of the time that I've been here in Louisville: River Park, Thirtieth and River Park, which is west Louisville. And for approximately ten years, I lived out in West Buechel, which is out in the southeast end of town in and around the General Electric Plant out there. As the projects, the Park Duvalle started to build down here, I decided to move back to the west end with the incentives that they offered and plus the majority of my family lived here in the west end and I thought it would be a good thing to, one, the opportunity to have a new home in a new subdivision, and I spent most of my time down here anyway. So I said I'll move back to the west end. And in 2000, the year 2000, we purchased down here and we've been here ever since.

DC: Now did it feel like a risk that you were taking or an experiment to see how this area would work?

SB: Somewhat, yes. I wouldn't say a risk per se, because unlike a lot of the individuals who flee from the west end for whatever reason, because of the stereotyping that goes on down here and plus there's a lot of activity, there's a lot of violence that went on down here that people are afraid of, but that was not an issue with me, because I lived in this neighborhood, so

I felt like I was comfortable living here. I wasn't uncomfortable living here, let's put it that way. The risks involved—no, the experiment, you said experiment. The experiment part, I would say, would be the challenge of being involved in a brand-new subdivision within the older city and the challenge to maintain the subdivision. I think that was the challenge. I think that was the experiment.

DC: And how has that been meeting that challenge and being part of this new neighborhood association?

SB: It has been a challenge and it remains a challenge. I feel very strongly, and listening to some of my neighbors talk, I think the knowledge of individuals who have never owned property before, as they purchase, as they become property owners, they don't understand the responsibilities. Let's say we have a CC&R, which is [Community] Codes and Restrictions. It's CC&R, I can't think of the name. Anyway, it's what you're supposed to do within a community, alright. When you purchase homes, you are given a pamphlet of the things that you can and cannot, or you can and should not do within your own community, such as not leaving your garbage cans sitting out at the curb and your setbacks or different restrictions, alright. A lot of people don't adhere to that. What as a community, being part of the community association, what we try to do is send out friendly reminders or fliers reminding people how to maintain their property value, how to keep their house up, so that the community stays on a proper track to not devalue our property, etcetera, etcetera. That in itself is a challenge that we're constantly facing to teach people how to take care of their property. That's one of the biggest challenges.

DC: Because you have to do it in such a way that you don't insult people or create anger or friction?

SB: Right.

DC: What you're really trying to do is build a community here.

SB: Right, very much so. That is true.

DC: Has that happened? Has that begun to happen?

SB: To some extent, yes, I would have to say. We've come a long ways, but we've got a long way to go. We've come a long ways, but we've got a long way to go. As I, on my daily movement, as I venture in and out of the subdivision to whatever I may have to do at night, as I'm moving about, I'm constantly observing individuals' property. I mean, I have a daily routine that when I walk, I will walk through the community and observe other people's property and to see what condition, to see if they mow their grass on a regular basis or if they're doing just the basic upkeep of their properties. When I see something that stands out, let's say any one individual or individuals that are lagging in certain areas of maintaining their property, then what we as an association, we'll bring up the issues of the need to send out reminders on a routine basis of property upkeeps, what people have to do in the wintertime, what you have to do in the summertime. Hopefully, like you said before, we don't offend people, but that's a very delicate balance that we have to try to maintain, like you're saying. Like I say, it's an ongoing effort.

DC: Right. Your neighborhood association, is it made up just of private homeowners or also renters?

SB: Yes, we have renters and we have individuals from the surrounding community, the older community.

DC: Oh, they're involved as well?

SB: Yes. We have Colonial Homes, which is the area that is at Thirty-fourth and Southern. As you turned in on your left-hand side, those are older units. They are owned. It's like condos. They are individually owned. Well, they have been here for years, long before--. Even when Southwick Homes was here, Colonial Homes was there. We have individuals from there. We have individuals from the Algonquin Association, which is across Algonquin, which is adjacent to Park Duvalle. Then Park Duvalle community itself, which has been here for years, the Villages of Park Duvalle is the development, but the Park Duvalle community, we have individuals from there also, the older community shall we say.

DC: Has it felt like there are gaps to bridge between this new development and the older community?

SB: Yes. The one major gap that we feel like we've seen is that there seems to be some—not animosity, animosity is a strong word—maybe envious of, from the older community and the new community, where some of the individuals, some of the things that have been said indicate that the people over here, because the value of the homes in the Villages is much higher than the value of the homes in the older communities, you get that, “Well, they think they're better than us.” There was no unity as far as any type of neighborhood association out in the older community. So other than the older property owners, it's been difficult to get the younger, even renters, out in the older community to participate in the community association. Some of the older property owners, they participate and they're not on a regular basis. Our core group of individuals basically is made up of older property owners and primarily those individuals, the majority of them come from the Villages here, and like I say, with sporadic individuals in the older community and they don't participate on a regular basis; they participate sometimes.

DC: In the Villages of Park Duvalle, what's the racial makeup in this area? Is it still primarily African-American?

SB: Yeah, predominately it is African-American. We do have caucasians and I know a couple of Hispanic families that I'm aware of to date that are property owners, but like I say, predominately African-American.

DC: And this might seem like a strange question, where do you do your shopping? Is that a sore point, because there's not a supermarket around here is there?

SB: No, not here in this general area. You have a choice of Twenty-eighth and Broadway where there's a major Kroger's, which is about—

DC: That's not too far.

SB: About a mile and a half, two miles away. Or we go to major shopping areas. By being near the expressway, we're about fifteen minutes away from major shopping centers, Wal-Marts or Sam's Superstores or Target or what-not over in Southern Indiana. We can go to Southern Indiana or we can head out Dixie Highway, which is approximately about five and a half to seven miles. We go out Dixie Highway where there's major shopping out there, Myer's, Value City, Kroger's, whomever. Within less than fifteen minutes away, we have major areas to go shopping, but like I say, not within our own neighborhood, no, we don't have them here yet.

There have been talks and negotiations with major merchandisers. One of the obstacles that we encountered, when the application was sent forth for the Hope VI grant for this development, whomever, I call them "the founding fathers," or the city leaders and the individuals who was involved, one of the stipulations that they put into this application process was that we would have no alcohol, no commercial outlets that dealt in alcohol. Because at one

time, over on Wilson Avenue, this was a congested area with a lot of nightclubs and businesses that sold alcohol and it was felt that because of so many places that sold alcohol, that this was detrimental to a community. So they put a stipulation in that application process that no new facility would serve alcohol or be allowed to serve alcohol; they'd be restricted from it. So when the approach was made, and it's my understanding—now this is second-hand information that we're getting from the city fathers, the Housing Authority, etcetera, etcetera—that Kroger's, for instance, did not want to come into an area where they couldn't sell beer, so they said they wouldn't do that.

DC: Interesting.

SB: Like I say, this is second-hand information that we're getting. So this was one of the factors that did not allow us to attract a major retailer, to anchor a shopping, a business district within here. It's my understanding now that there has been some relaxation of these. Now how they went about that, I don't know, because like I say, I haven't seen anything in writing. This is just what we've been told. To my knowledge, I know that our current city council person, Mr. Leonard Watkins—unfortunately he lost his bid for reelection, his term is up, but anyway—during his term, he had kept us informed of the negotiation process to negotiate with a major retailer to come into this area. They were talking with Wal-Mart about a “neighborhood store,” which is a smaller store, but that did not come to anything. Then they were talking to Aldi's, which is a discount supermarket, but to date, we don't have any business in this area yet. But like I say, that's on our wish list, let's put it that way.

DC: I was wondering about that, because both in terms of creating a community and in terms of property values, I would think that that would be something that might be a goal.

SB: Years ago, what we called the Twentieth-eight and Dumesnil area, at that intersection was the main shopping area within and around this area. You had all types of stores. This was before the riots and the area got destroyed, so businesses never did come back to that area. We do have a supermarket over there, a discount supermarket over there. It's part of a chain of about three markets that are around Louisville called the Meat Stores, they call them. That's one of [the] major, that's the closest major grocery store that's here other than Kroger's. Kroger's is further away than the Meat Store is, but I don't think, just the people within the neighborhood, they travel to the Meat Store, let's put it that way.

DC: Right. Now before you got involved in this neighborhood association, over the years previous, had you been involved in your own community or in various organizations?

SB: Not to this capacity, no. In the previous communities that I lived in, when I lived out in Buechel, I would attend a neighborhood association meeting every now and then. If there was something in the community that needed to be done and they needed volunteers and my work would permit it, I may have gotten involved. If we had a neighborhood clean-up or something of that nature, I got involved. But in this capacity, no.

DC: And you owned your own home in these other neighborhoods as well?

SB: Yes, yes.

DC: Let's sort of shift gears over to the Rubber Town Community Advisory Council, because that is something that you are involved in as well. Can you tell me about how you got involved in that?

SB: Actually, I was a--. (laughs) During a meeting of the neighborhood association, some of the older residents made accusations of how some of their ailments were being caused by the proximity of the chemical plants. I am a type of person, I deal in facts. I like good

information. So I spoke with an individual, a friend of mine at that time, who I knew that served on a board over there at the Rubber Town Advisory Council. It just so happened that their term, they were getting ready to resign their position and they asked me, would I be interested in doing that? And I said, "Well yes, of course." As a neighborhood leader, I felt that if I got my information first-hand, that I could better talk to my constituents in the community. So that is basically how I started to serve on the board of the Rubber Town Advisory Community Council.

DC: And what has that experience been like?

SB: It's been a learning experience. Well first of all, some of the names of the chemicals that they use I couldn't pronounce previously, but now, you know, I'm very familiar with that. I am much more knowledgeable of how the process of let's say, to shelter a place, what type of procedures that the chemical companies themselves have tried to implement to work with the community, to warn the community if there's a problem or emergency of what-not, all the efforts that the chemical plants take to help to protect the community. Also I've become very knowledgeable about the amount of pollutants that is released into the air and what type of effects it can have on the individual and just more knowledgeable basically of what's actually going on, because like I say, I'm getting my information first-hand. So I feel more knowledgeable of what's going on.

Before I lived here, I just passed through this area. I never paid it any attention. But now that I live here, I don't know if you noticed when you pulled up, outside we have a rail spur out front and the tank cars that are going into the chemical plant are constantly parked there. That issue has been brought up before. I personally asked some of the plant managers that we meet with on a monthly basis as to the status of those particular tank cars and was reassured that no

tank cars with chemical product sits outside of the property, that this is just a rail spur maintained by the rail company and these tanks are empty, etcetera, etcetera. There's no security on them, so we have some concerns about that, but being reassured by the chemical companies themselves that most of their product is a "just in time" type of process where they know what's on the way and they make arrangements for it to be received right into the plant and then offload it, and that basically, this spur out here is utilized by the railroad just to park cars awaiting transport. And that in itself, I guess, is a little easy on the mind to know that, that you don't have a volatile chemical, a loaded tank car with a volatile chemical parked in front of your door less than, what, it's about less than a thousand yards away from your front door. That's been the knowledge to know that what's going on. You understand the process better, let's put it that way, by being involved with the chemical company.

DC: And you feel they're fairly forthcoming and honest with you?

SB: As much as a company can be. I mean, I understand. I've managed a company, not similar to that, but I've been involved in management and I know that there's only so much that you can put out for confidentiality purposes, etcetera, etcetera. I realize that. But yes, I feel like they've been forthcoming. By having knowledge of let's say, the West Jefferson County Tax Force and then the University of Louisville, by having access to information from them, and then comparing what the company gives you on a routine basis and just comparing this information, I feel very comfortable that yes, they have been very forthcoming with what's going on in their plants, like I say, as much as they possibly can.

DC: Now the proximity to the plants and the rail spur, etcetera, do you feel that has or could have an affect on property value at all for you or for the Villages in general?

SB: As far as property value appreciating, yes, I feel that it will, it does. Like I say, when we contemplated moving down here, that was not in our—for some reason, we didn't think about, because neither one of us had lived over in this area before and we just didn't think about it. The property would appreciate more if it wasn't here, let's put it that way. I feel confident that once we—we feel that we've got a ten-year plan and we've been here six already. Our goal was to invest out here and then use this as a springboard to go somewhere else. Since we've been here, our property has appreciated more than what we paid for it. So we won't make a killing or anything like that, but hopefully we'll get our money back and then make a little profit when we move.

DC: So it's been a steady investment at least?

SB: Yes, but not as if, like I say, the property was in the southeast or the east end, it would appreciate much more than what it has.

DC: Have other properties rolled over already around here as far as resale?

SB: Yes, there's been a few that have rolled over. Let's see, off the top of my head, I'm aware of two pieces of property that individuals have sold out and moved on. In my last tour around the community, I don't recall seeing any for sale signs. No, I don't recall ever seeing any for sale signs.

DC: It looks like there's even some new construction going on.

SB: Well, they are still completing, the buildout has not completed yet. No, the buildout is not complete yet. As a matter of fact, there are some adjacent lots across from us right here now that there's no building on them. We have been informed by the Community Builders who are the managers of the project out here that they intend to build town homes over here across from us. So I think there's room for about twenty town homes and they're still building

individual homes about a block away from us through that phase over there, which is the third phase, the 3B, I believe it is. It's just about complete. They've got about, I think it's about ten lots where they're building individual homes on that they're trying to sell out. Then up in the front, the larger lots on Dr. William B. Weathers Drive, it's not completed either. So there's still building to be done down here.

DC: Just for my own knowledge, because I'm a little confused on this fact, Community Builders has done both the individual homes and the public housing units?

SB: No, the Community Builders manage the rental units and they also are the guiding force behind organizing the different organizations within the community, alright. The private home owner lots have been managed by the Louisville Real Estate Development Corporation, which works in conjunction with the Community Development Bank. They handle the individual homeowners.

DC: So that's who you have primarily dealt with is those folks, rather than Community Builders?

SB: Oh yeah, well the Community Builders I deal with on a organizational basis as far as the neighborhood association, the homeowner's association, etcetera, etcetera. But the Community Development Bank and the Louisville Real Estate Development, yes.

DC: Has Community Builders seemed to be a pretty good property manager in your opinion?

SB: Yes, overall, yes. I've gotten a lot of complaints from the rental individuals about the management of the Community Builders. There was a period where they went through a transition period. They've had several different individuals to manage that organization. But because I don't have any dealings with them from a management perspective -- other than what

I've heard, [which] has all been negative about it -- but from my own opinion, as far as them working with us and working with the community, the neighborhood association, and trying to help us with our annual events and different things, they've been very cooperative.

DC: Speaking of annual events, can you tell me about those? I know there was just the big reunion weekend down here a couple weeks ago.

SB: Yes, but that's not a Park Duvalle per se event. That's an event which was organized and it came about long before the [Villages at] Park Duvalle project, the development came about. That's the Southwick and Cotter Homes Day and it's been in existence for years. The Park Duvalle, we have an annual event on August the fifth. We have our annual family festival, which is a one day event that has come about since the neighborhood association has been in existence. We have an annual Christmas party for the community and the surrounding communities. And we have an annual jazz festival—

DC: Oh, so you do a lot.

SB: In September. It is basically to create a positive environment for the family-oriented event. That has been our main focus. It's growing. Each year the participation grows more and more. In the past, it hasn't been highly advertised outside the community, but this year we're moving to a format where we will be advertising outside the community. We'll be bringing in vendors. We'll be bringing in a carnival for the children and entertainment, what-not. We're going to incorporate a talent show, just doing different things. The main thing will be focused on the family.

DC: What percentage of people have kids in this area? Are there a lot of children in the new development?

SB: Yes, it is. I don't know the exact figure, but just if I take my block for instance, there are thirty percent that don't have children; seventy percent have children, thirty don't. That's just one block and that's typical of the entire development. The majority of people do have kids down here. We have the Southwick Community Center, which is just a block away from us.

DC: Right, I just drove by.

SB: Yeah, that provides events and entertainment and activities for children. There's a large park adjacent to it, which is Russell Lee Park. Then we have the Duvalle Education Center, which provides daycare facilities for the children and then after-school activities they provide. There's a Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Club also incorporated into the Education Center up there and they have a lot of events and things for children, what-not. So we have facilities for kids. Then the Algonquin pool, I don't know if anybody's told you or not, the Algonquin pool, which is approximately less than a half a mile away, the Algonquin Park is near the senior center of this development. The award came down, almost two months ago it was announced, that there's a major renovation going in to redoing the pool and everything over there for the community. That will be a facility for the community, it will be enjoyed by the community, which is readily available.

DC: And that's your public pool for this area?

SB: Yes, which is not too far away.

DC: Other than upkeep of the properties etcetera, any other issues that have really sort of occupied your time in your involvement in the neighborhood council, sort of main issues in the community?

SB: Well, let's say the recurrent issue is the retail, what is being done as far as negotiating with bringing in some type of major retail. Within the meetings that we have, that comes up just about, well I would say at least every other meeting that comes up. On a lower scale, even though we have to refer individuals to other avenues of recourse, people constantly come to the neighborhood meetings complaining about abandoned cars in different areas. This, I don't know why we have that problem here, but we have a police officer, a community resource officer, which attends our meetings on a regular basis. We try to work with them very closely to keep them informed and if we get complaints from the neighbors about abandoned cars, that's one of the biggest issues, and noise has been, that's a complaint too. Some of our older residents—I guess, I don't have a problem, but I live down here on this end, so I don't have the problem that the people live in the more congested area--. We don't have houses across the street from us so we don't get that two-sided traffic type of deal. But from what I've heard, there's been a lot of complaints about noise issues at night, people with loud music in their cars and things like that, having to call the police and what not.

DC: How have the police relations been since you've been here?

SB: Very good, very good. Maybe from your previous talks, you have--. This area down was the highest crime rate area in Louisville, mainly because of the low-income situation that had been allowed to develop down here. But once they did away with that and then you have property owners moving in and a new development, the crime rate dropped dramatically. Then with the major effort being put forth by the community and the police, by community involvement by the police, there has been a very good cooperation. Like I say, the community resource officer, he calls me from time to time just to find out if there's anything, any problems

that we're having, which I find unusual where they call me to see if you're having any problems or not. No, it's been great, it's been great, just to answer your question.

DC: Do they have a physical presence over here as far as a substation or anything?

SB: Yes, they're right next to the fire station, which is we have a fire station and we have a police station right in the neighborhood.

DC: For you personally having this involvement, has this made you consider getting involved in other things or maybe a political run at some point?

SB: Well, I wouldn't be truthful if I said I hadn't thought about it, but I don't entertain that idea. No, politics is a dirty business. (laughs) No, I don't entertain any ideas of going any further, no. This has been an experience. It's been a learning experience for me and an enjoyable experience, but no. I think this is as far as I'll go. (laughs)

DC: Okay, I think you'd be very good at it. (laughs) Well, any questions that I didn't ask that maybe I should have asked or that you thought I might ask about your community here?

SB: Well, I'm just going to make this one statement. The Housing Authority, it has been brought to my attention and I have observed that I don't feel like there was enough training put forth for homeowners. I mean, they talked about it, but we haven't seen it on an ongoing basis or any type of effort to—I know you can't hold people's hands and put them in a home and expect them to do right. Maybe that's not what I'm trying, I don't know what I'm trying to say and what's the best way to say it. The city fathers think this a beautiful development and I'm quite sure their efforts didn't go unappreciated, but they left a lot to be desired as far as what would happen to the area after they left, let's put it that way.

Hopefully, with this new project that's coming about, which is Liberty Green, which is downtown now, that they have learned from this development, because this was their first one. Maybe they've learned how to, they're going to have to teach people how to live in a new neighborhood when they do a project like this. There has to be more effort on somebody checking on what's going on other than the neighborhood. We didn't get our neighborhood association up off the ground until we had been here almost a year and a half before the efforts were started to get the neighbors involved, when we feel like it should have been from the get-go, the first person that moved in, and then maybe hand it on down. Something should have been done.

DC: Right, so you felt like you really had to step into that gap, because it just wasn't being done?

SB: Right.

DC: If you were in charge of Liberty Green for example, what kinds of things would you put in place, some sort of a permanent manager or just create an association from the beginning or training courses? What kinds of things would have been helpful?

SB: Well, like I say, training courses (pause), yeah, training. I believe a property manager from the onset and strict guidelines and enforcement of strict guidelines. Here it was, what we saw was just there were too many hands in the pot. One person says you can do this. One person says you can't do this. Let me say this real quickly what I'm trying to get at. For instance, when we moved in and then we wanted to have a—we couldn't have our garage built because of the setbacks of the electrical easements, the utility easements. We purchased the lot before the utilities were installed and our plans with our developer, our builder, was to have a house and a garage and we purchased a lot which would accommodate all of that which they

told us. Well, then they come in with the utilities and have a setback which pushed our house further back on the lot, so we had to go without the garage. Since we had already contracted with the developer to build our house, we decided well, we'll do without the garage. Then we said well, we'll put up a shed. Well, we were told that we needed to this. We had rules and regulations to abide by about what type of shed, what it had to look like, and what we could do. So when we adhered to that, then we have another person who comes along and tells us, "No, you can't do this."

There were too many people telling us too many different things. It seemed like every time something was brought forth, then it was changed by someone else who came in. I don't know. It felt like we were an experiment. That's the feeling that we got. There was just too many changes to what we were initially told as opposed to what actually could be done. Now we're seeing, like for instance, if you had a shed put up, you had to have it on a concrete base. Now I'm seeing throughout the subdivision sheds sitting on blocks, on dirt, because different people are in charge now so things have changed. You couldn't have certain types of houses. I'm seeing all kinds of different houses. Just we need a solid format to set out with and try to stay with that pattern as you go along. There were just too many changes to start with and a lot of people got despondent about that, because, "Well, they told me I couldn't do that and now they're doing that." These are the type of issues that you find out.

DC: Right, so some sort of consistency—

SB: Yes.

DC: Has been missing.

SB: Yes, and that's what threw people in a bad mindset about what was going on.

DC: That's completely understandable. Have things improved or does it still seem like it's being worked out?

SB: As far as the consistency down here, because the development is so large and almost in a buildout phase, we don't get that anymore, because people have just accepted that that's just norm for the course. And the people that are coming in now, well, I'll give you an example of the people that are building in now in the three streets over here that are being built. When the developer came in and started building homes, they set the mailbox behind the sidewalk. Then somebody come along and told them, someone from the managing forces told them that the mailboxes had to be at the curb. Now when the mailman stopped delivering the mail to these people, they told them that your mailbox is supposed to be at the curb. Well, if you'll look, if you go through the subdivision, all of our mailboxes sit behind sidewalk when in essence, they were supposed to be at the curb. Well, when these people that recently, over the last year or so, when the mailman stopped delivering these people's mail because their mailboxes were behind the curb, then they come back along and somebody paid for them to move them out. No, the property owners had to pay to move their mailboxes out.

DC: Oh, the property owners had to bear that?

SB: Yeah.

DC: Oh man.

SB: Because within the development, the design phase, the mailboxes were supposed to be at the curb.

DC: But they weren't done that way.

SB: No, they weren't done that way.

DC: That's a pretty serious snafu.

SB: Yeah. Then on William Weathers up here, which is one of the main thoroughfares from the senior center or for Wilson Avenue, the sidewalks were too close to the curb for the vegetation, for the greenery to be planted. So somebody had to come back and move the sidewalk back and there was a big snafu about that. I guess whoever designed it, these are just inconsistencies that have happened.

DC: Yeah, they're frustrating.

SB: Yeah.

DC: But it is the city and it is new and yeah, you could see where--.

SB: And one last thing, we had an issue from some of the rental units over off of 34th street. There was a vacant lot in behind these rental units that even has yet to be developed, which is at the end of Duvalle Street, Thirty-fourth and Duvalle. There's a large empty lot. Well, the contractors from all around the development was using that lot to dump rock and dirt and different things on, because as they build basements and they bring lots down to grade they have excess, they take it over there and dump it. Well, the children started using that area as a playground or a place to play, where they could climb up dirt and take their dirt bikes and go up these mounds of dirt. But some of the kids got to throwing rocks and hitting people's parked cars and what-not, so the residents started complaining.

It took a good four and a half months of shuffling back and forth between TCB, the real estate development company, the Community Development Bank, the city, to find out who was responsible for maintaining that area to get it cleaned up so that we could eliminate this problem of kids using it to throw rocks and damage people's property. But it was frustrating to the property owners around there, because they'd go to one person and they'd say, "Well, it's not our responsibility." They go to another organization and they say, "It's not our

responsibility.” We even got the police involved in it and they finally, they helped us find out who was responsible for it and to get the area cleaned up, which should have been a real simple thing to do. If TCB is managing the property, the Louisville real estate development is responsible for the lots, then we shouldn’t have had to talk to all these different people just to get one simple little thing done. But that’s just one example of, “It’s not my responsibility.”

DC: In terms of the Metro Housing Authority then, does it sort of feel like they came in and got this started and then really disappeared or is there still a working relationship or responsibility that they still have?

SB: I believe Metro Housing only works with the homeowner’s association. That’s another thing. This is a fragmented community when it comes to organizations, which I don’t think should have been done. You have a renters’ association. You have a homeowners’ association. And then you have a neighborhood association.

DC: Oh, okay. (laughs) I didn’t realize.

SB: And it was created by the—

DC: You’re the neighborhood association?

SB: We’re the neighborhood association, right. So you have these fragmented organizations and we’ve tried to work with each other, work together, but the renters’ association, which is run by the Community Builders, we have yet to work together. So Metro Housing, to directly answer your question, Metro Housing works closely with the homeowners’ association, because there’s homeowners’ association fees to be collected and different monies to be distributed out for maintaining the community, so I think they still work together. But the neighborhood association, we don’t have any dealings with the Metro Housing.

DC: Do you see the potential then for the neighborhood association to be the sort of umbrella?

SB: That is the goal.

DC: That's the goal.

SB: That's the goal. TCB is a, well, I'll use the word barrier, between the renters' association working with the neighborhood association, because they have their idea, "We have our own association so why should we work with you all?" Nobody has said that, but when we send out fliers for meetings and things, we don't get any response from those people, but people say, "Well, we've got our own meeting we go to. We don't need to be with you all." There's, like I say, so many fragmented organizations down here and we're not working together. Maybe down the road we can work this problem out, so it's going to take a long time to work it out.

DC: But it sounds like your vision is one of a united larger community of renters and homeowners etcetera?

SB: Right, that's our vision.

DC: But there are barriers at the moment.

SB: Right. Everybody has their own agenda.

DC: Well, I wish you luck.

SB: Thank you.

DC: Anything else you want to add before I cut this out?

SB: No, that's it, that's it.

DC: Great, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

SB: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Baran. July 2006