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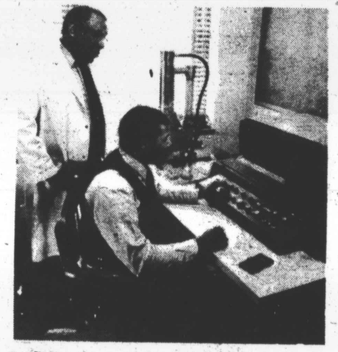

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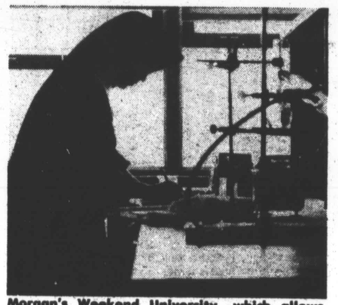

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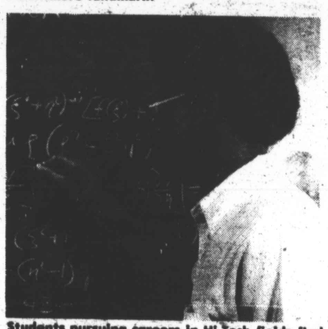

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Shop Neighborhoods Week

OCTOBER 12-19

Shop Neighborhood Week alerts city shoppers

By Tyrese Vines
AFRO Staff Writer

Shop Neighborhood Week is designed to have the city shoppers "discover" their own neighborhoods and for the neighborhood merchants to create incentives for them during "Shop Neighborhood Week."

"It is hoped that by the merchants displaying such basic characteristics as courtesy, service, and honest values, they will gain an increase in confidence for the shoppers to return again and again," said Herman Katkow, executive director of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Small businesses.

The commission was formed in 1960, as a result of a small group of businessmen meeting with the first-term city councilman, William D. Schaefer. Their concern was the lack of self-determination by businessmen who were affected by decisions made by the city frequently without knowledge of how it might affect the business climate.

Out of that meeting, councilman Schaefer arranged a meeting between representives of the small business community and Mayor J. Harold Grady, who subsequently appointed the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Small Businesses.

Thus, recognizing the importance of Baltimore City residents shopping in their own city, the commission initiated a program in 1974 to strengthen and improve the city's older retail district.

The program identified as "Commercial Revitalization" works with the various business associations on what is developed into a public-private partnership. The city agreed to specific public improvements such as, off-street parking lots, improved lighting, new sidewalks, tree planting.

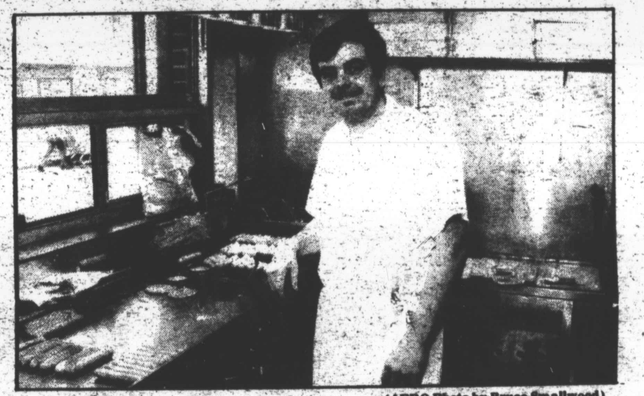
This agreement was in exchange for the merchants agreeing to make exterior and interior physical improvements to their properties to assist in the latter, the city offers a long-term loan program so that the merchants will not be required to expand operating revenues for capital improvements.

"Since the program have been in existence, our loans have generated over $20 million in new investments; has stabilized neighborhood business areas and the tax base; and added thousands of new jobs with many coming from within the immediate neighborhood," Katkow said of the commission's commitment to improving neighborhood business networks.

The mayor also has the same commitment to developing the businesses in the neighborhoods of Baltimore City. He has given the program a high priority among the city's economic development plans, as evidenced by the fact that in 1974, of the $35 million bond issues placed before the city's voters, $3 million was for commercial revitalization efforts.

"To illustrate the priority the mayor has placed on the program by including the commercial revitalization funds in each of the request mentioned, the voters should be aware that despite the urgent requ-est of the city agencies for capital improvement totalling well over 100 million dollars.

"The total restricted for one year is $35 million (because there is no election in 1975 this year's request for bonds total $30 million covering two years," Katkow said.



(AFRO Photo by Bruce Smallwood)

Proud owner of Pollock Johnny's in the 1100 block Light St. is Jay Gillies, who is chairman of the citywide Shop Neighborhoods Week.

This is the second year Mr. Gillies has participated in the program.

According to the commission, Baltimore City is one of not the only metropolitan urban community that is retiring its public debt at a rate equal to or greater than it is creating new public debts.

"Thus, through prudent physical management, Baltimore enjoys an A-1 credit rating and does not have to pay as high interest rates as other large cities," Katkow added.

However, the Maryland Food Committee, Inc. produced a survey showing that poor pay significantly more for food in the inner city area than the surrounding counties. They reported that poor people pay 44.2 percent for food than middle-income people.

The survey was conducted in seven low-income city neighborhoods, two Giant Food Stores and the Johnston Square Food Co-op, a non-profit storefront co-operative. It contrasted the prices of seventeen basic food items of the same standard size.

"This is an area in which our committee is not involved. However, it is self-evident that the tremendous purchasing power of the Suburban chains makes it possible for them to sell some foods products at a price as low as or lower than some of the smaller inner city merchants pay for purchasing the very same items," Katkow said.

Despite of the efforts by the mayor's office through the commission, some merchants complain that securing a loan to purchase property has been difficult considering their lack of capital. Thus they are considering a mayoral loan program to offer small merchants loans supplied by the city to purchase new commercial properties.

"My position would be contingent entirely upon the form such a program might take. In effect our present loan program is a mayoral program since without the mayor's support it would never have been instituted," Katkow said.

The Advisory Commission of Small Businesses consists of one director, one secretary and nine volunteer businesspersons. New entrepreneurs are assisted by the commission which offers information on a step-by-step process which might be generally referred to as the "Red Tape" involvement.

The commission also frees the perspective businessperson to various loan programs available to management and technical assistance and frequently they will do personal business counseling.

Mayor's Advisory Commission

This year's celebration of Shop Neighborhoods Week, Oct. 12 through 19, will involve 21 of the city's 30 neighborhoods rallying behind the theme "Discover Your Neighborhood," according to Affiliated Merchant Association Vice-President Sandy Bates.

Parades, festivals and sidewalk sales will be held during the week in which residents are encouraged to patronize the shops in their neighborhoods.

The kick-off for the week long activities will take place Friday, Oct. 12 on the parking

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