

## **MEMPHIS SPEECH #597, OCTOBER 1999**

Good afternoon. My name is Rick Kremer, and I am an architect in private practice, from Louisville, Kentucky, just a few air miles down the road. In fact Mayor, I believe that the University of Louisville football team may have recently played a game here in your fine city where they literally eked out a last-second victory on a miracle, diving catch. There's another team from the state of Tennessee that plays football too - I think they call them the "Big Orange" or something like that, and they play the University of Kentucky in just a few weeks. I can only imagine you'll pay us back in a big way with that on. But in Kentucky, we don't really know too much about this sport you play with that funny shaped ball - we're a little more used to a sport they call basketball. In fact, one of our favorite sayings this time of year is "well, just wait till basketball season." We'll see.

I am here today as Vice President/Elect of the American Institute of Architects, representing our sixty-some-thousand members. I am very honored to stand before such an important and distinguished audience, and wish to thank Partners For Livable Communities for providing me the opportunity to speak.

Just over one year ago, the AIA opened the doors to its Center For Livable Communities. The Center was designed to bring coordination and focus to the Institute's many activities related to urban design and quality of life communities. We have spent a great deal of that time talking to, and more importantly, listening to, people around the country to find out what is important to them in their own communities. We wanted to find out to whom this issue was important and what makes a community "livable". What makes a community unique to itself? What are its special issues, both good, and bad?

Listen. As a profession, that's what we do best. As architects, we listen to the concerns, the aspirations, the dreams, and then offer opinions and dialogue aimed at accomplishing goals unique to that community. It's a planning process that leads to communities that are better-designed to fit their citizens wants and needs.

In a recent AIA national survey of local elected officials on aspects that make for livable communities, we asked them to rate the importance of a series of factors that make up "livable" communities. What issues were on top? What was foremost in the minds of our nation's community leaders? AIR AND WATER QUALITY; QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES; AVAILABILITY OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES; AND AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING.

Do you notice an interconnectivity there? Where housing goes, need go schools. Where people live and send their children to school, they need open parks to enjoy as part of the lifestyle they are seeking. And air and water quality follow closely to the quality of planning involved in the first place.

The survey found that nearly two-thirds of the state and local policy makers said they were directly involved in initiatives to address issues affecting livable communities.

Not surprisingly, the survey also found that a clear majority of state and local elected officials believe the proper Federal role should be to support local initiatives through grants and funding, not control programs.

The American people have made "livability" one of the largest grassroots movements of the late 20th century, and it will carry far into the next. Newspapers, politicians, planners, and pundits around the country have taken their cue from this movement and talk about growth, traffic, community building, and urban development. During the coming year, look for AIA to continue its strong involvement in this critically important issue.

We have a lot planned - a national convention focusing on "Livable Communities for America's Future;" a national summit on improving and enhancing our nation's communities; a summit on affordable housing; and an extensive study on the issues, facts, and numbers that color the debate on livable communities. This is an exciting time to be working on these issues, and I am happy, and hopeful, because AIA is able to bring the talents and knowledge of its members to the table.

Now, I would like to introduce your first luncheon speaker. A native of Memphis, Dr. Willie W. Herenton was elected Mayor of Memphis on October 3, 1991, and reelected for a second term on October 5, 1995. A graduate of LeMoyne College and the University of Memphis (whose football team just lost to the University of Louisville). He earned his P.H.D. from Southern Illinois University. Prior to his election, Mayor Herenton served as Superintendent of the Memphis City Schools System. He has received numerous awards for outstanding public service, including an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Rhodes College, an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Christian Brothers College and the 1988 Horatio Alger Award. He has served on the national board of directors of The Urban League, Junior Achievement, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He has devoted time to many civic and service organizations such as March of Dimes, United Way, the Rotary Club, the Boy Scouts and the Economic Club of Memphis. Dr. Herenton is a member of the American Association of School Administrators and American Management Association. And rumor has it that he may even take up coaching football at the University of Memphis.

Please join me in giving a warm welcome to the Mayor of Memphis, Dr. Willie W. Herenton.