***Black Springs Poses Problem***

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(EDITOR’S NOTE): This is the second of a three-part series dealing with the problem of civic improvement in what is probably Washoe County’s most blighted area—the community of Black Springs, located on Old Highway 395, about six miles north of Reno.)

“We’ve tried to be as helpful as we can,” says Washoe County Manager C.B. Kinnison about Black Springs, a very sub-standard community north of Reno.

“The people can’t qualify for an assessment district,” says County Engineer George Oshima.

County Building Inspector Ross Stoltz says, “The people out there re going to have to want to do something and want to get out of the living condition they made for themselves before we can ever do anything.”

The situation in Black Springs developed before any building ordinances were adopted in Washoe County, Kinnison explained. “Before the building code cam in (1957-58), there were no regulations on home construction.

“We do our best to enforce the building code in the area,” Stoltz said. “it’s hard to because the people claim they cannot spend a few dollars extra to do the work according to code; they’ll substitute inferior material or used material.”

Several places which do not comply with the code should be condemned, he said. However, condemnation is a difficult task , and is rarely attempted.

Recommendations must be made to the county commissioners by the county health, building and f ire authorities. But the homeowner can appeal to the commissioners, and tell them that this is the best they can afford and that they are satisfied to live there, Stoltz said.

Several burned out structures should also be condemned and removed because they constitute a safety hazard as well as a health hazard, he said.

Sparks Fire Chief Bill Farr say the entire area “is a firetrap,” and should be cleaned up.

“We’ve threatened condemnation on several occasions Farr said, “but we’ve never gone through with it. Generally the threat is enough to bring some results and the owners get the places clean up.”

Washoe County Undersheriff Richard O’Boyle has been asked to take steps to remove the old cars that have been abandoned in Black Springs.

“We’re trying to get them cleaned out of Sun Valle right now,” he explained. He said operators of an auto salvage firm will begin working in Black Springs as soon as they finish their work in Sun Valley.

In regard to the streets and sewage problem, Kinnison said the possibility of an assessment district has been explored thoroughly.

“But the assessed values are insufficient to warrant either a road or sewer assessment district, let along both,” He said.

Oshima said he was first approached about a possible assessment district for Black Springs in October of 1965, just 6 months after the state legislature passed an enabling act of creating assessment districts.

Creating an assessment district can be difficult, especially in an area such as Black Springs , where the property values are low, Oshima said.

According to the statue, the cost to the property owner cannot exceed the value of the property. If just one parcel does not qualify, an assessment district can not be established.

**Cities Figures**

Oshima showed figures for a street improvement district which would amount to $96,000 including the cost estimate of $73,000 and the 31½ per cent district cost of $23,000 (costs of fiscal attorneys, engineering study, and interim money that may have to be borrowed.)

These figures are for paved streets. Oshima explained costs would probably have to be carried over a period of ten years and the paved streets would last the live of the payment plan.

Total frontage to be paved would be 12, 837 lineal feet, with a unit cost of $7.48 a lineal foot. Thus property owners on each side of the street would be assessed half that or $3.74 a lineal foot.

A 100-foot lot, most common size, could cost the owner $374 for the streets. Many of the unimproved lots(lots without houses) are valued at around $200 and thus would not qualify for assessment charges.

Of 78 parcels which would be affected by the street improvements, 28 do not so qualify, Oshima said.

**Cost Estimates**

Two cost estimates were established on the sewer district. One for a n area which would cover 60 parcels in the central portion and a supplemental which could cover an additional 30 parcels.

The first plan, said the engineer would cost $108,000 but the complete plan for the district would be $191,000.

Under the first plan, the cost to the property owner would be $.0926 per square foot. Of the 60 parcels, 22 do not qualify for assessment charges.

The complete plan would be somewhat less expensive to the property owner, $.080 per square foot. But of the 90 parcels involved. 39 still do not qualify.

The assessment district can be created if someone picks up the difference,” Oshima said, “But who’s going to pick it up?”

Kinnison said, “We and other agencies have attempted though federal departments to secure grants to make up the insufficiency of money but we have been unable to do so.”

“ We (the county) can’t bail them out. We haven’t the authority to go in and spend the taxpayers’ money. Unless the people gain individual grants or loans, I’m not sure how you could improve their residences. We can’t apply for them; they have to.”

**Tomorrow: Outside individuals express an interest in Black Springs’ problem, and some offer possible solutions.**