

# In The News



## CITY IS LUCKY GLOVER MADE IT HER ADDRESS

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### *Renee Glover Good for Public Housing*

Renee Glover, who has directed the Atlanta Housing Authority for the past decade, strikes more and more people who know her as one of this city's important reformers.

Her background could have sent her in very different directions. Born into a privileged black family in Jacksonville, she also grew up in the world of Southern segregation. She got caught up in the politics of the 1960s and '70s -- which led to law school in Boston, then to a Wall Street law firm where she specialized in corporate finance. Later, divorced, she moved to Atlanta.

Glover practiced law here, too, and Mayor Maynard Jackson put her on the board of the Housing Authority. Before long she was chairing that mismanaged agency; and when two prospective executive directors decided they didn't want the job, she took it herself, "temporarily."

That was in 1994. Glover has been bulldozing government slums and building mixed-income developments ever since.

Too few Atlantans know her story. Perhaps Monday will help cure that. Alphonso Jackson, the secretary of Housing and Urban Development, will be in town to help Glover and Mayor Shirley Franklin inaugurate the first completed buildings of a huge (and so far very handsome) development called West Highlands, which

has started to rise on 400 acres of northwest Atlanta formerly occupied by Perry Homes.

Glover believes the old housing projects were proven failures. They didn't need renovating and expanding. On the contrary, she told me last week, "The old way clearly was not going to work." The old projects had become such traps -- such creators of poverty, crime, dependence and bad schools -- they cried out to be razed.

Don't concentrate the poor, Glover argues -- disperse them into normal society. Forget the old centralized bureaucratic model of government housing for the welfare class. "Provide assistance without making a program around poverty," Glover says. "Create a market rate development with a seamless affordable component."

Some bureaucrats and local politicians never liked such ideas. Some of the poor feared them. But the ideas have been spreading.

Her public-private developments -- at Centennial Place, Castleberry Hill, East Lake and elsewhere -- have helped leverage \$220 million in federal housing money into \$2 billion worth of apartments, condos, houses, parks, public schools, charter schools, stores, recreation centers and more.

Skeptics say "mixed-income" can't last -- that rich and poor won't live cheek-by-jowl like that. But big cities are complicated places, and people of very different circumstance often coexist in close proximity.

Other questions about Glover's strategy haven't been answered. Where exactly have the people gone who lived in the demolished projects? Will blighted neighborhoods simply re-emerge? Flattening a project like Capitol Homes has cut that zone crime rate -- but what will happen in the long run? And, in the short run, will the HOPE VI program of federal funds for mixed-income housing survive the Bush administration?

However such questions are answered, something had to be done about government-sponsored slums. They were costing society a fortune -- not to mention the wasted lives. Glover helped do what was necessary, and her strategy seems to be working. Atlanta is lucky she moved here.