

At least no one lost their home

After the Specific Purpose (sixth penny) sales tax election in November of 2003, the election that approved a new viaduct over the UP tracks - a viaduct a majority of residents didn't know existed - and a community park for the southside, as well as the new library, I appeared on a local call-in radio program and assessed the outcome of that election.

I made the comment that it was unfortunate that two groups of people would be displaced from their homes. One group to be displaced had houses where the new library was to be built and it was known that they would be uprooted if the vote passed for that library. In spite of that, voters did approve a new library at that location. Indifference and apathy prevailed.

The other group of people that I knew would be displaced were those north of the refinery, coming off the existing viaduct and along 5th St. to the west. Unlike the library confiscation of private property, plans for the viaduct had not been made public by the time of the vote but anyone with a half ounce of sense knew that, to widen the road to and from a new viaduct and around 5th St. and down Morrie, numerous homes would have to be confiscated under the threat of eminent domain.

It turned out that the city took 35-36 homes, some just to create a Greenway path and park, not even for the viaduct or roads to and from it.

Later the same day as my appearance, Jack Spiker called the hostess and asked if he could come on the following day to correct the misinformation I had presented. Of course, he was granted permission - local radio program hosts are flattered to be in the company of the mayor or other elected officials.



So, Jack went on that same radio call-in program the next day and said something to the effect (I have the cassette tape recording of his appearance somewhere and can produce it if he denies this accounting) that he "didn't know why I had lied." He said "no one will lose their homes."

I know that this area of town is not among the most visited areas but a quick trip over the safe and sturdy existing Norris Viaduct will drop you right smack into the middle of the barren space created by taking those three dozen houses.

This part of Cheyenne (or out into Laramie County) is similar to the other areas bulldozed down for "progress." The other two areas being where the library is and Nob Hill, west of town off Happy Jack Rd. The hospital displaced those residents under threat of eminent domain. The similarities are income levels of the people displaced and ethnicity in two of the areas (east 5th St. and the Nob Hill subdivision).



The photos on this page refute the mayor's promise that "no one will lose their homes."

Like comedian Bobcat Goldthwait once said about his job after he had been fired, "I didn't lose my job. I know where it is. It's just that when I go there, someone else is doing it." These folks didn't "lose" their homes. They know where they are. It's just that they have to go to the landfill now to visit them.

It must be nice to be impervious to feeling the harm caused to your fellow man. But, the right of eminent domain, and the threat of condemnation of private property is all about progress, isn't it? Progress in *your* neighborhood. Taking *your* home. But not their. Not their new town house or their big house with the bigger mortgage in Bar X. Someday, there will be a nicer viaduct for tanker trucks to cross. The homes will still be at the landfill. Not lost, though. The mayor promised.

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