

**LLOYD D. SMITH** | 1933-2004

## Indefatigable Advocate for NE Spearheaded Redevelopment

By ADAM BERNSTEIN  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

Raised in the Northeast Boundary area of Washington, Lloyd D. Smith once remembered the historically black neighborhood mostly for its rural backdrop. He used to chop down his family's Christmas tree in nearby woods. To him, the quaint charms of childhood were a blink of the mind away.

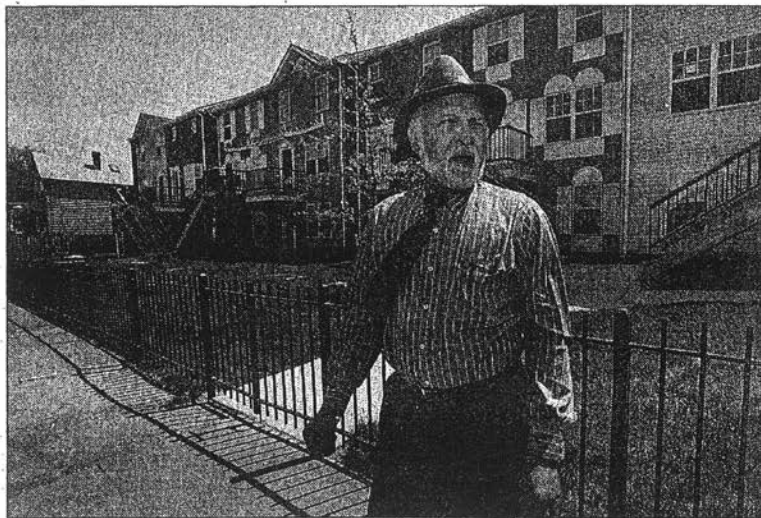
Mr. Smith, 71, who died June 15 at Howard University Hospital of injuries suffered in a fall, lived to see his community descend into a crime-ridden void that developers feared to invest in and city agencies seemed to neglect. During the drug epidemic of the 1980s, his car

was stolen from in front of his home.

Vowing to change the business of daily life in his part of the city, the former District government planner turned his retirement into a second career. As the longtime head of the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization, he became one of Washington's most effective advocates for changing the fortunes of a dying city.

Mr. Smith, eloquent and often impassioned, was one of the city's more persistent public citizens. He said he felt he could accomplish more outside of city government than within and devoted the last 25 years to that proposition.

See SMITH, B6, Col. 1



BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

**Lloyd D. Smith stands in front of new townhouses that were built with assistance from the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization in 1995.**

# OBITUARIES

## Lloyd Smith; Tireless Advocate for Northeast

SMITH, From B1

He advocated for better police and social services and for the development of economic stabilizers—shops, supermarkets, restaurants and a blend of residential income levels—to make his mission easier. It seldom was.

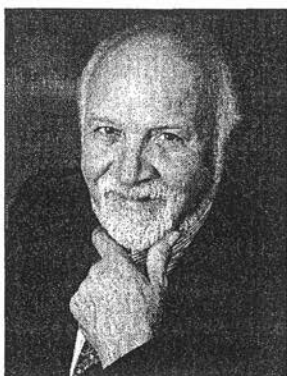
Long involved in community service groups and PTAs, he began his major thrust to tackle the roots of community despair upon his retirement from the city government in 1980.

For the next 18 years, he led the new Marshall Heights organization and oversaw its growth from a staff of four to 64 and a budget that grew from \$115,000 to more than \$5 million.

The group built more than 100 single-family houses and renovated more than 500 apartment units. It also partnered with the city and Freddie Mac, the mortgage financier, to start a program at J.C. Nalle Elementary School that offered adult education classes and a general equivalency diploma program.

In 1990, he won a highly competitive, multimillion-dollar grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and created drug prevention programs in schools. The neighborhood had been ravaged by drug dealers and addicts.

"We are not going to be victims," he said at the time. "We are not going to be prisoners in our own homes in our own neighborhoods. We are trying to shine a light into the darkness, rather than cursing the darkness."



FAMILY PHOTO

**Lloyd D. Smith led the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization for 18 years.**

A triumph for the Marshall Heights group was the revitalization of the East River Park Shopping Center, at Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road NE, in the early 1980s. It was all but defunct, its occupants having left for the suburbs.

Mr. Smith, describing one of his boldest moves, said the organization leveraged \$25,000 in venture capital to buy the \$3 million shopping center. "I took a chance," he recently told Marketwise, a community development magazine. "I had to basically commit my personal assets as 1 percent partner to make the deal work."

There was a grand opening in 1985 as a slew of new businesses sprouted in the shopping center, including a furniture store, a depart-



BY CAROL GUZY—THE WASHINGTON POST

**"We are trying to shine a light into the darkness, rather than cursing the darkness," Smith said of the fight to reclaim neighborhoods in Northeast.**

ment store, a deli and an auto supply company. In 1988, Safeway opened what was then its largest grocery store in the District.

Mr. Smith received praise from national organizations and from politicians who like to associate themselves with success stories. But to Mr. Smith, it all remained so simple: the comfort of shopping in one's own neighborhood and the dignity of economic hope that the new stores might bring to the area.

For years, he said, "we had to beg someone to invest in this area. Now it's a question of, 'What else do you have available?' And for the residents, they like what we're doing. It's bringing some level of comfort amid all the other doom and

gloom that might be around."

Lloyd David Smith, the son of federal government employees, was born in Chicago and moved to Washington as a child.

He was a graduate of Armstrong High School, where he ran cross-country and track and was a drill sergeant in a cadet corps. He was an Army veteran of the Korean War, where he served in a transportation truck company.

He later became a mail carrier for the old Post Office Department and did mailroom work at Marine Corps headquarters.

He joined the District government in 1968 and retired in 1980 as deputy director for community services in the office of planning and

development. He simultaneously was community liaison officer for the assistant city commissioner for budget and resources development.

Leaving the Marshall Heights organization in 1998, he became the founding chairman of City First Bank of D.C., formed to help businesses and individuals invest in poor neighborhoods.

He served briefly as board chairman of National Capital Revitalization Corp., the city's economic development arm, and was outspoken about moving businesses, even entire schools, to what he called the "wasteland" along parts of the Anacostia River.

In 1999, he favored the controversial proposal by Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) to move the University of the District of Columbia from the Van Ness neighborhood in Northwest to a vacant spot in Southeast. The plan soon was withdrawn by the mayor, but to Mr. Smith the idea symbolized the radical change he favored.

"You've been to Boston? You've been to Harvard? You've been to Harvard on the Charles?" Mr. Smith said. "This is UDC on the Anacostia. . . . This property's doing nothing. It's a wasteland. This is a campus."

Mr. Smith had little patience for delay, which his family said might have led to his death. On May 6, he was determined to cut a tree limb in his daughter's yard. He fell from the ladder and later died of his injuries.

His marriage to Esther Snead Smith ended in divorce.