



The Urbana Free Library

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**Society for the Urban Residential Environment (SURE)
Records, 1975-1990**

Collection 78

Champaign County Historical Archives

Compiled by: Bronwyn Schell, Fall 2016

Creator/Corporate name: Society for the Urban Residential Environment (SURE)

Inclusive Dates: 1975-1990, (bulk 1975, 1985)

Physical Description: 1 box, (0.5 linear feet)

Provenance:

The Society for the Urban Residential Environment (SURE) collection was donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in 1994.

Access:

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

Historical Note:

The Society for the Urban Residential Environment (SURE) was founded in October 1975 by a group of citizens concerned with growth and development in Urbana, IL. The Society was founded and principally organized by James P. Neal. The group held monthly meetings from 1975 until its dissolution in 1986. They regularly held petitions and letter-writing campaigns to show citizen opinion on proposed public works projects relating to roadwork and urban planning. SURE's officers and board of directors was primarily composed of faculty and retired faculty from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Their largest success was the opposition to the proposal to widen Springfield Ave in Champaign to five lanes for its entire length, put forth in 1985. SURE countered that it would better serve the community if the widening only took place further outside of the residential areas, so traffic would not be congested but the neighborhood would retain its shape. The letter-writing campaign, petitions, and letters to the editor at the *News-Gazette* represent the largest public outcry for any of SURE's projects, and the project was amended accordingly. After this, several members of the Urbana City Council and the Mayor, at the time, subscribed to SURE's newsletter.

Around 1986, Neal chose to move his family to Florida. Attempts were made to pass the leadership of the Society onto its Board and Officers. However, Neal's vision and understanding of the minutiae of urban planning were crucial to the organization and despite attempts by the remaining members, the Society dissolved in 1987. The remaining members saw that the funds and active projects from the Society were distributed to other community organizations. James P. Neal died in 1990 (his obituaries are included in the collection, and SURE is mentioned prominently).



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Scope and Content Note:

This collection was likely compiled and donated primarily from the personal files of two SURE officers, Jeanne-Marie Wyld and Leonard Coburn. Many of the address labels and marginalia are written by Wyld and Coburn. Wyld was the likely compiler, as Coburn's copies were added to files out of order.

The collection includes a generous sampling of materials from SURE's active period (1975-1986), but it is clear from the content that none of the materials represent a complete set. The meeting minutes do not have uniform structure, and frequently make reference to materials from meetings that do not have minute records in the collection. Similarly, the newsletters, flyers, and petitions contain information primarily from the initial founding of the Society (especially materials produced by the founding meeting in November 1975), but very little from the projects that followed over the next decade. The material present shows the Society's functional structure, mission, action items, member lists, and extensive information about their opposition to the Springfield Ave widening proposal.

Related Collections: See also the *SURE Newsletter* and *SURE News* in the Champaign County Historical Archives Local Organization Newsletters Series.

Arrangement:

The collection is divided into two series, Administrative Records, and Publications and Community Papers. The contents are arranged chronologically inside each folder.

Subjects Terms:

Cities and towns – Planning
City planning – Law and legislation
Community development – Societies, etc.
Land use, Urban – Planning
Springfield Ave (Champaign)
Springfield Ave (Urbana)
Urban Design
Urban renewal – Societies, etc.

Names:

Coburn, Leonard
Dodd, Robert W.
Neal, James P. (1908-1990)
Society for the Urban Residential Environment
Wyld, Jeanne-Marie

Container List:

Box 1

Series 1: Administrative Records

Folder 1: SURE By-Laws and Nonprofit Articles, 1975, 1984



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Folder 2: Meeting Minutes, 1975, 1979, 1981-1985

Folder 3: Membership and Contributor Lists, 1976-1984

Series 2: Publications and Community Papers

Folder 4: Newsletters, Flyers, Petitions, 1975-1977, 1983

Folder 5: City and SURE Objectives, Springfield Ave. Expansion, 1985

Folder 6: Newspaper Clippings, Springfield Ave. Expansion, 1985

Folder 7: Correspondence to Urbana City Council, 1985

Folder 8: Closing Materials, 1986-1987

Folder 9: Obituaries of James P. Neal, President, 1990

