

U.S.F.&G. GETS OKAY TO BUY HARBOR LOT

Embry Cites Promise By Firm To Hire, Promote Negroes

By JANE L. KEIDEL

Robert C. Embry, Jr., the city housing commissioner, said yesterday he has approved sale of an Inner Harbor urban renewal site to the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company.

In announcing his decision, Mr. Embry said he was satisfied that U.S.F.&G. has made a "sincere and irrevocable commitment" toward correcting charges of racial discrimination in hiring that had been leveled against it by civil rights leaders.

The Activists, Inc., a bi-racial civil rights organization, had asked last February that the insurance firm be refused exclusive negotiating rights for the renewal lot until it undertook an "active" program to increase the number of its Negro employees.

No Negro Executives

At a public hearing before Mr. Embry last week, the Activists complained that U.S.F.&G. still had no Negro workers above the clerical level.

They asked that the renewal site, at Charles and Lombard streets, not be sold to the insurance firm until it increased the number of its Negro employees to a level comparable to the number of Negro workers in the metropolitan area's labor force, or about 20 per cent.

Mr. Embry said yesterday that Walter J. Jeffery, president of U.S.F.&G., has promised to fulfill the Activists' demand.

Price Is \$200,000

Sale of the Inner Harbor lot to U.S.F.&G. will be presented to the Board of Estimates tomorrow.

The price of the lot, which borders on the Charles Center renewal project, has been set

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at \$900,000 by two independent appraisals, according to Mr. Embry.

The insurance firm has proposed construction of a new 35-story headquarters at a cost of \$10,000,000 and has agreed to develop about 70 per cent of the lot as a public plaza.

Mr. Embry said yesterday that the "extremely low number of Negroes" at U.S.F. & G. in recent years "indicates that U.S.F. & G. has not fully utilized available Negro personnel."

But, he noted, investigations by the city Community Relations Commission and by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development show that the insurance firm is not in violation of either local or Federal equal-employment laws.

About 100 Negroes

Mr. Embry said about 100 of U.S.F. & G.'s approximately 1,200 employees are Negroes. About half of the firm's Negro workers are employed in white-collar jobs at clerical levels, he said.

During the last six months, Mr. Embry added, the number of Negroes at white-collar levels at U.S.F. & G. has "more than doubled."