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Our Common Destiny
by
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APPENDIX B:

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE REQUESTS

In 1974 the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gave Americans the right to obtain and copy any government document. It is the best tool for finding information at the federal level. Many states have a Public Disclosure Act (PDA). Call the city clerk and ask. Remember, American public officials don't have to create documents, answer questions, or explain their actions. What they have to do is respond to requests for their existing documents. Be sure to cite every law you have at the top of every request.

Sample letter:

Dear (Agency Officials),

Please provide the following documents:

1. Local-federal Community Oriented Policing (COPS) grants.
2. My personal information held in local database programs. Please include COMPASS files, Community Development mapping programs, public school records, State Driver's Licensing, Community Block Watch and Neighborhood Associations, Department of Land Use files, and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).
3. Private-public partnership and development contracts.
4. Meeting notes regarding the start-up of local visions.
5. Local Weed & Seed programs and grants.
6. Every database level in the community developer maps.

Public officials have an exact time frame for answering requests. Once they respond to your request, you can call and verify an appointment to visit and review the requested documents. Based on what you copy in these documents, you can request more specific documents that are referred to in the documents you've already obtained. If they refuse to provide any documents you request, you can sue them under your law.

Remember to remain polite and friendly. Receptionists and secretaries can be a great asset in your quest. Expect the run-around. Elected officials do NOT want the public to know about these backroom deals. The old Watergate adage-follow the money-will lead you to hidden deals made between your local government and international developers. There's a lot of money in the development game. The closer you get to unconstitutional agreements, the harder it is to obtain their financial information. When it gets really tough, you're getting close.