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The Renewal of Cities

Many U.S. cities, with the aid of the Federal Government, are engaged in ambitious efforts to renew themselves. It is not certain, however, that the overall gains of these programs have outweighed the losses

by Nathan Glazer

When we speak of the renewal of cities, we mean all the processes whereby cities are maintained or rebuilt: the replacement of old houses by new houses, of older streets by newer streets, the transformation of commercial areas, the relocation of industrial facilities, the rebuilding of public utilities; we refer to rehabilitation as well as demolition and rebuilding; we mean too the laws and administrative and financial mechanisms by which this rebuilding and rehabilitation are accomplished. The only way to discuss such an enormous subject is to consider all the elements of change in a city: its changing economic role, its changing population, decisions to buy or sell, stay or move, rehabilitate or demolish, and the larger market and political forces that affect all this.

Fortunately we can narrow our subject considerably. There exist, in this nation and others, specific public policies designed to plan and control at least some part of these vast processes.

PART OF A RENEWAL AREA in Philadelphia occupies the right side of the aerial photograph on the opposite page. On the left side of the photograph is an old area consisting largely of rundown three-story row houses. The cleared land is being used to put up new row houses, some of which appear at right. Construction has just begun in the block at upper right center. This project, known as the Southwest Temple urban renewal project, has involved the relocation of some 2,000 families and individuals, almost all low-income Negroes. The pattern of new occupancy suggests that the renewed area will house some 1,750 families and individuals, almost all middle-income Negroes. Wide streets bounding the renewal area are Broad Street (left), Columbia Avenue (top) and Girard Avenue (bottom).

In the U.S. such policies are expressed in the urban renewal program administered by the Urban Renewal Administration (a part of the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency), which guides hundreds of local city agencies in the effort to transform urban renewal from a process dominated by the requirements and opportunities of the market to one guided by social intelligence—reflection on how the process might best create a better city.

The specific program that is the focus of this article began with the passage of the Housing Act of 1949 and has been expanded and modified continually since then. Before that time, of course, there were many mechanisms by which cities and states and the Federal Government attempted to affect the rebuilding of cities. The most significant Federal predecessor of urban renewal was public housing, that is, slum clearance and the building of subsidized Government housing for the poor. There remains a good deal of confusion between public housing and urban renewal. Indeed, the agency that is responsible for New York City's huge program of urban renewal, the largest in the nation, was until a few years ago called the Slum Clearance Commission. A similar agency in Chicago was called the Land Clearance Commission. And under the original Housing Act the effort to guide urban renewal was administered by a Division of Slums and Urban Redevelopment. All these agencies now have different names that foretell the sparkling new structures that will go on cleared land rather than the grimy ones that are to be cleared. Therein lies one of the great dilemmas of our approach to urban renewal: the fact that our program provides great powers and resources for clearing the way to get new

areas built but few resources for dealing with the people who live in the older areas that are to be cleared.

Federally supported public housing was only one of the ways in which government had tried to deal with urban problems before the development of a comprehensive renewal program. There were also Federally sponsored mortgage-insurance programs that helped to make possible the widespread construction of private, single-family houses in the suburbs of U.S. cities after World War II. In addition there were numerous efforts on the part of cities to control development and redevelopment with zoning regulations, health and building regulations concerning housing, and the establishment of local planning agencies. The urban renewal program made use of these local powers of planning and zoning, Federal credit mechanisms and the existing power to clear slums and build public housing; it added to these older approaches a powerful legal mechanism and a powerful financial mechanism, both designed to win the cooperation of private developers in the pursuit of public goals. The legal mechanism stipulated that a local renewal agency was empowered to condemn private property not only for public uses (which had long been permitted) and publicly owned housing but also for resale to private developers who agreed to fulfill the plan for the area that the local agency had drawn up. The financial mechanism, known as a write-down, committed the Federal Government to paying from two-thirds to three-quarters of the difference between, on the one hand, the cost of buying the land, clearing it and preparing it for the new development and, on the other, the price that private re-

developers would pay for it. The designers of the urban renewal legislation were proposing a compromise: public intelligence was to guide the rebuilding of cities, but the rebuilding would be carried out in such a way as to ensure significant private profits and ultimate private ownership of land the public had spent a great deal of money and effort to acquire.

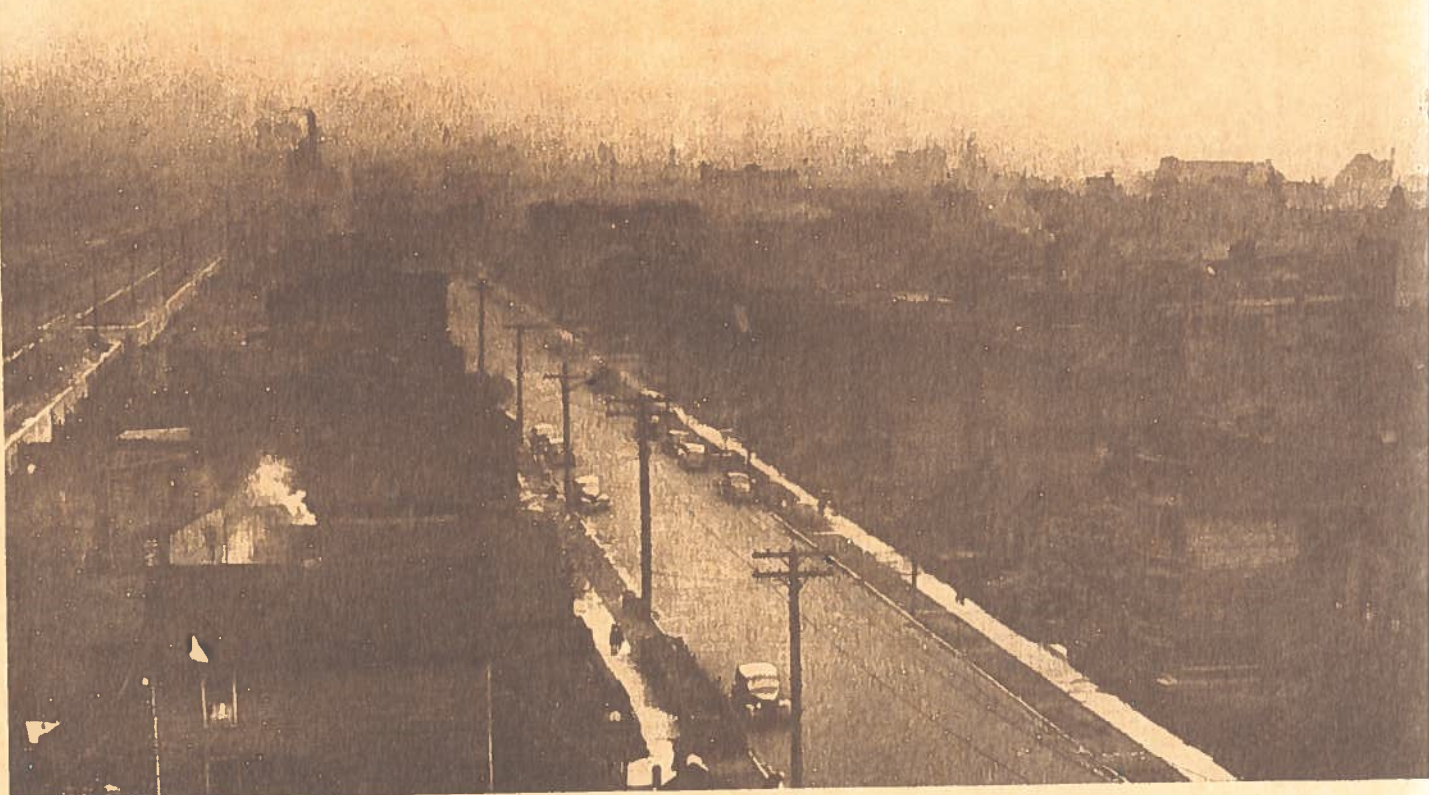
The power of condemnation assured private developers that they could acquire large tracts. These were sought because they prevent the remaining slums from pressing too close on the renewed area, diminishing its desirability, value and profit for the owner. One social critic, Jane Jacobs, has dramatically questioned the need for such large tracts in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Most modern planners, however, tend to endorse the developers' demand for large areas, citing the need for more parking and park space. As for the financial write-down, private developers sought it because the price of central-city slum areas was high, even if one took away from the property owners the right to raise their prices excessively. The slums were densely occupied and lucrative for the landlords, favorably located and well served by public

transportation and city facilities. In certain areas the financial power to write down the cost of land became far more important than the power to condemn. In Manhattan, for example, the redevelopment of urban renewal property has cost the public \$1 million an acre—the difference between what was paid the owners of the land in order to clear it and what the developers paid to have the opportunity to redevelop it. In other areas developers were quite willing to pay the condemnation cost of the land, and it was the power to condemn and assemble that made redevelopment possible.

We have described the mechanisms of urban renewal; what were the objectives of the program? These can be ascertained if we examine the disparate elements in the alliance that forged it. There were first of all people committed to public planning and public housing. In 1949 these were the men and women who had participated in the great experiments of the New Deal, in which a modicum of European social imagination and concern in the area of housing had been introduced into the U.S. They saw urban renewal—even if they had qualms about the compromise

embodied in the legislation—as a means of extending the power of the people to affect through politics the growth of their cities and the quality of their housing and environment, thus reducing the power of the market to shape this for them. Tied to the original urban renewal legislation was provision for a good deal of public housing that would foreseeably accommodate those who had to be relocated from the demolished slums. It was unpleasant from the point of view of the reformers to have to pay the owners of slum property so much money for the privilege of replanning and rebuilding the areas, but the alternatives had been vetoed. One such alternative, put forward by Charles Abrams and Catherine Bauer Wurster, called for building more public housing on open and cheap land on the outskirts of a city and allowing the price of central slum properties to fall as they emptied. Such a solution was opposed by the big-city mayors and the commercial and financial interests dependent on maintaining business and property values in the centers of the big cities—in particular, department store owners and banks with mortgages on central-city property.

Urban renewal was created by an



CHICAGO SLUM was photographed in 1944 from a building on Federal Street. In the 1950's this neighborhood was demolished

and rebuilt under the auspices of the U.S. Urban Renewal Authority, the Chicago Housing Authority and several other agencies.

alliance of those seeking reform and those seeking profit. The planners and advocates of public housing were trying to improve the environment of slum dwellers and the overall pattern of the city in terms of amenity and efficiency. The commercial and financial interests were trying to maintain the level of business and property values in downtown areas, jeopardized somewhat by an increasingly poor (and, incidentally, nonwhite) central-city populace. Both groups wanted to stem the rapid flow of the more prosperous citizens to the suburbs and hoped this could be done by remodeling the cities physically. The mayors, confronted with the increasing costs of urban government and threatened by the decline of property values and tax revenues, shared this hope. They saw in urban renewal the solution to the economic decline of central-city areas and an opportunity to build monuments and generally beautify the cities.

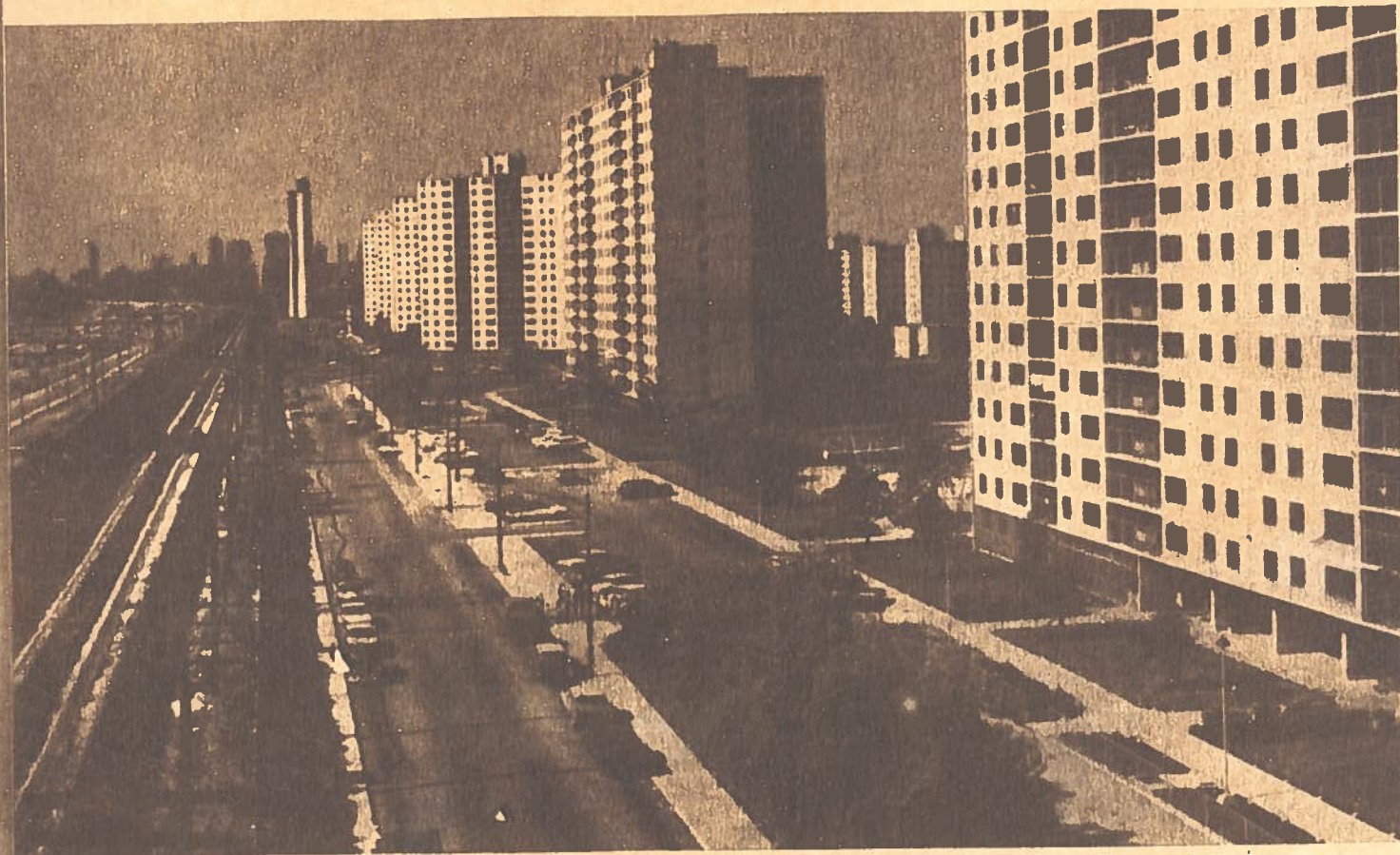
The alliance is no longer intact. The downtown commercial interests still support the program. The mayors still support it, seeing no alternative. The planners are split. Those who emphasize the social aims of planning, the problems of the poor and the slum dwellers, oppose the program on the

grounds that it has done little for the poor and nothing to reverse the pattern of increased urban segregation. These planners are torn between their commitment to the ideal of the people shaping their own environment and their dismay at the actual environment that, under political and economic pressure, has been shaped. Most planners, however, support urban renewal; for one thing, the planners of today are not the planners of the 1940's who participated in the New Deal or whose ideas were molded by it. They are now in large part the professionals trained to fill needs created by the urban renewal program itself.

Let us review the present state of the program, taking our information from the report of the Housing and Home Finance Agency for 1964. By the end of that year local renewal agencies had acquired about 27,000 acres of urban land. "Redevelopers had been selected for 16,318 acres"; the rest was being cleared or was unsold. "Redevelopment had been completed or was actually under construction on more than 55 percent of that land," or about one-third of all the land that had been acquired. "By mid-1964, more than 72

percent of all land disposed of, exclusive of streets and alleys, had been purchased by private persons or organizations. More than half was intended for residential purposes. By mid-1964, 61,770 dwelling units of all kinds were completed and 18,300 more were under construction"—some 80,000 in all. The sum of Federal money involved in this effort—the capital grants that would eventually be required to complete this volume of urban renewal—was \$4.3 billion. Midway through 1964 some 176,000 families and 74,000 individuals had been relocated from sites scheduled for urban renewal.

The scale of this undertaking seems different from various perspectives. Bernard Frieden, professor of city planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former editor of the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, estimates that deteriorated housing in New York City in 1960 covered 1,145 acres. The number of units of deteriorated housing recorded by the census of 1960 was 147,000. This suggests that the urban renewal program was of a sufficient order of magnitude to clear away all the slums of New York—if all of the program had been devoted to that city (and if it had been



RENEWED NEIGHBORHOOD was photographed from same perspective in 1965. Federal Street has been rerouted and is now

adjacent to the railroad tracks. The development at center and right consists of eight units housing mostly middle-income families.

used to clear away slums, and if there had been policies to prevent new slums from forming). On the other hand, the 80,000 units of housing built or under construction since the beginning of urban renewal in 1949 is not an impressive total compared with the 7.3 million housing units built between 1960 and 1964, nor does the relocation of some 750,000 people seem highly significant in view of the fact that 40 million people move every year in the U.S.

Obviously one can say that renewal has just begun to scratch the surface of the need; there were, after all, 2.3 million substandard dwellings in our cities in 1960. It is also being said, however, that renewal has already gone too far, or at least too far in the wrong direction. Social critics allege that although the volume of building under the urban renewal program has been slight, its impact on certain parts of the population has been devastating. In some cities the designation for urban renewal of any area, no matter how decrepit the housing, arouses a desperate resistance among the people living there. Indeed, television dramas of daily life sometimes cast the local urban renewal agency in the role once played by the hardhearted banker. This ad-

verse reputation, a powerful comment on urban renewal, seems to arise from the real experience of the poor; it was not created by the social critics who now amplify it. The urban renewal agency does in fact represent a current threat to many: destroying small businessmen, evicting older people from their homes, forcing families from their tenements and then failing to relocate them in decent, safe, sanitary and reasonably priced housing as required by law, threatening buildings of historic or architectural value, and even attacking Bohemians and artists in their contemporary garrets. (These are the most dangerous opponents, because they know how to get publicity.) It is apparent that the urban renewal agency is a more vivid threat to security than the banker in these days of amortized mortgages.

Still, if the scale of urban renewal has been as small as I have indicated in terms of figures for voluntary movement of population, new dwellings built and people directly affected, how is it possible to argue that its effects on the city have been so damaging? Primarily because its impact has been on one segment of the urban population: the poor—those least able, materially or psychologically, to adapt to upheaval. The

people who live in old neighborhoods are, compared with the rest of the U.S. population, poor, old and more likely to be Negroes or members of other minority groups. They are often people with special ties to the neighborhood and special problems that keep them there. For many reasons, of which money is only one, they find it extremely difficult to find other housing in the city. Two-thirds of those relocated from urban renewal sites have been non-whites (the program has sometimes been derisively termed "Negro removal"), whose problem of finding housing is compounded by the fact that few parts of the city will accept them. Many of the businesses on urban renewal sites were small and marginal; indeed, some provided for an aged couple a living no better than what they would get on welfare. Such people were nonetheless kept occupied, and they provided some of the social benefits of an old neighborhood that Jane Jacobs has described: places to leave messages, conversation to break the monotony and anonymity of city living, eyes to watch the street. Some 39,000 business properties had been acquired by urban renewal agencies as of September 30, 1963; studies have shown that a third do not survive relocation. Some of them would have



NEIGHBORHOOD DUE FOR RENEWAL on the upper West Side of Manhattan includes this block on 89th Street between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West. The brownstone houses

were once one-family dwellings but have long since been converted to apartments. A slum by certain criteria, this block provides its residents with housing convenient to familiar institutions, stores

succumbed to the high death rate of small businesses in any case. Many that do relocate successfully move outside the city; thus ironically the city loses the taxes from business that urban renewal is meant to increase.

The urban renewal agency is required to demonstrate that enough housing is available for those whose homes are to be demolished, it is required to help them move and it has Federal resources to pay moving expenses for families and businesses. These requirements were much looser at the beginning of the urban renewal program than they are today, and the resources available were much scantier. Among the first large urban renewal projects in Manhattan were those undertaken by the energetic Robert Moses at a time when New York had a great shortage of housing, particularly low-cost housing. Relocation was unquestionably carried out in a businesslike and ruthless fashion (that is, rapidly on those sites where the developers were eager to move out the people and put up the new buildings, slowly on sites where they preferred to collect rents from the slum dwellers they were supposed to evict). Available aid, in the form of money or advice or social service, was slight. The image

of renewal, as of many things in this country, is largely set by what happens in New York, where most of the writers, publishers and television producers live; urban renewal began with a very poor image. It is uncertain whether enough has been done to correct the practices that created the nightmare one critic calls "the Federal bulldozer."

According to reports sent to Washington from local authorities, the dwellings of 87 percent of the families relocated from urban renewal sites are known and were inspected, and 92 percent of these are decent, safe and sanitary as required by law. These figures have been disputed by Chester Hartman, a city planner who worked on a major study of the impact of urban renewal conducted by the Center for Community Studies in Boston. Hartman argues that local authorities have loose standards in judging the quality of the housing into which people move from urban renewal sites. Thus the local agency reported that less than 2 percent of the families relocated from Boston's West End had moved into structurally substandard housing, whereas the Center for Community Studies placed the figure at 25 percent. Conversely, the local authorities tend to apply strict standards in judging the housing of an area they plan to demolish, because they have to satisfy Washington that the area is a genuine slum. Herbert Gans (in *The Urban Villagers*, a detailed description of the West End as an old, inner-city working-class district) has pointed out that what was a slum to the planners was good housing to those who lived there—housing they preferred to any other in the city, and in a neighborhood that contained the people and places they knew.

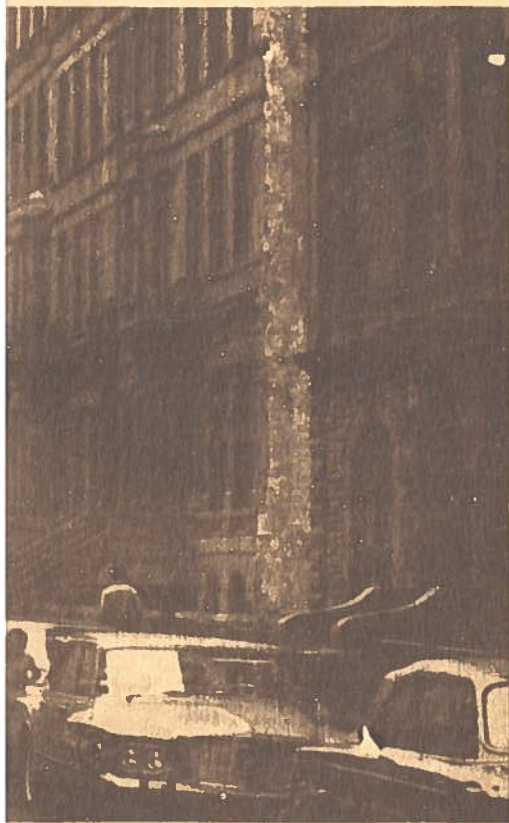
The West End study demonstrated that there was an improvement in the quality of the housing into which most families were relocated and an increase in the proportion of home owners. There was also an increase in rents: the median rent of the West Enders rose from \$41 to \$71 a month, and rent as a proportion of income rose from 14 to 19 percent. Similar studies have been completed in recent years, some of which indicate that before renewal the West End was a real bargain. Although the figures vary from survey to survey, the results of relocation form a pattern: housing is somewhat improved, rents go up, the proportion of rent to income goes up, home ownership increases.

How are we to evaluate such a pattern? There is currently great in-

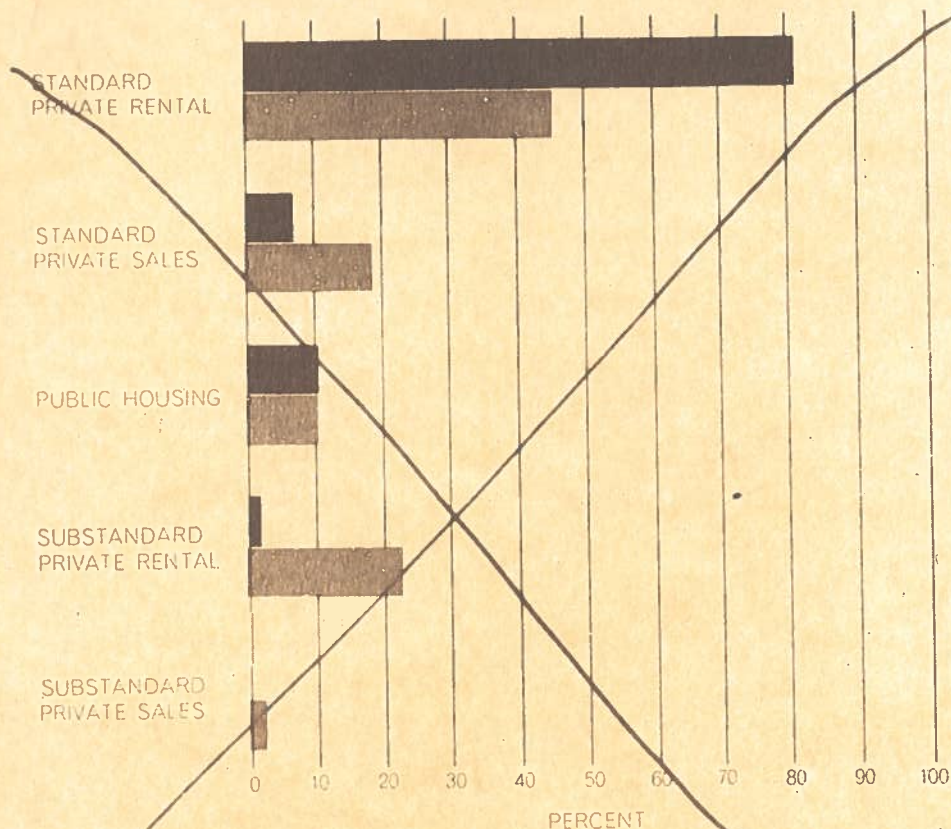
terest among city planners and urban economists in developing a technique for quantitative comparison of costs and benefits, a technique that could in every case give an objective answer to the question: Is this urban renewal project worth it? Attempts at cost-benefit analysis have in the past been crude. For example, planners have compared the costs of police, welfare and other social services of an area to be leveled with the reduced costs after rebuilding, neglecting to take into account the fact that the costs are incurred not by neighborhoods or buildings but by people. The departure of the people does not, of course, reduce the costs; it merely changes the place where the costs are incurred. As Martin Anderson has shown in his critique of urban renewal, *The Federal Bulldozer*, even the simple analysis of tax returns from the property before and after redevelopment is often inadequate, since it may fail to take into account such elements as the loss of taxes during the long period of redevelopment and the possibility that the same new structures might have been built elsewhere in the city without redevelopment.

If the tangible aspects of renewal are difficult to evaluate in the balance sheet of a cost-benefit analysis, how can one assess such intangibles as the cost of relocating an old woman whose only remaining satisfactions in life are taking care of the apartment in which she has lived for many years, going to the church around the corner and exchanging a few words with the neighborhood merchants? Admittedly one can even work in these costs by reckoning the chance that she will require a nursing home when she moves, or some additional city service. Such tabulations may at times seem akin to dissecting a rainbow, but they are being made nonetheless. The major purpose of the West End study has been to determine the impact of relocation on the mental health of the participants. Reports by Marc Fried of the Harvard Medical School indicate that serious reactions of grief have exceeded, in depth and duration, most expectations.

Even if we can find a way of quantifying the intangible aspects of relocation, how are we to take them into account in making social policy? The decisions to renew or not to renew must be made by local governments responsive to the pressures of the different parts of the community. If the political costs of a certain course of action are great, they will certainly outweigh the results of any subtle analysis of psy-



and friends. Renewal plans call for moving the present tenants and selling the houses to people who can afford to renovate them.



SATISFACTORY RELOCATION was the subject of contradictory reports made by the Center for Community Studies in Boston (colored bar in each grouping) and the local urban renewal agency (black bar). Bars give percentage of families who found housing in each category. The discrepancies suggest different standards of the two agencies.

chological, social and economic costs or benefits. Experience so far shows that almost invariably the despair in areas slated for demolition is not channeled into meaningful political opposition; it is outweighed by the arguments for renewal presented by planners to the city fathers and the prejudice among middle-class citizens against allowing what they consider slums to remain standing near them. The proponents of renewal have not, however, been oblivious to its reputation among the poor; with each subsequent housing act they have expanded the resources for relocating families and have heightened the obligation of local authorities to do the same. Let us review briefly the resources now available to the local urban renewal agency for dealing with this problem.

Families on sites scheduled for demolition have always had priority in moving into public housing. The amount of public housing built has approximated the amount demolished. In general, however, only half the families on a site are eligible for public housing, and all told only 20 percent of the relocated families have moved into it. Often there is not enough public

housing available at the precise time it is needed. The local public housing authority and the local renewal authority are two separate bodies; they deal with two separate agencies in Washington; they operate under separate laws, and although specific public housing projects theoretically could be built in anticipation of an old neighborhood being cleared, this has not often been done. In any case, many of those eligible for public housing will not accept it; this is particularly true of white families, who often refuse to move into projects in which they feel the proportion of Negroes is too high. Negroes and whites alike object to the institutional atmosphere of projects, with their regulations and requirements, and all share the apprehension that public housing attracts a concentration of problem families.

Since 1954 one of the major objectives of urban renewal has been the rehabilitation of old houses—a process that makes relocation unnecessary. Unfortunately rehabilitation, even with Federal loan programs to promote it, has rarely been successful. Renovating a house to meet the standards imposed by the program requires much more money than the occupants can raise; the property is then sold to a new own-

er. The general result is that poor people are moved out of houses that upper-income people can afford to renovate.

The sums available for relocating families and businesses were originally small, and they were provided only when they were needed to expedite development. These sums have been increased sharply and are now given more readily. The 1964 Housing Act for the first time recognizes and authorizes payment (of up to \$500) to families, elderly individuals and small businessmen for the dislocations attendant on moving. It has taken 15 years for this principle, which is taken for granted in other countries, to be recognized by our government. Late but useful aid has also been extended by the Small Business Administration, which was authorized in 1961 to help businessmen reestablish themselves with loans, assistance and information.

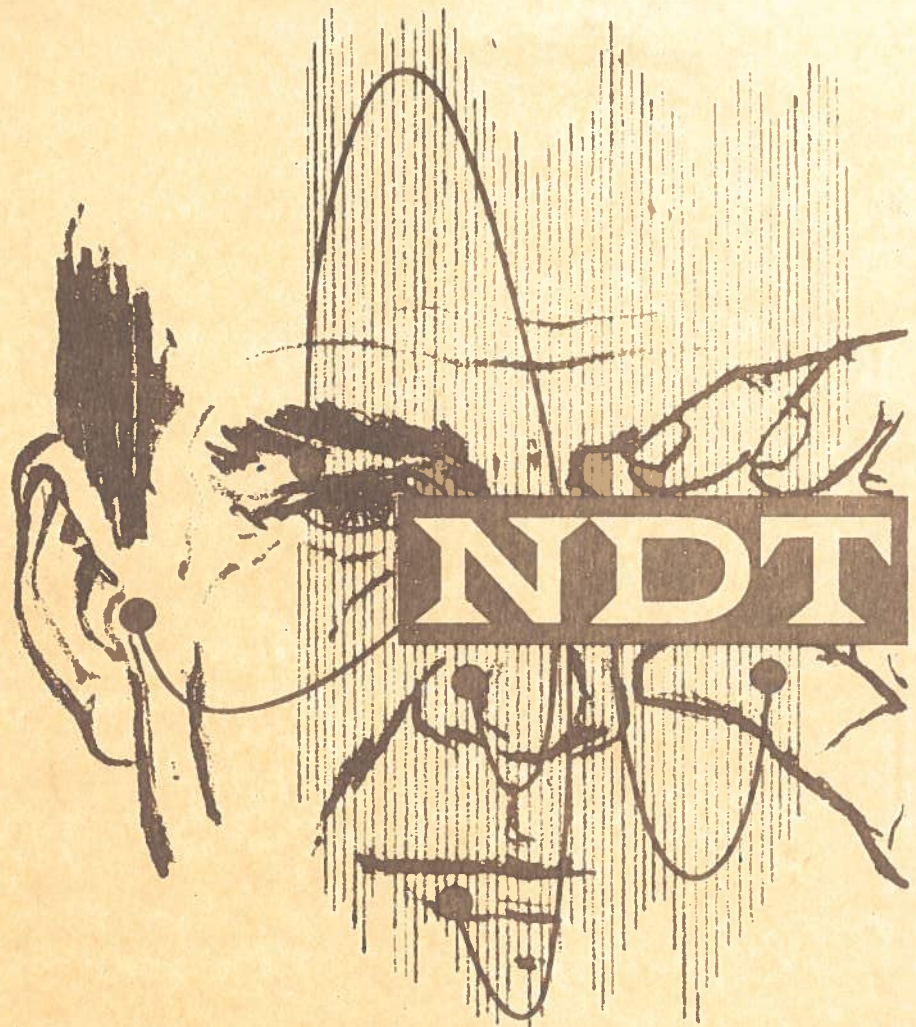
Still other efforts have been made to ease the burdens of relocation. In the early 1950's special loans were designed to provide housing for those from urban renewal sites who were too poor to get regular housing but not poor enough to be eligible for public housing. The most successful type of loan was instituted in 1961; it permits nonprofit sponsors as well as limited-dividend corporations to get mortgages below the going rate to put up cooperative or rental housing for moderate-income families. There has also been a strengthening of Federal regulations requiring detailed reports from local agencies on the availability of housing (in different price ranges and for nonwhites as well as whites), on relocation plans and on current progress. Finally, the explosion of new social welfare programs for the poor provides additional resources. On the West Side of Manhattan, where extensive relocation is under way, a substantial number of social workers are engaged in various programs to help families find housing and settle in a new environment.

Gradually, after 15 years of putting so much energy into getting buildings down and so little into helping people up, we are beginning to develop the kind of program that should have existed from the beginning and that exists in the advanced European welfare state—a program whose emphasis is on providing housing. We are still faced by immense problems of segregation, institutionalism in public housing and human uprooting, but as of 1965 it should be possible for most local urban renewal authorities to carry out an effective relocation plan and even provide some of those benefits from relocation that the

advocates of urban renewal maintain the process makes possible.

The question now becomes: What positive goals are we attempting to attain through renewal? How well does the renewal program make it possible to achieve them? It is not enough to say that we want new buildings instead of old buildings. Urban economists argue that in any event buildings will go up in response to market demands; urban renewal has merely shifted the location of new buildings rather than increased their actual number. Unquestionably renewal has done a good deal to bring investment into downtown areas, but what has the public gained by investing hundreds of millions of dollars for new street layouts, parking, open space and land write-downs for private developers—all for shoring up the center of the city? The answer is usually stated in terms of tradition or economics: The center must remain strong if a metropolitan area is to thrive. It must have good commercial and cultural facilities, and a significant proportion of middle- and upper-income residents. If private, unguided investment insists on going to the outlying suburbs (a tendency encouraged by the automobile, freeways and cheap suburban land), then public investment must redress the balance. Only in this way can the central city retain the middle- and upper-income people whose tax revenues enable it to provide services.

Both aspects of the defense of the central city have been challenged. Scott Greer of Northwestern University and Melvin Webber of the University of California at Berkeley observe that the form of the city is changing in such a way that Los Angeles will be the most likely model of the city of the future. They hold that behind the abandonment of the traditional city form is the fact that free citizens in an affluent society—particularly those with children—prefer to live in detached houses with some land. This seems to be true the world over; it is only where costs make such an arrangement impossible that people settle for apartment houses. To rebuild expensive inner-city land for residential purposes means building apartments, attractive only to such special elements as those without children—the young or the old. Certainly these groups represent an important market, but it does not follow that government should provide them with a subsidy. As for the economic argument—the need to attract the wealthy—it has been attacked as a form of discrimination against the poor. After



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A BELL SYSTEM SUBSIDIARY / ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO / LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA

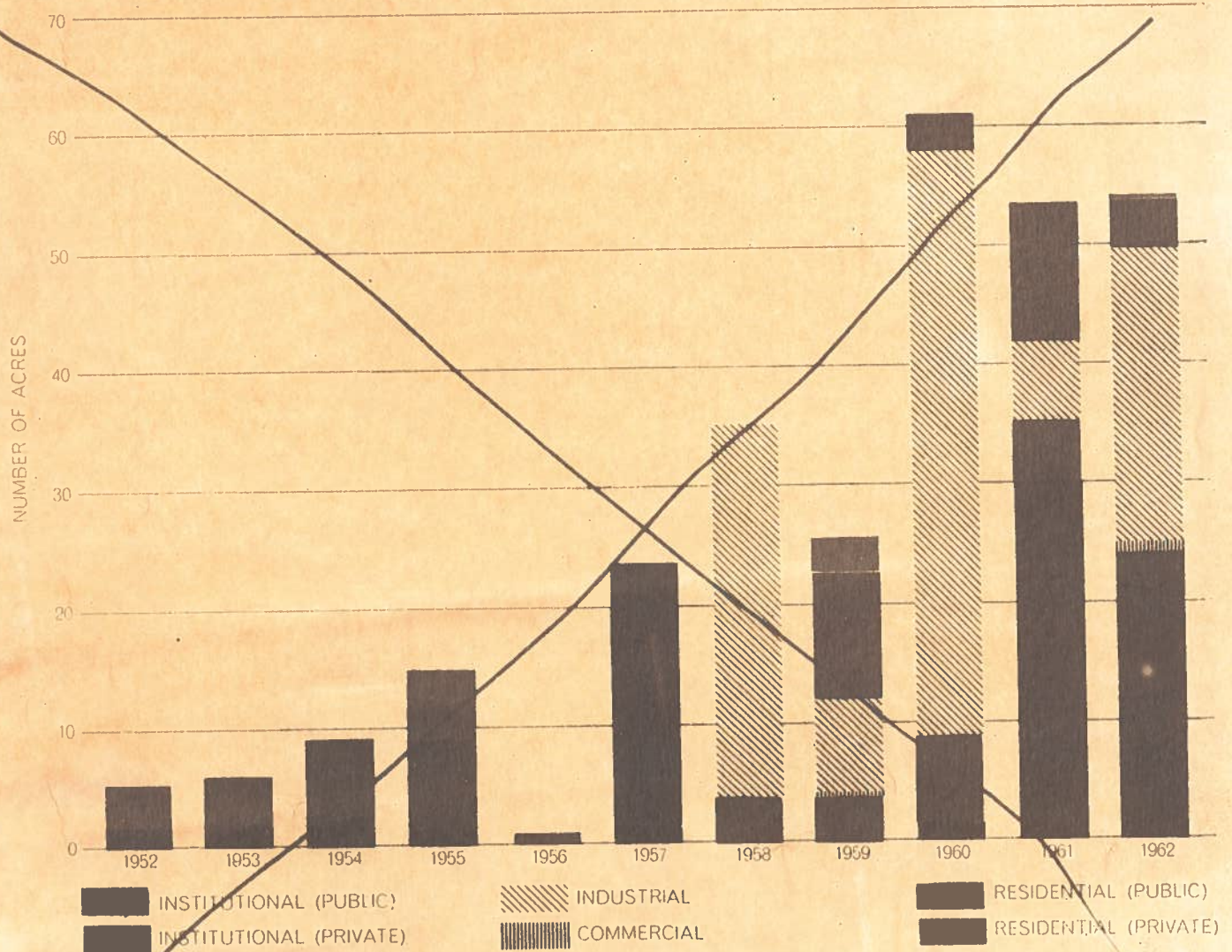
all, the poor have come to the city's center because housing there is cheapest and most convenient for them. They are near their jobs, their friends and, in the case of immigrants, their families or countrymen. If the cities need subsidies to counter the increase in low-income residents, why must the subsidy take the form of urban renewal? Why not redistribute Federal taxes to cities on the basis of need and let the city choose how to spend it? If we do this, a city made up largely of low-income people need not be a disaster.

A more basic challenge can be made to the argument that we need inner-city renewal to save the traditional centers. Why must we accept the present boundaries of cities as being permanent? These boundaries have been set by a variety of political accidents; as a result where one city (Boston, for example) may be a small part of a metropolitan area, another (Dallas) may embrace almost an entire metropolitan region. If the boundaries of each city could be

redrawn to include most of the metropolitan area, the wealthy, who had abandoned the center for the outskirts, would again pay taxes to the city and the need for public investment in the center would be reduced. There are still other reasons why there should be some form of metropolitan government. Many problems in the provision of services could be solved more easily and effectively if they were examined from a metropolitan point of view rather than from the point of view of separate political entities within the metropolitan area [see "New York: A Metropolitan Region," by Benjamin Chinitz, page 134]. This is preeminently true of transportation, water supply, open space for recreation and air pollution. It seems inordinately difficult to reorganize metropolitan governments in this country rationally; we can only envy the relative ease with which the government of London has been reorganized by an act of Parliament. The U.S. Government encourages metropolitan planning, but it

can do little to create metropolitan governments to supplant the disparate governments within a metropolitan region.

One of the real virtues of urban renewal is that it has induced local communities to consider their needs and plan to meet them. In 1954 the Federal Government required that each city entering into an urban renewal program develop all the major operations of city government necessary to guide the rebuilding of the city and to submit a "workable program"—proper building codes and zoning ordinances, a comprehensive city plan, an administrative organization that could fulfill it, proof of interested citizens and the like. By 1959 the U.S. had instituted the Community Renewal Program, which provides substantial sums of money to cities to project their future development needs and policies. This program has supported much sophisticated work involving simulation on computers of future urban development under alter-



DISPOSITION OF LAND by the urban renewal agency in Philadelphia from 1952 to 1962 is charted. Bars give acreage devoted to

types of reuse listed in key at bottom. A change in emphasis is implied by rise of developments for purposes other than housing.

native policies. Unfortunately too much of the current research and projection, no matter how imaginative, is oriented to the wrong scale: the city rather than the metropolitan area. Moreover, the major tool of the urban renewal program remains the specific project. It is still hoped that a better city can be achieved by supporting, by means of advantageous condemnation and land write-downs, specific projects based on the capacity to attract specific investment. This gives urban renewal an inherently spotty character.

Suppose it is—as I believe—essential that cities radically improve their function in inspecting buildings, requiring repairs and supporting them where necessary. Suppose a major way to improve a city is to root out substandard buildings wherever they are rather than demolish a huge area that is decrepit in spots. What Federal aid would be available for that? Much less than is available for the specific-project approach. Let me give an example.

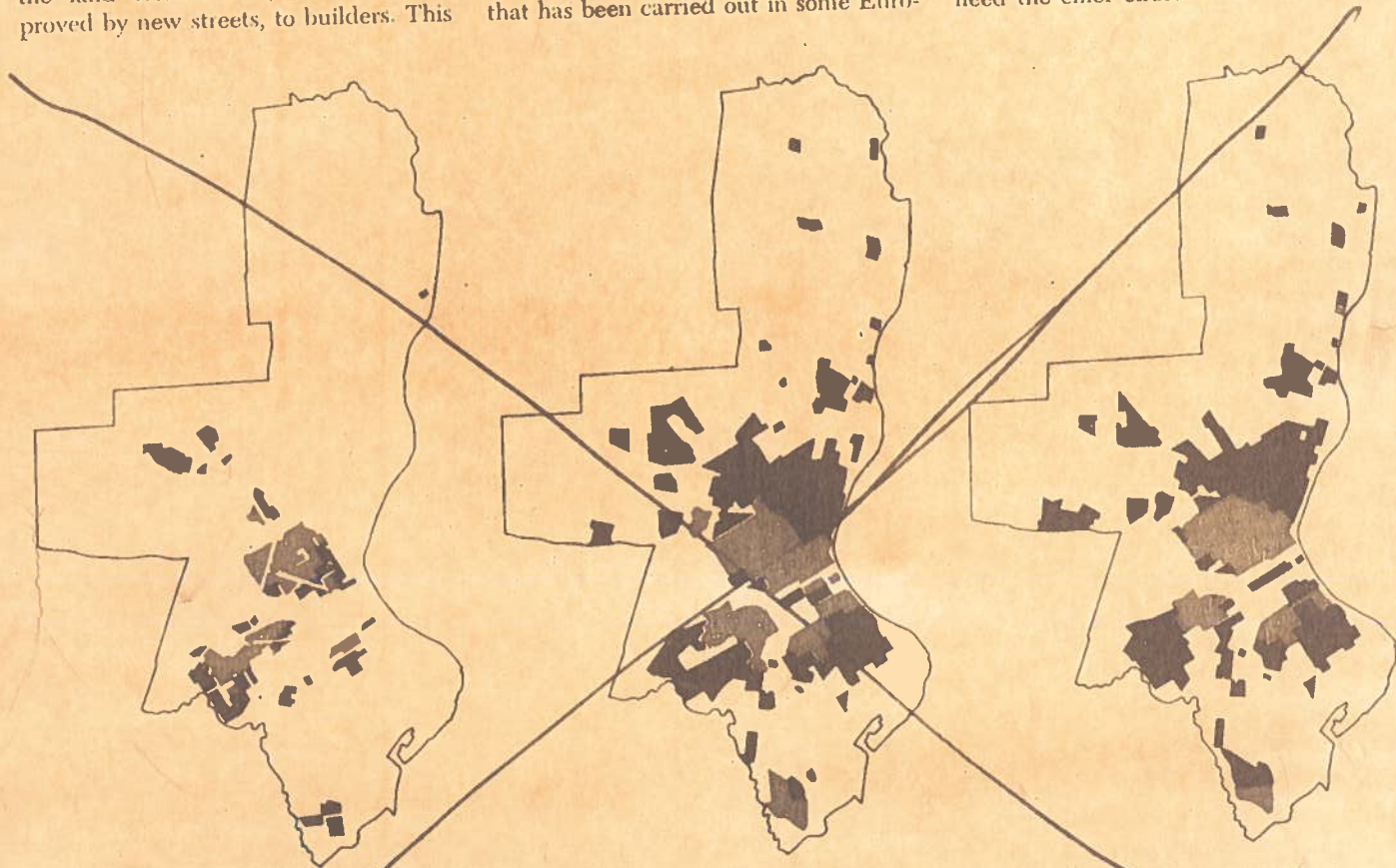
A proposed project in San Francisco was going to cost \$40 million. For this amount some 15,000 people would be relocated, their homes demolished and the land turned over, somewhat improved by new streets, to builders. This

is an enormous expense for a city the size of San Francisco, the total annual budget of which is only about \$350 million. The money, however, was to come from the Federal Government and from the point of view of the city the undertaking was free. This would not be the case if San Francisco chose an alternative project, such as a major program of code enforcement, demolition of substandard housing or loans for rehabilitation. Urban renewal law and practice indicate that only a small fraction of \$40 million would be extended for such efforts.

All the criticisms of urban renewal point to the fact that, whereas the program speaks of the whole city and all the ways in which it must be improved, provisions are made to influence only one aspect of the city—the physical nature of a given locale. The program as constituted and as practiced makes too little use of the traditional agencies of city government that must be depended on to improve cities. It also relates poorly to other large programs and expenditures in the city, such as the freeway program. When we consider the imaginative urban renewal that has been carried out in some Euro-

pean and Japanese cities by closely linking transportation arteries, housing, commercial and office facilities, we wonder why our projects are so often massive concentrations of a single function: all housing here, all concert halls there, all shopping there—and all poorly linked by transportation. This is the logical result, I would argue, of the fact that our urban renewal authority in Washington and the local agencies are oriented toward single missions—and the mission in every case is the individual project rather than the whole city.

After some 16 years of urban renewal we are still struggling with the problem of slums and still trying to formulate some alternative to the naive image of the city beautiful in its middle-class version, an image that has increasingly lost its power to move people and solve problems. Under the pressure of a number of gifted critics, urban renewal has become an instrument that any city can use to develop policies well suited to its needs, and to carry out some of them. It is by no means a perfect instrument, but the source of its failings generally seems to be in the politics, the imagination and the structure of local government. It is there, I think, that we now need the chief efforts of our critics.



IMPACT OF RENEWAL ON NEGROES AND POOR is suggested by three maps of Philadelphia. Maps at left and center are based on 1960 census data. Map at left shows tracts where nonwhite population exceeded 80 percent (color) and tracts where it was 50 to 80 percent (gray). Map in center shows tracts where average family

income was less than \$4,720 annually (color) and where it fell between \$4,720 and \$6,000 (gray). Map at right shows zones scheduled for renewal by reconstruction (color) or renovation (gray). Dislocation of Negroes and the poor has been minimized in Philadelphia, but the problem is a continuing one in national program.