

*Urban renewal.*—During the past biennium, NAHRO has worked hard to clarify the urban renewal process. Out of this experience has come the conviction that "urban renewal" must be redefined to include all community improvement activities. NAHRO foresees that what is now labeled "renewal" will eventually become the overall urban development process.

The problems of the past must be understood in order to reach a new program definition. NAHRO sees these major problems:

The fact that the program has been too narrowly defined in the minds of many key agencies and leaders and in the minds of the general public. It has been seen largely as a housing operation, whereas the intent of the program is the clearance or rehabilitation of urban slums and blight and the use of land to its best advantage under a general plan for the city. NAHRO supports a balanced program that recognizes the importance of aids for central business district renewal, industrial area development, and institutional expansion.

The fact that renewal accomplishments have been too narrowly measured. The test of success has too often been the extent to which the local tax base has been increased as a result of individual renewal projects. NAHRO contends that, while increasing a locality's tax revenue can be counted as a major advantage of renewal, it should not be the sole measure of success. The elimination of overcrowding, the changing of incompatible land uses, the provision of public works—they all bring improved city living and should also be used to measure success. Furthermore, in instances where projects do return added revenues, NAHRO opposes any attempts to recapture Federal grants from such tax increments, in view of the limited financial resources of cities.

The fact that renewal has been unfairly labeled as a disruptive force through displacement of families and small businesses. NAHRO points out that urban renewal is the first federally aided program in the history of the Nation to carry a requirement for assisting all those residents and businesses displaced by public action. While urban renewal has been assisting its displacees, other federally supported programs (highways, public housing, public works) have been free to let their displacees fend for themselves. Although urban renewal continues to develop effective techniques for assisting in relocation, it must be recognized that the success of any one effort may not be recognizable if other public and private displacements do not achieve comparable results. NAHRO has long supported (and, in large measure has seen achieved) a broadening of relocation aids under other public programs. It supports uniform relocation aids for all public displacement and also supports improved programming of relocation housing and a strengthening of relocation assistance to families with severe social and economic problems.

The fact that some renewal critics charge that rehabilitation can substitute for clearance. NAHRO considers conservation of neighborhoods a basic goal of urban renewal and urges cities to devote greater attention to this aspect of their programs. Nevertheless, it is self evident that structures beyond repair or in poor locations demand clearance—often on an area basis—to restore land to its proper use within the community. Clearance and rehabilitation work together to correct neighborhood defects and restore structures to sound condition.

The fact that urban renewal is often too narrowly administered on the local level. NAHRO urges local administrators to make use of all the techniques at their disposal, including the full range of aids offered in the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965.

The fact that urban renewal—with its concern for citizen participation and relocation—takes time to achieve its goals requires that localities (a) devise "first aid" treatment for deteriorating or deteriorated areas, (b) make ingenious uses of land acquired early in the renewal process, (c) develop new methods of land use control, and (d) find a way to protect the interests of property owners before public action commences.

In the biennium ahead, NAHRO recommends a bold new approach to urban renewal. In formulating this new approach, NAHRO will recognize that (a) cities must be given an option to work in "total improvement areas" that include all portions of the city in which community improvement activities are contemplated; (b) Federal planning funds must be provided to keep program objectives up to date and to support local administration on a continuing annual budget; (c) Federal reservations of capital grants must be provided on a budget