

Chapter IV

RELOCATION AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The metropolitan areas of the United States are being transformed not only by rapid social change but by vast programs of physical development as well. Unlike earlier periods of city building when the role of government was limited mainly to regulation of private undertakings, the process of urban development today involves major governmental commitments. Cities, States, and the Federal Government have embarked on programs of highway construction, urban renewal, public housing, park development, and the provision of public buildings. Much of this construction activity takes place in heavily populated cities and suburbs where new facilities are needed. As a result, thousands of people and businesses are forced to move every year because of governmental acquisition of property as well as Government enforcement of housing and building codes. All indications are that this pace of displacement will accelerate with increased urbanization and the consequent mounting demands for urban services, and with the growth of Federal, State, and local programs for the renewal of cities. It has been estimated, for example, that between 1964 and 1972 the federally aided urban renewal and highway programs alone will uproot 825,000 families and individuals and 136,000 business and non-profit organizations.¹

As the magnitude of displacement has increased in recent years, there has been growing concern over the impact on those forced to move—concern over whether these “displacees” are being forced to bear a disproportionate share of the cost of public works programs that need the land they occupy. There is special concern for the poor and the elderly and for small businesses. These individuals and businesses seem most often to be in the way of property-taking programs and are least capable of coping with the adjustments of a forced move.

President Johnson, in his 1964 housing message to the Congress, commented on the human costs of relocation in specific reference to urban renewal:

Despite existing programs assisting families and persons displaced by urban renewal projects, the human cost of relocation remains a serious and difficult problem.

The vast majority of those displaced by urban renewal and public housing have relocated in better and standard housing, but some have not. For most, the cost of improved housing has been an unsought burden. For some, the inconvenience of displacement has meant only another slum dwelling and the likelihood of repeating this experience.

¹ U.S. Congress, House, *Study of Compensation and Assistance for Persons Affected by Real Property Acquisition in Federal and Federally Assisted Programs*, printed for use of the Committee on Public Works, 88th Cong., 2d sess., 1964, p. 258.