

EVALUATING URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Title IV of the bill requires the President to establish rules and regulations to be applied in formulating, evaluating, and reviewing urban development programs. Such rules and regulations are to incorporate eight specific objectives including appropriate land use, conservation of natural resources, balanced transportation systems, and concern for high standards of design.

We strongly endorse this section of the legislation. It is most important that federally assisted urban development be formulated and administered in accordance with guidelines that relate to the overall goal of developing sound, healthy urban communities. Such a broad concern for community values is highly commendable.

While the language of the bill is excellent, we wonder if a citizen can do anything about a transportation system that is not balanced, a highway that destroys a unique historical area, or a public housing project that is poorly designed.

In our opinion clear, national urban and environmental goals must be developed. Without such goals, all value and judgment phrases are not as meaningful as they might be because there is no standard to measure accomplishment. Furthermore, it is one thing to consider developing a balanced transportation system and quite another to require it. As contemporary events indicate, wishful thinking about economic, social, and cultural development does not solve the problems of the poor or homeless. We advocate that the objectives stated in title IV be mandatory requirements. This type of commitment and resolve is necessary for sound urban development.

In 1949 Congress established the national housing goal of a decent home and suitable living environment for every American. With nearly 20 years of experience with Federal programs ostensibly designed to fulfill that goal it is possible to measure national performance and to take corrective action.

Many other areas—such as land use, open space in congested urban areas, urban development, to mention only a few—require similar explicit statements of national purpose. We do not suggest that this legislation be amended to state such goals. But we do believe that intergovernmental cooperation will be more meaningful if all levels of government were working together to accomplish specific objectives. Hopefully, the rules and regulations promulgated by the President will be a step in this direction, and will provide the basis for further congressional inquiry.

FEDERAL URBAN LAND USE

Title VIII is designed to provide harmonious intergovernmental relations by requiring Federal land transactions in urban areas to be consistent with local planning, zoning and land use procedures. We believe that if this title is enacted it will, indeed, foster good relations between Federal and State or local governments.

But we also believe the acquisition, use and disposal of Federal land could serve another important purpose; namely, to promote sound planning, zoning, and land use policy. It should be the obligation of the Federal Government to make such transactions in accordance with the planning and land use objectives of local government only when