

**The original documents are located in Box D16, folder “Grand Valley Chapter, American Association of Architects, October 2, 1963” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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10-2-63  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Ann. *James H. Bushnell*

URBAN RENEWAL

\$2 - Airports \$2.8 - Urban Renewal  
\$5 - Hospital - Water Pollution  
\$50 - Highways

1. One of the strenghts of the Urban Renewal program is that it is a LOCAL program ~~--- locally~~ locally conceived, planned and executed. It is a concerted effort by a COMMUNITY to improve a local situation. In truth, the federal government assists, but the Urban Renewal projects are planned and carried out by a local public agency.

- 2. (for statistics on projects and costs, see attached chart)
- 3. The program is gaining momentum and during the past two years the Urban Renewal Administration has approved 432 projects equal to half of the number approved for the entire period from 1949 to 1960. By mid-year 1962 more than 600 cities had an urban renewal program, and the last two years accounted for about 250 of them.
- 4. The Commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration predicts that by June 1964 the program will include 1560 projects in 750 cities. The total area covered by these projects will be about 185 square miles.
- 5. Since the beginning of the program in 1949, about 127,000 families have been displaced by urban renewal. The record shows that 80 percent of these families have moved into locally-certified standard homes. About 7 percent moved away from the city, 7 percent disappeared, and 7 percent moved into substandard housing, after having been offered standard accommodations.
- 6. (mention Grand Rapids urban renewal project - - refer to attached brochure and fact sheet.)
- 7. Getting away now from the statistics, I have been impressed by the emphasis which William L. Slayton, Commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration, has placed on the responsibility of the architect in the success of the urban renewal program. In discussing the REAL problems of



URBAN RENEWAL

<u>CALENDAR YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF PROJECTS FOR WHICH RESERVATION MADE</u>	<u>RESERVATIONS; PROMISES TO PAY OUT (in millions)</u>	<u>ACTUALLY DISPERSED IN GRANTS (in thousands)</u>
1950	124	199M	0
1951	77	84	0
1952	58	46	0
1953	1*	19	8,673
1954	18	29	12,597
1955	62	176	37,580
1956	92	273	16,291
1957	66	193	30,618
1958	151	305	50,080
1959	44	64	78,894
1960	149	477	135,558
1961	176	601	149,866
Dec.31 1962	198	547	191,959
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<u>1210</u>	<u>\$3,014,000,000</u>	<u>\$712,106,000</u>

\$836 million (to Aug. 31st, 1963.)

\*33 Projects considered but dropped.



GRAND RAPIDS URBAN RENEWAL

Total expenditures by Federal Gov't. \$2.8 million

Cost of City 350 thousand

Gross Project Cost (Clearance, site improvement) \$3,156,000

Sale of land - to recover 1,500,000  
(To private interest \$877,000)  
(For city use 616,000)

Loss (difference between purchase & sale) \$1.6 million

shared 2/3 by federal govt.; 1/3 by city

\* \* \* \*

To date Grand Rapids has collected from Federal Government: \$320,000



urban renewal Mr. Slayton has said, "For the real problems of urban renewal are not functions of time or process but the difficulty of refashioning our cities in a rational, aesthetic, and comprehensive pattern."

8. Mr. Slayton went on to say, "A further objective is the creation of new urban areas designed to please the eye as well as meet the needs of its users in a functional and pleasant way. The rebuilding of cities is an opportunity one has but seldom. We should not lose it, but rather should remember that we shall be judged years hence by how well we built today and the extent to which we were able to plan and build for the needs of the future. In this rebuilding, one basic objective is esthetics. We should not shy at the term nor feel strange in its presence."

9. Mr. Slayton also pointed out the obstacles in the achievement of these objectives is not only expediency and the failure to measure long-term benefits against short-term setbacks, but also "the unwillingness to accept design and beauty and esthetics as a major criteria in determining the developmental program."

If this is true, and I have no reason to believe it is not, the opportunities as well as the responsibility of architects in the urban renewal program is indeed profound as well as far reaching.

10. Mr. Slayton's solution to the problem is, as he puts it, in the "education of the decision-makers. The procedures used by most municipalities in the selection of architects and designs for public structures are not conducive to giving weight to esthetic considerations. Municipalities could take a leaf from the State Department's overseas building program; namely, the use of a panel of top architects to select and work with other architects for the design of public structures."





11. Mr. Slayton summarizes by saying that the "real bottlenecks to a comprehensive urban renewal program are lack of a comprehensive development plan, too little concern with design in the building operation, and slowness to recognize the importance of the human and social objectives."

Generally we think of urban renewal as clearing out an area more or less completely and starting anew. However, the Agency is also concerned with historic preservation. But as the agency points out, in any historic preservation there are two areas of emphasis: 1), its rehabilitation and conservation whenever that is feasible, and the other emphasis is on good design.

Again, the thing that impresses me is the emphasis that the Urban Renewal administrator places on the design aspects of urban renewal.

I am sure that you in this audience tonight have sound and constructive answers to the problem to which Mr. Slayton refers. I am speaking as one who is no architect but as one who must agree with the administrator's analysis, the success or failure of urban renewal projects lies to a major degree with the architects and engineers who plan and develop the new building in the renewed area.

12. The role of the architect has always been highly significant in any building program. But when we have an opportunity to tear down the old and start from scratch, and when the responsibility of expenditure of millions of tax dollars is involved, the extent of the architects responsibility and influence is greatly magnified.

