

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 30, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The cities of this nation and the neighborhoods which are their backbone today face increasingly difficult problems of decay and decline.

Our society is one of constant change and movement. This fact has both its positive and negative effects. The areas most likely to suffer from technological, demographic, and social change are our older cities.

In recent years, rapid changes in communications, manufacturing, technology, transportation, and social expectation have combined to cause migration from older cities to the suburbs and to expanding areas in the South and West.

These developments have produced severe strains on older cities, forcing city governments to cope with the potentially devastating pressures of a stagnant or declining economic base coupled with a growing need for services which are becoming more and more expensive. For some time my Administration has been examining these problems, and I have proposed major program consolidations in health, education, and social services.

Some eight weeks ago, I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of many ethnic organizations that have been holding periodic gatherings here at the White House.

In my remarks that day, I asked those leaders if they would tell us what they think needs to be done to bring new life and vitality to our urban neighborhood.

Their number one recommendation was that we should set up a task force within the Government to review all major Federal programs that have an impact upon urban and neighborhood life.

Today I am pleased to announce that I am appointing a Cabinet-level task force to carry out that mission. This new Presidential Committee on Urban Development and Neighborhood Revitalization will be chaired by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Carla Hills.

Yesterday afternoon I met with Secretary Hills and other members of the committee and asked them to begin an immediate review of current Federal programs which have an impact upon cities and their neighborhoods.

They are to seek the perspectives of local officials and neighborhood groups on Federal programs which affect them and to develop recommendations for improvements in Federal policies and programs.

In setting up this committee, my premise is that many Federal programs now on the books are worthwhile and should be continued, especially those which encourage local initiative

more

and local leadership. It is particularly urgent that the Congress act soon to re-enact the General Revenue Sharing Program.

At the same time, it is clear that the Federal Government must find better ways to coordinate its many programs, that some programs should be consolidated and that still other programs should be phased out altogether. The commitment to serving our cities and urban neighborhoods need not require massive new funding programs; a great deal of Federal money is currently being spent. What is clearly required is that we make better use of resources that are already available.

In my discussions with ethnic leaders, I have also been impressed that the Federal Government can do more to encourage a greater sense of community, a sense of belonging within our urban centers. In this Bicentennial year, it is especially important that we seek to enhance the values of family, of community and of cultural diversity that have been the strength and richness of America for many years.

The Presidential Committee I have appointed will perform a great service for the country by helping to revitalize urban and neighborhood life in America.

#