

MEMO

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THE FIRST REPORT OF THE NATIONAL POLICY TASK FORCE

CREATING A NEW NATIONAL POLICY

A Statement by Max O. Urbahn, FAIA
President

The American Institute of Architects has taken a major step into the future. It is an historic step for our professional society and, to the extent that we persuade our political leaders and fellow citizens to join with us, it will have a major impact on the quality of life in urban America.

I refer to the report of the AIA National Policy Task Force, whose findings and recommendations are set forth in the following pages. The report follows a year's intensive study by a group of distinguished architects with the help of expert consultants. The policies proposed in the report have been unanimously approved by the AIA Board of Directors, including representatives from all geographic regions of the country. They were formally accepted by AIA's Executive Committee on January 3, 1972, and are subject to revision and elaboration at the Annual Convention of the Institute in May.

In brief, the new policies recommended in this report would change the "ground rules" that now shape, and distort the shape, of American communities; create a new and useful scale for planning and building in urban areas; and commit the nation to a major land acquisition policy to guide development in and around key urban centers. These are new policies, but, in the best tradition of American progress, they are built upon the values and precedents of the past.

I am proud to be the president of your Institute at the moment when this new program—the natural culmination of many years of grappling with public policy—comes to fruition. The formal study was begun in the administration of President Robert F. Hastings, FAIA. Yet elements of it have been discussed by AIA boards and presidents over a period of many years.

I urge you to read this report, to communicate with me and with other officers of the Institute, to express your opinions—and, we hope, your dedication to its goals—at the Houston convention. I ask you also to join me in thanking the National Policy Task Force Chairman, Archibald C. Rogers, FAIA; members Ieoh Ming Pei, FAIA, and Jaquelin Robertson, AIA, and the body's two distinguished non-architects, William L. Slayton, Hon. AIA, executive vice president of the Institute, and Paul Ylvisaker, professor of public affairs and urban planning, Princeton University. We are grateful for their far-sighted leadership.



Task Force Chairman Archibald C. Rogers, FAIA, right, and Paul N. Ylvisaker, professional adviser.

AMERICA AT THE GROWING EDGE: A STRATEGY FOR BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA

This report is about America at its growing edge. It outlines a set of policies that can enable this nation—as a responsible member of a threatened world of nations—to shape its growth and improve the quality of its community life.

The strategic objective of these policies is a national mosaic of community architecture designed to be in equilibrium with its natural setting and in sympathetic relationship with its using society.

In brief, the report urges:

A. That changes be made in a number of the "ground rules" (e.g., tax policy, governmental organization, etc.) which presently shape the development of American communities;

B. that the nation develop the capacity to build and rebuild at neighborhood scale (the "Growth Unit") ensuring open occupancy, environmental integrity, and a full range of essential facilities and services;

C. that federal, state, and local governments—in partnership—set the pace and standards for growth policy through a special impact program affecting 60 of the nation's urban regions and a third of the nation's expected growth between 1970-2000.

*Task Force members
I. M. Pei, FAIA, left;
William L. Slayton, Hon. AIA,
center, and Rogers.*



THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE ARE DEALING WITH

The nation's population has grown and urbanized dramatically over the last generation. By conventional measures, most of us have prospered. Personal and family incomes have generally increased. Housing conditions have improved. National opinion polls consistently find that most of us feel the quality of our personal lives is better. And amid the flurry of sudden growth, we have staked out a substantial range of free choice.

But a lot of things have us worried and dissatisfied—and properly so.

Millions of Americans have not had this range of free choice. Machines have pushed men off the land and into deteriorating cities where they have been imprisoned by rising prejudice and dwindling opportunity. Others have been left behind, trapped in the forgotten hamlets and hollows of rural America.

The nation has been polarizing into richer and poorer, black and white, growing suburbs and declining cities, neighborhoods of higher and lower status and some with no status at all.

Giant urban regions have sprawled into being without the armature of public utilities and services that make the difference between raw development and livable communities.

Jobs have been separated from housing, forcing families to spend more money on highway transportation than on homes and more time on the road than with each other.

Land, money, and building costs have priced more and more Americans out of the conventional housing market, not just the poor, but middle class as well. Construction has lagged for the lower income groups and larger families. Abandonment of existing stock in the older cities has picked up at a threatening rate. Mobile homes have "saved the day" for growing numbers of Americans (though not the minorities), but they have scattered their residents out past the range of regular community life and services.

The technics of our growth have broken loose from the regenerating cycle of nature. The accumulating wastes of this growth—phosphates, plastics, pesticides, heat, hydrocarbons—contaminate our soil, our air, and our water, and cast a growing cloud over our nation and future.

Land has become a negotiable commodity and tossed carelessly into the game of speculation for profit. Once in the market, not only its use but its very existence is subordinated to the highest bidder and shortest-term gain.

The comforts and the hardships, the benefits and the costs of national growth have not been equitably shared. Our tax structure has frequently dumped some of the highest costs on those least able to pay. The education of the nation's children and the general level of community services have been left to the happenstance of local tax rates and the small politics that exploit them. They breed fiscal zoning, and fiscal zoning has put a damper on the social and economic mobility of the poor and working class.

The social distortions in the development of our communities are reflected in our built environment. For much of what we have built, largely since World War II, is inhuman and potentially lethal. We have created a community architecture which, in its lack of efficiency, its inattention to human scale and values, and its contribution to chaos, adds up to a physical arena adverse to that "pursuit of happiness" which is one of the fundamental rights that stirred us to create a nation. Surely it is as important to bring our physical fabric into conformity with this goal as it is to do so with our social fabric. We cannot long endure an environment which pollutes air, water, food, and our senses and sensibilities.

At the same time that our growth has created an environmental crisis, the governmental process for dealing with growth has been scissored into bits and pieces. Whatever energies and resolves Americans can muster to shape their growth and salvage their environment are dissipated in an almost infinite chain of separate and conflicting consents which have to be negotiated in order to do the public's business. Just when the nation most needs its enterprise, creativity, and an overriding sense of community, stymie and cynicism become the order of the day.

Now another generation of dramatic growth is about to begin. The numbers of Americans in the 25 to 44 age group—traditionally those who create new households—are increasing at a rate nearly four times that of the past decade. These new households will not likely beget children at the bulging rate of postwar, but they inevitably will touch off a new burst of community formation and urban growth. It is doubtful that these new householders will fit easily into old patterns; many of them will not want to. Families will be smaller; wives will be working; their tolerance of environmental pollution and bureaucratic incompetence will be lower; they will be demanding more for their money and especially the money they are asked to pay in taxes.

And young adults are not the only Americans pressing for places to live—to live better and in many respects to live differently. More and more Americans are living longer; during the seventies an ever growing proportion of our population will have raised their families, retired from their jobs, and started looking for communities that will serve their changing needs. There will be another round of kids with mothers asking for day care, new waves of migrants and immigrants searching for something better than ghettos to live in, and alumni of the ghetto—increasing millions of them—who have learned from tragic experience not to let even poverty trap them in bad neighborhoods forever and again.

TOWARD A NATIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY: THE POLITICS AND PROMISE OF DIVERSITY

Sharpening awareness of the flaws in the way we've grown accounts for the rising demand for a national growth policy. Our

nation's search for such a policy is a welcome sign of a maturing society, a more civilized and humane America. But just because so many seem to be asking for a national growth policy, doesn't mean that they all want the same policy. And just totting up everybody's unhappinesses about how we've grown—and maybe goofed—doesn't necessarily add up to a policy that's better or more consistent or more salable to the American public.

Not until these differences in need and life style are admitted and understood will we really be on our way toward more productive policies for national growth. These diversities are the facts of life that politicians—especially the President and the Congress—have to deal with if the nation is to have governing policy and not just years of fruitless debate.

In fact, it well may be that a diversified nation which values free choice above all may have to live with a national growth policy which is less than coherent, which contains more inconsistencies than it resolves, which turns the power of conflicting forces into creative energy—and which succeeds because it strives toward unity but does not mutilate its freedoms in an all-out effort to achieve it.

We submit this report in that spirit. We are a single profession with our own creative diversities. We have spoken assertively, but only to enrich the national debate, not dominate it. We have tried to convert what we think are legitimate discontents into constructive ideas of how to make America better. And we have taken the risk of translating generalities (this is easy) into specifics (which is tough).

THE BELIEFS AND PREMISES WE START WITH

A. A national growth policy is first of all an expression of national values.

B. The values we most cherish are the worth of the individual and his freedom of choice. These values have been constantly stated in national legislation but not so regularly honored.

C. We believe, therefore, that national growth policy should actually commit the nation to these values, not merely restate them. What has been missing is the public competence that makes both our values and our policies credible: laws with teeth; programs with money behind them; public officials with the power to act, and a willingness to fulfill a leadership role. Private freedom and public competence are not incompatible; one needs the other.

D. The goals of national growth policy and the problems it should be concerned with have more to do with quality of life than with numbers. We do not share two of the usual fears: (1) that the American population is too large; and (2) that not enough houses will be built to meet our growing demand. During the past decade, Americans have spontaneously and freely limited reproduction—the birth rate is now at an all-time low. Earlier estimates of how much America will grow in the next 30 years now seem too high—the total may well be as low as 60 million, a

number we can certainly care and provide for. Meanwhile, housing starts have picked up; the prospects are that the nation's stated housing goals (2.6 million annually during the 1970s) may be met; and these goals actually may turn out to be too high.

It is not the numbers we should be concerned about but the quality of living and the choice of life style that are opened to Americans whoever they are and however many there may be. This is what we believe Americans mean when public opinion polls regularly report that a majority of them say they would prefer to live in smaller communities. Not that they won't abide living in large metropolitan areas—(despite what they say, most of them have chosen to move and stay there). But they are searching for communities that are more livable. Neighborhoods that are safe, neighborhoods that are within easier reach of jobs and a richer mix of community life and services, neighborhoods small enough to have some identity of their own, where no one need be anonymous while attaining the privacy Americans always have yearned for.

E. It follows, we think, that the measuring rod of national growth should be the quality of our neighborhoods, and the assurance that neighborhoods—even when they change—will not deteriorate. The neighborhood should be America's Growth Unit. We have made it the theme of this report.

F. By concentrating on the neighborhood as a Growth Unit, national policy can relate to growth and regrowth wherever it may occur—in rural areas, in smaller towns and outlying growth centers, in metropolitan areas and their central cities, in free-standing new communities. No national policy would be politically salable that did not speak to every condition of America; no national policy would be comprehensive if it did not.

G. Our own guess is that most of America's expected growth from now until the end of the century will occur within existing metropolitan areas—whether all of us would like that to happen or not. The economics and the politics of radically changing that pattern are too difficult; they well may be impossible. Marginal changes, yes; and since we, too, have a general prejudice in favor of "more balanced growth" and against overloading the environment (as we have done, possibly, in some of the Great Lakes and coastal regions) we should be of a mind to encourage these changes.

But realities force us to be realistic. **We therefore conclude that American growth policy should concentrate on improving the present and future conditions of our existing metropolitan areas.**

H. Within these areas, we believe the first priority should go toward improving the condition of the older core cities, more especially the condition of those trapped in poverty and the squalor of declining neighborhoods. Until we deal with the deep-seated factors in American life that give rise to such conditions, all growth in America is vulnerable, no matter how much concern and money are lavished on it, no matter how carefully it may be segregated from those neighborhoods where the contagion of decline is more evident.

I. Growth and regrowth—building new communities and restoring old ones—must go together. We think it folly to try urban



renewal in the older, denser neighborhoods before moving and relocation room is made ready elsewhere. That means, we think, a deliberate policy of building new neighborhoods on vacant land before renewal of older neighborhoods is begun.

J. We believe that no national growth policy will work unless there is a broader base for financing the facilities and services that are necessary for more livable communities. The local property tax is no longer enough. We have exhausted it, and now it is crippling us.

There are many possible ways of achieving this broader base of financing. Our own preference is for the federal government to assume far more of the costs of social services such as health and welfare, and more of the costs of utilities. We believe the states also should assume a greater share of local costs, especially of schools, and should do so through a combination of broad-based taxes whose impact is less regressive and its yield more responsive to changes in the general level of the economy.

K. Similarly, we are convinced that an effective national growth policy will require broader perspectives and, in many cases, larger governmental jurisdictions. We welcome signs that the states are readying themselves to participate more actively in community development—even when, as in the case of zoning, taxation, and other matters, they have to be prodded into action by the courts. The states are essential to the development of a national growth policy precisely because their jurisdictions (and hopefully their views) are broader, and because they constitutionally control the ground rules of local government and community development.

We also welcome the signs of new life at the metropolitan level. A promising example is the emergence of regional planning, development, and financing in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. If indeed most of America's growth is to occur in these areas, some form of regional control must evolve—and soon.

L. And while these broader capacities are developing, we also see the need for more citizen control and participation at the neighborhood level. Neighborhoods have been swallowed up in the growth and change of urbanizing America. The exact forms and functions of neighborhood government can vary; but national growth policy cannot do without the sturdiness and savvy of grassroots support. We see no contradiction in simultaneous transfer of power upward to broader-based levels of government and downward to the neighborhoods. It is not power which is being subtracted—it is capability which is being added.

M. It also follows from our concern with the neighborhood Growth Unit that the architects who design it, the developers who package and build it, the doctors and teachers and lawyers and merchants who serve it, should be given every honorable encouragement to work at this scale. Urban America may be massive, but it has accumulated in a formless way from a myriad of actions and designs that were of less than neighborhood scale. Thought and habit patterns will have to change if we are to build more livable neighborhoods—neighborhoods that fit as building blocks into metropolitan, regional, and national societies.

N. We wonder whether the time has come to consider less affluent standards of housing in favor of higher standards of neighborhood environment, facilities, and services—if indeed the choice must be made. "Less affluent," at least, than is explicit in the spiraling requirements of floor space and lot sizes and building codes that are being written defensively into suburban and other exclusionary legislation. The rising cost of exclusion is even higher than the rising cost of building. The product may well be more luxurious houses but less desirable, certainly less open communities.

O. Finally, we are convinced that an effective national growth policy requires that land development increasingly be brought under public control. This is true particularly of land which lies in the path of growth or that otherwise is crucial to the community's well-being—open space, flood plains, coasts and shores, etc.

We favor public acquisition and preparation of land in advance of development. We believe that the appreciating value of urbanizing land should be recycled into the costs of developing, serving, and maintaining it. We believe that, in many cases, leasing rather than outright sale would be desirable for land acquired and assembled by public action.

BUILDING AT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY SCALE: THE "GROWTH UNIT"

The Growth Unit is first of all a concept—a general way of saying that America's growth and renewal should be designed and executed not as individual buildings and projects, but as human communities with the full range of physical facilities and human services that ensure an urban life of quality.

The Growth Unit does not have fixed dimensions. Its size in residential terms normally would range from 500 to 3,000 units—enough in any case to require an elementary school, day care, community center, convenience shopping, open space, and recreation. Enough, too, to aggregate a market for housing that will encourage the use of new technology and building systems. Also enough to stimulate innovations in building maintenance, health care, cable TV, data processing, security systems, and new methods of waste collection and disposal. Large enough, finally, to realize the economies of unified planning, land purchase and preparation, and the coordinated design of public spaces, facilities, and transportation.

This general scale is consistent with likely trends during the 1970s which will encourage the filling in of open land and the renewal of older neighborhoods within existing metropolitan areas—as well as the expansion of outlying communities (Growth Centers) within the population range of 25,000 to 250,000. It also coincides with the trend toward "miniaturization" which seems to



Archibald C. Rogers, FAIA,
discusses the report
before the December 1971
Board of Directors meeting
in Washington, D.C.

characterize emerging patterns of consumer behavior and demand and which is producing a new range of facilities such as community health centers, neighborhood city halls, and convenience shopping centers.

Life styles, housing types, and residential densities could vary according to local markets and circumstances.

Larger communities—up to and including free-standing new towns—should be built as multiples of these Growth Units—allowing, of course, for an emerging hierarchy of additional services and facilities such as high schools, community colleges, hospitals, regional shopping centers, mass transit, and utility systems.

The neighborhood Growth Unit relates just as much to the rebuilding of America's older cities as it does to new growth on open land. We have learned the hard way that urban renewal and the rehabilitation of older neighborhoods cannot succeed when done piecemeal, house by house, problem by problem. The job is much bigger than that, and the Growth Unit is a more appropriate scale and way of doing it.

The Growth Unit is based firmly on the principle of open occupancy and equal access to facilities and services. Moreover, by linking growth and regrowth both outside the central cities and within them, the nation can find an orderly way out of its segregated living patterns and the haunting tragedy of its older cities.

Finally, the Growth Unit offers a valid measuring point for environmental performance. It can be planned and judged as a "package" rather than a disjointed accumulation of activities, some of which do and some of which do not meet going standards of ecological innocence.

USING THE GROWTH UNIT IN A NATIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Concentrating on the Growth Unit is a practical and incremental way of approaching a national growth policy. But it is not a retreat from major and even radical changes—as those who recently have ventured into large scale development painfully can attest. Architect after architect, developer after developer, large company after large company have tried their hands at building new communities at larger scale. Only a few have survived—and even for them the experience has been bloody. Listed below are some of the constraints and hazards and some of the changes and reforms we think are necessary if this nation is to achieve the capacity to produce livable neighborhoods without all the traumas (and mischief) that presently are involved.

A. Housing and Land Use Policy: Growth Units of the sort we propose will not be built at the rate and scale we propose unless:

1) there is an assured flow of credit at stabilized rates of interest over a sustained period of time;

2) low- and moderate-income families are directly subsidized (through income supplements, housing allowances, "235" and

"236" type interest reductions, etc.) at levels equivalent to the housing subsidies now provided higher income homeowners in the form of tax deductions of mortgage interest and local property tax payments (plus what economists call "imputed rents");

3) state governments retrieve sufficient control over local building, zoning, and health regulations to insure an adequate supply of land for large site development—and also land permanently reserved for open space, ecological balance, and communal use.

B. Front Loading: Building at neighborhood scale requires front money equal at least to 40 per cent of the total investment, with no appreciable return on that early investment coming until the fifth to the 15th year. Few are in a position to advance that kind of money and wait so long for a return. Public money and guarantees are still scanty and hard to come by. Except for New York State, they are available only through one limited program of the federal government. These public supports will have to be expanded greatly, both at federal and at state levels.

C. Aggregating Sites: The assemblage of large sites is a problem, but probably less so than obtaining the many consents necessary to develop them—zoning, building codes, etc. For the private developer, time is money; one major developer is reported to have incurred interest costs of \$5,000 per day over a year while awaiting the necessary consents. Too many developers have been led into dubious practices in an effort to offset these costs and find ways around these constraints.

The passage of legislation which authorizes planned community development promises some relief. Probably more important will be an arrangement that allows for someone other than the developer to hold the land until the consents have been negotiated and the developer can move immediately to build.

D. The Public Infrastructure: Another barrier is the shortage of public funds for the necessary infrastructure and community services. We propose that the federal and state governments plan and construct networks of utility corridors, including transit, water, sewage, electricity. These would constitute the skeleton of utilities on which Growth Units could be fastened.

At the level of a single project, the scale of development that we propose requires a long-term and disciplined schedule of public spending geared closely to the efforts of the builder.

E. Removing Tax Disincentives: Both federal and state tax systems are replete with impediments and disincentives to building and rebuilding at neighborhood scale. The Internal Revenue Code encourages a quick-build-and-sell posture for the developer; it discourages his staying around to make certain that the costs and concerns of management and upkeep are given equal attention as the cost of construction.

F. Tax Incentives: Building communities is far more complex than the single missions which become manageable profit centers for a business enterprise. Congress might declare the building of Growth Units to be in the national interest, and make special tax and other provisions to enable American enterprise—under tight performance standards—to make the long and broad commitments that the job requires.

G. Property Tax: America's dependence on the local property tax is especially hurtful. By tying practically all costs of community development to local ratables, it causes undue hardships to the builder and the citizen alike. The apparent answer is to move toward broad-based taxation at state and federal levels. It also suggests moving certain costs from local to state and federal governments.

H. Revenue Sharing: Any sharing of revenue by the federal government with the states should be conditioned on certain reforms, including a restructuring of the property tax system, zoning and building codes, and reallocation of infrastructure costs.

I. Governmental Structures and Process: Governments in America—federal, state, and local—are not organized to facilitate the kind and scale of development we propose. Major changes and innovations are in order:

1) at the federal level, some analog of a national development corporation capable of negotiating the necessary bundle of federal grants and consents; dealing with counterpart state, local, and private development agencies; and tapping national money markets;

2) at the state level, development corporations emulating and going beyond the pioneering example of New York State;

3) at the metropolitan level, public and public/private corporations subject to regionwide planning and participation, and oriented both to redevelopment of the inner city and to new development on open land.

J. Categorical Grant Programs: The tradition of categorical funding that long has been followed in American government needs to be modified. Above all, the Highway Trust Fund, we think, must be converted into a general fund for community development and greatly expanded. If this self-regenerating fund is not refashioned to serve our highest priority needs, the nation will place itself in bondage to the automobile and superhighway.

USING THE GROWTH UNIT IN COMMUNITY DESIGN

A national strategy based on the Growth Unit requires the use of tactical stepping stones in the design of communities which will be in harmony with human needs and the natural environment. Such a strategy must be a long-term commitment. Its integrity must be maintained consistently, although it may require continuous updating to accommodate changes we cannot foresee. Commitment to a long-term strategy based on such fundamental principles as freedom of choice and the worth of the individual demands tactics that emphasize flexibility and diversity.

Community design based on the Growth Unit should embrace the following principles:

A. Equilibrium: The design should be economical in its consumption of natural resources. It should minimize the emission of harmful effluents and encourage emissions that tend to replenish natural resources. The need for transportation should be reduced

by intermingling of residential and other uses. Community services (health care, education, security, etc.) should be consciously designed as systems and subsystems.

B. Symbiosis: The design should provide a beneficent and nourishing relationship between the physical environment and its using society. The surest means of attaining this relationship is to encourage community participation in the design process.

C. Satisfaction of Spiritual Needs: The design must satisfy the individual user's need for reassuring symbols that speak to him from the natural setting and from architecture within this setting. It must satisfy his need for symbols of place and personality which distinguish one person and one community from another—his need for an environmental order that denotes purpose in life.

D. Expansion of Locational Options: Just as the national strategy emphasizes freedom of choice of location, design of Growth Units should reduce barriers based on economics or race or age. This means that transportation, industry, and commerce must be placed with attention to their social consequences.

E. Expansion of Qualitative Options: The design mosaic must provide a rich variety of living environment matching the variety of life styles within our society.

F. Open Space Preservation: Community design must preserve open space at all geographic scales from the national to the local. Certain areas should be precluded from development either because of natural features that are hazardous to residents or where development would threaten ecological balance or recreational values.

G. Historic Preservation: Our historic heritage must be preserved from destruction or erosion if a sense of individual and community identity is to survive. Preservation of historic buildings and communities will require the discovery of new uses as original uses become obsolete. Some historic structures may have to be altered and modernized to accommodate contemporary functions. We also must look to the values in contemporary architecture that may in time have historic significance.

H. Public Investment as a Key to Development: Public utilities and facilities can be used to determine settlement patterns, both nationally and at the level of the single Growth Unit. The network of transportation and communications corridors should be the essential basis for comprehensive planning within the proposed communities and for their external connection with the existing community fabric. It should be designed and put in place incrementally in accordance with the largely private development of housing, commerce, and industry. Since this infrastructure is relatively permanent, it should be generous in its dimensions in order to permit accommodation of future technological developments. It should be seen as the opportunity for expression of great civic art and architecture.

I. Amendable Architecture: The design should provide a physical fabric that is amendable by its occupants to accommodate changes in life styles, technology, and economic circumstance.

J. Reduced Cost of Shelter: Design should seek to reduce the cost of housing. Off-site manufacture is one method of pursuing this goal, but care must be taken to produce a kit of parts that



Member Jaquelin Robertson (right) raises a key point at Task Force meeting in Princeton.

can be assembled in many differing ways to provide environmental variety. The design should take maximum advantage of the reduction in governmental constraints which must be a part of a national growth strategy. Better quality and workmanship can be attained once such constraints are removed. The unearned increment in the value of the land should be recaptured by the public, instead of becoming part of the inflated cost of shelter, as it does now.

K. Experiment with Change: We must deliberately experiment with change. This, in turn, will require that public funds be available to finance experimentation. Each Growth Unit can be a laboratory for new applications of technology and design. Procedural experimentation could involve the using community and public/private and multidisciplinary development teams in an open "Dialogue." The behavioral sciences can be involved in the development of a more sophisticated basis for establishing user needs. New ways of determining costs and benefits could take into greater account intangible factors and qualitative benefits.

THE GROWTH UNIT AND THE URBAN CRISIS*

The neighborhood Growth Unit applies to all America. But some parts of the nation's society and landscape have been, and will continue to be, especially impacted by growth. We believe a more specific and concentrated response should be made to the problems of the nation's declining central cities and their fast-growing metropolitan areas.

There are approximately 60 metropolitan areas in this country with 1970 populations of 500,000 or more. These 60 urban regions accounted for half the nation's total population, over half of the nation's black population, and half of the nation's total growth during the decade 1960-70.

Currently, 80 per cent of America's growth is taking place within existing metropolitan areas. In all probability, the metropolitan areas cited above will continue to absorb the lion's share of national growth and the problems that go with it.

Without foreclosing (actually it could be planned as part of) a national strategy that might attempt to shift growth from these urban regions, we propose that the federal government join immediately with the affected state and local governments in developing growth plans for these critical areas.

These plans should include the following elements:

A. Governments involved immediately should assemble one million acres of land for community development within the core cities and in the metropolitan periphery. (We would estimate the cost of acquiring this at \$5 billion.) The appreciating value of this land—realized by lease and sale over the next 30 years—would be

* This builds upon a forthcoming paper by Bernard Weissbourd.

enough to cover its original cost plus a large proportion of the costs of preparing the land for development.

B. A third of the nation's growth (20 million) during the next 30 years could be accommodated on these one million acres at average densities of 20 persons per acre—far under the present densities of troubled core cities, and within range of current consumer choice and economic feasibility.

C. The building block of this development would be the neighborhood Growth Unit—500 to 3,000 dwellings, 2,000 to 10,000 persons—built either singly or in multiples which over time would be fitted together into larger satellite communities.

D. The development of these Growth Units should be staged to provide relocation and elbow room for the restoration of older neighborhoods in the core area. Open occupancy would be ensured—with the end result that no one sector of the metropolitan area would be—or feel—overwhelmed.

E. The social mix of these neighborhoods would be further ensured by housing subsidies and allowances covering housing rental costs exceeding 25 per cent of family income. These subsidies also would be available to families filtering into existing housing throughout the metropolitan area.

F. The federal, state, and local governments would join in planning and paying for the necessary infrastructure—particularly transportation and utility corridors which would weave these Growth Units into the existing fabric of metropolitan life: jobs, education, health care, etc.

G. The economics (and for that matter, the politics) of these selected metropolitan areas should be pooled—benefits (such as new ratables) as well as costs. As a matter of first principle, new growth should not be allowed to occur as an escape from, or at the cost of, the revitalization of older neighborhoods.

H. Zoning and building codes for these Growth Units should be developed jointly by the three levels of government, with the states taking a strong initiative.

NATIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY AS AN INVITATION TO CREATIVITY

Community building of the sort we propose is a many-sided challenge.

A. A challenge to developers, planners, and architects to anticipate and give creative expression to the emerging life styles of a richly diversified American people. The trends clearly are moving in the direction of smaller families with working mothers. The trends seem also to be moving toward residential densities lighter than those of the central city but heavier than those of existing suburbs. They also are moving toward the requirements, certainly an expectation, of a rich array of critical services, such as day care,

health, and continuing education. They also are pointing toward a greater degree of privacy and security. The art will be to put all these together into a working and livable community: the Growth Unit invites that art.

B. A challenge to those committed to the integrity of the environment; to produce increments of growth that are less hostile to man and nature, which continuously reduce the pollution of land, air, and water; and maintain open spaces and green belts for recreation and tranquility.

C. A challenge to all of us who must exact more and more resources which—at least relatively—are dwindling. Multiple purpose space and reusable resources will be the order of the day and will require all the inventiveness and ingenuity we can command.

D. A challenge to restructure the financing and delivery of critical services, especially health, education, and security in the face of escalating costs and consumer dissatisfaction. We believe strongly, for instance, that electronic information systems should be incorporated routinely as part of the community's infrastructure. There is also the prospect that imaginative use of cable television can reshape public education.

E. A challenge to each of the special skills, disciplines, and professions which historically have worked in isolation and are now being forced by the logic of complexity to meld their activities.

F. A challenge to develop new forms of joint enterprise, both within the private sector and between business and government.

G. A challenge to find new ways of resolving the dilemma of dividing trends, on the one hand, toward more distant government of greater resources and scope and, on the other, toward neighborhood control.

It is not easy to develop governing policy for a diverse nation in the full cry of its existence. It would be much easier to let the cup pass and continue to build the world's first throw-away civilization.

But if we are to achieve some coherence and not let freedom vanish into chaos, we have no alternative but to deal with all the tumbling forces and facts of the here and now, and then find levers that have the power not only to move but to win majority consent.

We have chosen the neighborhood Growth Unit as one such lever. It is within the grasp and values of every American. What we urge that the nation see and grasp it as part of a national strategy—to make of this country what it can and must be—a society confident and united enough to enjoy the richness of its diversity. Livability of that kind does not come by accident; even free choice requires design.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Members of the Task Force on National Policy are:

—Archibald C. Rogers, FAIA, chairman; Chairman of the Board of RTKL, Inc., Baltimore. He developed planning guidelines for a team approach to highway planning, which led to establishment of the Urban Design Concept Team assembled to plan Baltimore's expressway system.

—Ieoh Ming Pei, FAIA; principal, I.M. Pei and Partners, New York. His firm was responsible for planning and design of Philadelphia's Society Hill redevelopment; a renewal plan for Oklahoma City's central business district; Montreal's Place Ville Marie, and a master plan for redevelopment of downtown Boston.

—Jaquelin Robertson, AIA; currently director of the Office of Midtown Planning for New York City; formerly head of the urban design group within the city's planning commission.

—William L. Slayton, Hon. AIA; executive vice president of the Institute; formerly Commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration, Housing and Home Finance Agency; later president of Urban America.

—Paul N. Ylvisaker, professional adviser; professor of public affairs and urban planning, Princeton University; formerly commissioner of community affairs for the state of New Jersey.

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The American Institute of Architects
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
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