

URBAN RENEWAL

Adopted: 1964

Amended: 2007 - minor typographic changes only

– POSITION IN BRIEF–

Support of urban renewal in its three aspects - conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment, which shall include conformity to an adopted general plan, adherence to effective and current codes and ordinances, adequate broad citizen participation, and efficient and economic administration by qualified personnel.

– FULL POSITION –

Support of urban renewal in its three aspects - conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment - which shall include: conformity to an adopted general plan for the city or the appropriate political jurisdiction, adherence to effective and current codes and ordinances, adequate financing; local governmental responsibility for relocation, broad citizen participation, and efficient and economic administration by qualified personnel.

A. Position Paper on Urban Renewal

1. A city turns toward an urban renewal program for the following reasons: clearing slums (redevelopment) and preventing slums (conservation and rehabilitation); consolidating parcels of land into the large parcels needed for proper redevelopment of the control area, using the right of eminent domain; increasing tax revenue from an area through the erection of new buildings having a higher assessed value than the old ones; alleviating some of the social problems in a blighted area; obtaining a better image of the city; receiving federal financial assistance to carry out a program which is beyond the ability of the local community to finance.
2. A community should use conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment together with an integrated program based on the condition of individual areas involved. Since redevelopment is the most drastic tool of Urban Renewal, its use should be forestalled by conservation and rehabilitation to prevent the spread of blight and the necessary clearance program.

B. The workable program

1. A general plan including neighborhood analysis is a prerequisite to Urban Renewal. Although the Federal government requires the adoption of a comprehensive general plan, it is the responsibility of the local community to develop this plan and ensure that the Urban Renewal program conforms to it.
2. Housing codes and ordinances provide a basis for the implementation of the rehabilitation and conservation program. When kept up to date and properly enforced, they help to thwart further deterioration and protect the city's investment in the renewal project by keeping the renewal areas from becoming blighted again.

3. To be effective an urban program must be administered efficiently and economically by an adequate staff of qualified people. Proper communication and cooperation with city government is essential.
4. A local community can use the following resources to provide adequate financing: an adequate capital improvement budget, including necessary public improvements (e.g. schools, sewers, streets) which can be credited as a part of the city's 1/3 of cost of redevelopment. Other sources are: cash; tax allocation bonds; and appropriate use of tax credits.
5. A responsible relocation program should include provision for safe, decent and sanitary housing within the means of relocatees which is also accessible to transportation, jobs, schools and other public facilities.

Policies should reflect the desirability of maintaining the integrity of a community or neighborhood wherever possible, particularly when affected citizens have expressed objections to relocation out of that particular neighborhood.

Where permanent relocation of residents is required (the project not being an upgrading of existing facilities or rehabilitation) emphasis should be placed on scatterization of low income housing throughout the community.

6. Maximum encouragement should be given to private developers to provide housing to meet the needs of relocatees of all income levels. When the private market cannot meet the housing needs of low income people, some form of subsidized housing, including public housing when necessary should be considered one part of the city's responsibility. Consideration should be given to aesthetics of construction and programs to meet the social and educational needs of the occupants. Any development should provide for an adequate ratio between density and open space.
7. Citizen participation should include direct participation of affected persons in goal formation and other policies of direct relevance to potential redevelopment areas. Citizen participation should also include the broad spectrum of representation through such organizations as LWV, citizens committees, neighborhood organizations and homeowners groups. Activities might include attending public hearings, talking with public officials, observing, testifying, serving on commissions, committees, and informing the public.

The benefits of prudent Urban Renewal can justify the economic costs incurred and the social costs, which would include displacement of people. However, in a well-designed responsible program, individual hardships and community disruption can be minimized with a maximum of coordination with affected community members and adequate planning for assistance to citizens to be relocated. The collective gains to the community at large from Urban Renewal include: increased tax base, encouragement of private and public investment, social and aesthetic benefits, community identity and civic pride.

Note: A motion is under consideration to update this position more fully, but text has not been received as of this writing. (Annual Meeting Kit, June 2, 2007)