

# The New Urbanists

It took 189 years for the Federal Government to recognize the existence of cities with the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1965. At that time "the urban crisis" seemed to have particular urgency; it had not yet become a cliché or been announced out of existence by a later Administration.

Today the crisis is not only still with us; the cities are more troubled than ever. The dream of model cities died quickly, and policy turned toward safer suburban ground. Decay, with its disastrously linked economic and human side effects, has accelerated. Only the complexity and seriousness of urban problems have been recognized—and not always in Washington.

The dilemma has resisted all approaches, ranging from intellectual analysis to the housing numbers-game, by administrators ranging from academicians to politicians. Currently, H.U.D. is stuck somewhere between the new wisdom of neighborhood conservation and the old goals of decent housing, without being able to achieve either on a scale that could stem the downward slide of American urban life.

A new kind of administration is necessary. It has taken a decade of trial and error in the cities, of defaulted policies and programs, to develop professionals whose perspective runs from inner city to outer suburbs. But that kind of expertise exists now.

The new urbanists understand both the intricacies of legislation and funding and the realities of the urban process. They are not agency bureaucrats, or realtors changing sides. They have learned to deal with the developers, the politicians and the paperwork, to bring together the public and the private sectors, and only in this public-private partnership will solutions for the cities be found. It is this degree of sensibility, skill and experience that must be brought to the Cabinet level.