

\$5-Billion Urban Reform Proposed by Architects

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

A national policy statement on the country's growth and development was released by the American Institute of Architects yesterday over the strong protest of some of the institute's members.

The architects' organization has proposed a sweeping \$5-billion program of public land purchase and preparation, with a vastly increased government role in urban development and a complete reordering of the country's tax structure, investment machinery and governmental organization. New legislation and state constitutional amendments would be required to do the job.

The institute's recommendations, meant to serve as a way of dealing with the urban crisis, are in the form of a report called "A Strategy for Building a Better America."

The report is based on the premise that national growth should reflect national values, and that chief among these values are the importance of the individual and his freedom of choice in ways to live.

Result of Year's Effort

The study is a result of an intensive one-year effort by the institute's national policy task force, appointed to formulate a stand on goals and methods of urban development that will represent the institute's official attitudes and recommendations. It is intended to reflect a "leadership" position in urban affairs.

The report has been ratified by the national executive committee of the 24,000-member organization, and has been presented in a series of local, "grass-roots" membership meetings around the country.

The chief dissent has come from the institute's largest chapters, in New York and California. Criticism covers both the content and style of the policy paper.

The study deals with a set of broad principles meant as a guideline for shaping the country's growth and improving the quality of its community life.

The alternative to such a policy, the report says, is "to continue to build the world's first throwaway civilization."

A "special impact program" is urged that would affect one-third of the nation's development in the next 20 years.

58 Areas Involved

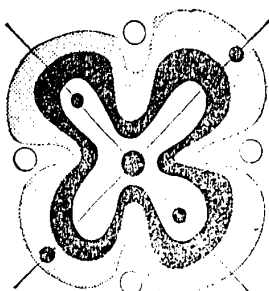
This program envisions government purchase of one million acres of core city or metropolitan area land in 58 metropolitan regions for community renewal or new construction at an estimated cost of \$5-billion.

The architects point out that much inner-city land is already reverting to the government through mortgage default. Appreciation in value and future lease or sale

of purchased land would cover the costs of buying and improving it. This total land bank would be developed in "neighborhood growth units."

The "growth unit" is defined as a "concept" of construction in terms not of single buildings, but of the "human community." More specifically, it is described as anything from 500 to 3,000 housing units with their attendant services, forming a neighborhood sizable enough to encourage new technologies and use patterns.

Priority is given to older, core city improvement, coupled with new community development. The "growth unit" could fill in vacant areas between exist-



GROWTH UNIT

20 PERCENT AGE VARIABLE FACILITIES
 COMMUNITY FACILITIES
 20 PERCENT AGE VARIABLE FACILITIES

Diagram of a growth unit accompanies report. Unit is described as group of homes large enough to encourage new use patterns.

ing sound structures in existing cities or be the building blocks of new towns. It could fill specialized needs, such as shopping centers.

Inequities Summarized

The first part of the report is a summary of the problems and inequities of the present American way of life. It cites the polarization of rich and poor, white and black, the growth of the suburbs and decline of cities, the increase of urban sprawl without community services, jobs separated from housing, and lack of choice for millions of Americans.

"Much of what we have built is inhuman and potentially lethal," the study says.

One of the more far reaching recommendations is that land be treated as a public rather than a private commodity. Land speculation is scored. Leasing, rather than sale, of publicly owned land is recommended.

Current concerns about the population and housing crises are played down, with the statement that population is declining and housing production is increasing.

The report includes a strong mandate for the radical overhaul of existing governmental and financial institutions. It asks for new methods of taxation, including incentives for "growth

Continued on Page 39, Column 7

\$5-Billion Urban Plan Asked By Institute of Architects

Continued From Page 37

unit" development, and Federal assumption of the costs of social services, such as health and welfare.

Public development corporations, similar to the New York State Urban Development Corporation, are proposed for the Federal, state and municipal levels. Revenue sharing is backed, tied to tax and zoning reforms. Long-term credit at stabilized rates and direct subsidies to low and moderate income families are endorsed.

Wide Range of Criticism

Criticism of the position paper within the institute has ranged from charges that it is too radical to complaints that it is not radical enough, with many questioning the implementation of the plan.

Although release had already been scheduled, the executive committee of the New York chapter recently sent a telegram to the president of the A.I.A., Max O. Urbahn, calling for the document's withdrawal. The national executive committee decided to make it public over New York's objections.

According to some New York officials and members, objections to the report are based on the feeling that much of it is a restatement of familiar generalities and well-publicized theories.

"Pious pomposities," "a 'safe' leadership position that won't rock the boat," "confused and sophomoric," are some of the comments.

"It is quite possible that we shouldn't talk about growth at all at this time," says one member, "but about how to slow it down." Another says, "It is a nail in the coffin of the institute's credibility."

Archibald Rogers, a member of the task force, calls it "a long-term vision of a far higher quality 'built' environment." Other members of the task force are I. M. Pei, Jaquelin Robertson, William L. Slayton, and Paul N. Ylvisaker, professional adviser.

The full A.I.A. membership will be asked to debate and endorse the report at the annual convention in Houston in May. A second report, with specific recommendations for carrying out policy, is to be completed later this year.