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National League of Cities

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February 26, 1976

TO: Members of the NLC Community Development Policy Committee

FROM: Stan Smigel, Associate Director
Office of Policy Analysis and Development

SUBJECT: 1976 Work Program

There are three broad elements which the Committee should consider in setting out its goals and work program for the year. They are:

a) The work and results of past committees, a large part of which is represented by Chapter 3, Community Development, of the National Municipal Policy.

b) Instructions from or decisions by the NLC Board of Directors.

c) New developments or issues that emerge which bear on the committee's area of responsibility.

A brief summary of the activities in the past year may help us focus on this year's program and provide useful background for new members to the Committee.

The Policy Committee met twice during the year; in Washington at the Congressional Cities Conference and in Miami at the Annual Convention. The earlier meeting established the broad priorities and the final meeting reviewed the work of the Steering Committee and adopted changes in the National Municipal Policy, which in turn were ultimately adopted by the NLC General Business Meeting.

In between the two meetings of the Policy Committee, the Steering Committee met three times. At the meeting held in California, the Steering Committee met with counterpart members from the California League of Cities, a meeting which members of both the state and national committee members found stimulating and productive.

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At other sessions of the Steering Committee, the Committee dealt with staff reports on community development, housing and local economic development issues, heard from Congressional Staff and national experts, and debated issues pro and con. As directed by the Board and the Community Development Policy Committee, the Steering Committee concentrated largely on three areas:

a) The monitoring of activities and development under the community development block grant program and other provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974;

b) The study of new housing issues and the increased responsibilities that have been assigned to city elected officials; and

c) A general survey of the questions surrounding local economic development and exploration of some local experience.

At its final meeting in October 10, 1975, the Steering Committee drafted a tentative list of priorities which it felt should be considered in the 1976 work program. These priority recommendations are:

1. Continued monitoring of developments in the CD block grant program. The funding of the CD program, the allocation system and a proper funding balance for small communities were regarded as particularly important aspects.

2. Committee exploration of the local economic development issue disclosed that the issue was complex and relatively neglected by cities. The Committee concluded that good comprehensive urban planning and policy could not take place without adequate attention to local (and often regional) economic issues. As a result, the Committee recommended that local economic development be regarded as a high priority work program item in 1976. It should be noted that a workshop on local economic development was held at the Miami Convention, helping focus attention and promoting exchange of information.

3. The Committee recommended that steps be taken to secure greater involvement and participation of the private business sector in city improvement programs. This seemed particularly important for local economic development programming.

In response to this Committee finding, a meeting was arranged between NLC representatives and representatives of the Mortgage Bankers Association of America to explore common mutual interests. The meeting took place on February 19. A summary of the meeting is attached. (The new Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Community Development Committee took part in the meeting).

4. Examination of the factors and trends which are leading to a decline in the construction of private rental housing and threatening to create scarcities and chain reactions.

5. An examination of the Section 8 housing program, particularly from the standpoint of how it can be made to work and meet legislative and local objectives.

In addition to the above recommendations, the Committee may wish to inscribe National Urban Growth as a priority item in its work program. As this memo is written, the Third Biennial Report of the President on National Growth Policy is expected to be released shortly. It will undoubtedly have major policy and program connotations for cities.

When the Committee meets on March 14, an agenda for the day will be available for all.

Enclosure: Summary of February 19 meeting.