

## Diagramming Urban Renewal: Devils and Details (Annotated by Joseph Heathcott)

From U.S. Government Report, *Measure of a Nation: A Graphic Presentation of America's Needs and Resources* (1949)

Who developed this plan? Under what authority? How did the plan come about? Did residents participate? The diagram is relatively accurate from the vantage of those impacted, as it presents the planners as shadowy, unknown characters who hover over blueprints with a God's-eye view.

Who are these people? What is the social life of their neighborhood? What rights do they have? Where do they go? Authorities typically provided tenants only a month notice and scant relocation assistance. The projects disrupted working class communities, and especially impacted African-Americans.

For what purpose is the land prepared? Who will live and work in this new landscape? Urban renewal projects typically replaced 'slums' with some combination of middle-class housing, civic centers, hospital or university expansions, commercial and office space, and corridors for expressways.

### HOW TO GET RID OF SLUMS



A REBUILDING PLAN IS DEVELOPED



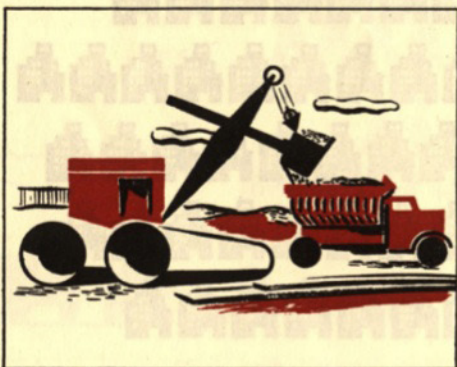
SLUMS ARE BOUGHT UP



TENANTS ARE MOVED



BUILDINGS ARE RAZED



LAND IS PREPARED



THE JOB IS DONE

Who buys them? Where does the money come from? How is the land valued and owners compensated? Urban renewal projects are undertaken by state-chartered municipal corporations, quasi-public authorities with power to take property by eminent domain and to issue bonds to raise capital.

What is cleared and what is saved? What historic and community resources are demolished? How much embodied energy is lost when bricks, mortar, wood, and iron are carted to the dump? Urban renewal not only displaced people; it also erased landscapes and sites of collective memory.

What was the job exactly? What vision moved it? Who benefited? Urban renewal left a mixed legacy. Planners cleared 'slums' and raised land values in the short term. But displaced tenants overcrowded other areas, cities lost historic urban fabric, and communities lost vital connections to their past.