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AMERICAN HOUSING POLICY: Past, Present, and Future

Catherine Bauer Wurster Lecture, April 1993

Introduction: John D. Landis

The 1992 election of President Bill Clinton rescued housing, cities, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from the obscurity to which they had been relegated by the Reagan and Bush administrations. How much the Clinton Administration does for cities and housing—that is, what level of resources will ultimately be directed to cities and housing—remains to be seen. For the moment, however, there is little doubt that the problems of urban America in general, and of housing in particular, are back on the national agenda.

History teaches that new presidents and new administrations often take new approaches to housing policy. What directions should the Clinton Administration take? Should it break completely with past housing policies and programs, and consider fundamentally new approaches—perhaps those pioneered at the local level in places like Boston and San Francisco? Or should it continue and expand the programs and institutions that have successfully weathered the indifference of the last twelve years? Where those programs and policies have been successful, should the Administration build on them?

The 1993 Catherine Bauer Wurster Lecture provided a forum on the future of national housing policy. It brought together three distinguished experts on housing policy, each from different parts of the political spectrum. Speaking from the left was Peter Dreier, the E.P. Clapp Professor of Political Science at Occidental College. The middle speaker—taking the middle position—was Professor Marc Weiss, Director of the Real Estate Program at Columbia University. (In June 1993, Weiss was named Special Assistant to HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros.) The final speaker was Professor Peter Salins of Hunter College in New York.

The Catherine Bauer Wurster Lecture is an annual lecture in the College of Environmental Design addressing important issues related to housing and community development. Catherine Bauer Wurster, of course, was one of the founders of the College of Environmental Design. The three presentations were transcribed from tape, and then edited for inclusion in the *Berkeley Planning Journal*.