

Urban Land Regularization (REURB): Challenges and Results in an Amazonian Municipality (2017–2023)

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Abstract:

Urban land regularization is a strategic instrument for the realization of the right to housing and the management of cities. This study analyzes the Urban Land Regularization (REURB) process, established by Federal Law No. 13,465/2017, focusing on the results obtained in the municipality of Porto Velho, Rondônia, between 2017 and 2023. The methodology adopted consisted of qualitative research based on document analysis of reports from the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing, and Urbanism (SEMUR), a literature review, and interviews with stakeholders involved in the process. The results indicate that although the municipality has achieved significant progress through the "Regularizar é Progresso" program and the implementation of "REURB Online," there is a disconnect between the increase in allocated financial resources and the actual number of regularized properties, demonstrating that capital investment alone does not guarantee the speed of the processes. It is concluded that land regularization in the Amazon region still faces structural challenges, such as bureaucratic complexity, the need for basic infrastructure, and socioeconomic hurdles. For the future, administrative simplification and greater coordination among federal entities are recommended to promote truly sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Keywords: Federal Law No. 13,465/2017, Right to Housing, Sustainable Urban Development, Urban Land Regularization (REURB).

1 Introduction

Urban land regularization is an administrative and social process in the management and ordering of modern cities. It consists of the legalization of land tenure and use, promoting the integration of informal areas into the formal urban system and guaranteeing property rights for the inhabitants of these areas. In Brazil, this issue is of particular relevance due to rapid urban growth and the disordered expansion of cities, resulting in a series of challenges related to irregular occupation and deficient infrastructure.

Historically, Brazil has faced major challenges related to land regularization, especially in urban areas. Public policies, such as the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) and the Land Regularization Law (Law 13,465/2017), were

developed to address these issues, offering legal and financial mechanisms to promote the formalization of irregularly occupied urban areas. Land regularization aims not only to solve legal problems of possession but also to improve living conditions and promote social inclusion.

In this context, supported by the right to housing, enshrined as a fundamental right by the Federal Constitution of 1988 in its article 6, item III, which deals with social rights establishing that "housing, as a social right, is everyone's right, and the State's duty, to guarantee, through social and economic policies, access to dignified housing, with the improvement of housing conditions and access to essential public services" (BRASIL, 1988, art. 6, inc. 3).

Based on this need, the Urban Land Regularization (REURB) was created, instituted by Federal Law No. 13,465/2017, involving a set of measures aimed at the inclusion of informal urban centers in urban territorial planning and the granting of property titles to their occupants.

REURB aims to legalize the possession of land and properties, promoting social inclusion and improving living conditions in urban areas. In Brazil, this process is particularly relevant in rapidly growing cities. In the municipality of Porto Velho, capital of the State of Rondônia, it could not be different. With a territorial area of 34,090.952 km², Porto Velho is the largest capital in territorial extension in the country, according to CENSO 2023 data. Due to this large extension, population centers were formed without the proper monitoring of public entities, and with this, disordered expansion and irregular occupation of public lands have caused profound impacts on the quality of life and sustainable urban development.

REURB is the legal mechanism that involves legal, urbanistic, environmental, and social norms with the purpose of incorporating informal urban centers into urban territorial planning and titling their occupants. Legal measures mean the solution of proprietary problems, referring to situations in which the occupant of a public or private area does not have a title with due legal guarantee over their occupation (MAUX, 2017).

For REURB legitimation, criteria provided in the legislation must be met, and it can only be applied to demonstrably existing informal urban centers, in accordance with the law, and even if they are located in areas with the possibility of land regularization.

Thus, the research problem seeks to understand how urban land regularization initiatives have been conducted by the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR) in the municipality of Porto Velho, and what are the main advances and challenges faced in this process?

This article aims to evaluate the situation of land regularization in the municipality of Porto Velho, applied by the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR).

Specific objectives were established: (i) to identify the main challenges faced and evaluate ongoing initiatives and public policies; (ii) to propose recommendations to improve the regularization process, promoting a more inclusive and well-planned city.

This study also aims to analyze the collaboration of the municipality of Porto Velho regarding the contribution to achieving the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) 2030 agenda. Since land regularization directly impacts SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; SDG 10, which contributes to reducing inequalities; SDG 11, which aims to promote sustainable communities and eradicate poverty addressed in SDG 01.

The choice of the theme of urban land regularization in Porto Velho is justified by the social, economic, and environmental relevance of this issue for sustainable urban development. The accelerated growth of the city and the disordered occupation of urban land highlight the urgency of effective public policies that ensure the right to housing and promote social inclusion. With a large territorial extension and a high rate of irregular occupations, Porto Velho represents a favorable scenario for the critical analysis of land regularization practices, especially considering the direct impacts on the quality of life of the population and urban planning.

From a theoretical point of view, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of informal urbanization processes and their legal and social implications, from a multidisciplinary approach that involves Urban Law, Public Management, and Urban Sociology.

In the practical dimension, the work intends to offer subsidies for the improvement of local public policies, identifying good practices and challenges faced in the regularization process. Socially, the research aims to value the role of land regularization as an instrument of social justice, guaranteeing access to dignified housing and full citizenship. From a management perspective, the study aims to foster reflection on the performance of municipal public bodies, especially SEMUR, proposing ways to make the process more efficient, participatory, and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The theoretical contribution of this work is based, first, on the constitutional principles established in the Federal Constitution of 1988, which recognizes the social function of property and the right to housing as a social right (art. 6, item III). The Magna Carta also defines urban policy as a competence of public power to order the full development of the social functions of the city and ensure the well-being of its inhabitants (art. 182 and 183).

In the legal field, Federal Law No. 13,465/2017, which institutes Urban Land Regularization (REURB), represents an important legal milestone by establishing mechanisms that facilitate the legalization of informal

settlements, through more accessible administrative procedures. This legislation distinguishes two types of regularization: REURB-S (of social interest), aimed at low-income populations, and REURB-E (of specific interest), applicable to occupations that do not fall into the first category.

From the point of view of public policies, the Minha Casa, Minha Vida Program and investments in urban infrastructure through the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) stand out, which sought to integrate housing and urbanization. These actions, however, were not always accompanied by an articulated land regularization strategy, which reinforces the importance of instruments such as REURB, which combines legal, urbanistic, environmental, and social aspects.

The literature on land regularization points out that, in addition to the legalization of possession, it is necessary to guarantee access to urban infrastructure and the provision of public services, such as health, education, transport, and sanitation. Authors such as Fernandes (2011) and Maux (2017) reinforce that land regularization should be understood as an instrument of social inclusion and combating urban inequalities.

In the local context, Porto Velho, capital of the State of Rondônia, faces specific challenges due to its extensive territorial area and unplanned urban growth. The performance of the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR) therefore becomes essential to structure and implement policies that promote sustainable development and social justice. The analysis of the Porto Velho case allows understanding how federal legislation is being applied at the municipal level and what institutional, technical, and social barriers still need to be overcome.

2 Urban context of Porto Velho.

Like several Brazilian cities, Porto Velho, capital of Rondônia, has experienced rapid urban growth in recent decades. The urban population grew significantly, driven by economic and migratory factors. The construction of two hydroelectric plants on the Madeira River in 2010 resulted in a mass migration to the municipality of Porto Velho. This disordered growth resulted in a series of problems related to the irregular occupation of land and the formation of informal settlements. The management and regularization of these settlements provide urban stability and guarantee the right to the city for all its inhabitants.

2.1 Importance of land regularization in Porto Velho.

In Sarlet's concept (2008, p.259), the right to housing is a constitutional right of immediate effect to be implemented by the State through positive provisions, with interest in the organization and creation of material goods that can reach the most needy.

In this context, the Federal Constitution of 1988, in its first article, defines the attributions of the State, proposing that it is its duty to guarantee the

exercise of social and individual rights, promote well-being, seek equality and social harmony with support in internal and international legal order, with the aim of seeking a peaceful solution to controversies. The Magna Carta also provides in its article 5, items XXII and XXIII, expressly that property must fulfill its social function.

Cities face typical challenges of disordered growth, such as the lack of basic infrastructure (water, sewage, electricity) and the presence of irregularly occupied areas, which directly affect the quality of life of their residents. For Porto Velho, as well as for other municipalities seeking urban land regularization, the creation of the REURB law came to guarantee not only property rights but also to promote sustainable urban development. Based on this need and supported by the legal system, municipalities, through the application of Federal Law No. 13,465/2017, as well as Law No. 11,977/2009, which provides for the Minha Casa, Minha Vida Program (PMCMV), seek to reduce these social inequalities and the legitimation of property.

Land regularization can improve access to public services and facilitate urban planning, allowing the city to grow in an orderly and inclusive manner.

Furthermore, land regularization has significant economic and social implications. The legal security provided by the formalization of properties increases the confidence of residents and investors, which can result in a more favorable environment for local economic development. For low-income families, regularization offers the opportunity to access credit and other social benefits, contributing to the reduction of urban inequalities.

3 Methods

A qualitative research approach will be used, which is defined by Creswell (2010) as being a set of procedures that allows gathering and analyzing qualitative data in a single study. Using documentary analysis, interviews with public managers and civil servants directly linked to the administrative process. For the analysis, data from secondary sources were used, including reports from the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR), documents from the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data allowed a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in land regularization.

4 Theoretical framework

Urban Land Regularization (REURB) is an important legal and urbanistic instrument for facing informality in the occupation of Brazilian urban land. Federal Law No. 13,465/2017 instituted REURB with the objective of promoting the regularization of informal urban centers, providing legal security to possession and integrating these areas into the full territorial

planning of cities. According to the aforementioned law, regularization can occur in two distinct modalities: REURB-S (of social interest), aimed at the low-income population, and REURB-E (of specific interest), applicable to occupations promoted by segments that do not fall into the condition of social vulnerability (BRASIL, 2017).

The concept of regularized property, within the scope of REURB, involves the existence of a property title registered in a notary public, issued based on administrative or judicial processes that observe legal, urbanistic, environmental, and social criteria. For this regularization to occur, the legislation provides for the joint action of different federative entities. The municipality is primarily responsible for conducting REURB processes, in accordance with article 30, item I of the Federal Constitution, which grants it competence to legislate on matters of local interest and manage urban policy. However, the States, the Union, the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and the Secretariat of the Union's Heritage (SPU) also play important roles, especially when the properties to be regularized belong to their respective domains (BRASIL, 1988; FERNANDES, 2011).

According to Maux (2017), REURB is more than a legal regularization policy; it is also a strategy of urban justice, which seeks to correct historical inequalities in access to land and public services. The regularization of possession should not be seen in isolation, but in articulation with the offer of urban infrastructure, mobility, sanitation, education, and health, aiming at the promotion of sustainable cities, as advocated by the UN 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) No. 1, 10 and 11 (ONU, 2015).

In the case of Porto Velho, capital of the State of Rondônia, the analysis of data provided by the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR) will allow answering key research questions, such as:

- Origin of regularized properties: The systematization of data can indicate whether most regularizations occur on Union, State or Municipal lands. This information is essential to understand the level of articulation between federative entities and the effectiveness of local public policies.
- Distribution between REURB-S and REURB-E: The identification of the number of properties regularized under each modality allows evaluating the socioeconomic profile of the beneficiaries and the social scope of the implemented public policy.
- Use of the TCU report (2024): Report No. 1410999 of the Federal Court of Accounts, entitled Union Properties: availability, demands and destination, offers relevant information about Union properties in Porto Velho, and can be crossed with SEMUR data to verify which federal

properties are being effectively regularized, in addition to highlighting any obstacles to the destination of these assets.

- Critical analysis of empirical data: The final stage of the research will consist of interpreting the data in light of current legislation, urban theory, and constitutional principles. The advances obtained, the challenges faced, and possible improvements in the performance of public bodies will be discussed, especially regarding the articulation between SEMUR, SPU, INCRA, and real estate registration offices.

4.1 Challenges in land regularization

Bureaucracy and Legal Processes: Land regularization faces a complex bureaucratic labyrinth that can significantly delay the process. The need for multiple approvals and documents creates an obstacle to the formalization of urban areas. Within the legal framework, in the provisions of procedural processing, multiple public bodies and sectors need to be involved to carry out the proper identification of the ownership of urban lots that need to go through the REURB process.

Inadequate Infrastructure: With the often disordered occupation of cities, areas to be regularized lack basic infrastructure, such as water and sewage networks, which are essential for legalization and for the quality of life of residents.

Socioeconomic Issues: The lack of financial resources among residents of informal areas often prevents regularization, as the associated costs can be prohibitive for low-income families.

Property and Public Land Conflicts: In Porto Velho, there are frequently disputes between different occupants and overlaps with public or private lands, which further complicates the regularization process.

4.2 Initiatives and public policies – actions carried out during the years 2017 to 2023.

The municipality of Porto Velho has implemented several initiatives to address these challenges. The Land Regularization Program developed and applied by SEMUR, in partnership between the City Hall of Porto Velho, the Government of the State of Rondônia, and INCRA, aims to map irregular areas and promote the integration of these areas into the formal urban fabric. As an example, we have the land regularization program, entitled "Regularizar é Progresso" (Regularizing is Progress), considered by its creators as a milestone of innovation in the context of land regularization in the Legal Amazon, a program that was born with the intention of acting as an agent in promoting sustainable development in the Legal Amazon. This program was divided into three phases, with an expected start in 2017, a year used as a benchmark for data analysis for the elaboration of this work, and an expected end in 2024, and due to the lack of compiled data in the system, it was not possible to use the data from that year to compose this work.

Attached to the regularization program, training programs were launched for civil servants, residents, and local managers, in addition to initiatives to improve the infrastructure of the affected areas, since the act of delivering the definitive title to the citizens benefited by the program is only one of the foreseen stages.

In the survey carried out with the annual reports issued by SEMUR, it was found that during the analyzed period there was oscillation between the years 2017 to 2023. Such oscillations were motivated by both administrative obstacles and problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which, due to imposed sanitary measures, such as social isolation, it made it impossible to develop the work carried out by SEMUR, directly reflecting on the results obtained, as shown in the graphs below:

Table 1: Social Interest Land Regularization: Regularized Properties

LOCALIDADE	2017	2018	2019	2020
Ayrton Senna	536			
Pedrinhas (figura A)	168			
Panair (figura A)	294			
Areal		1.122		
Jardim Santana		1.701		
Arigolândia (figura A)		275		
Assentamento Teixeira		83		
Socialista			989	
Distrito de Nova Califórnia			1.071	
Rosalina de Carvalho				648
Distrito de União Bandeirantes				2.243
Agenor de Carvalho/Lagoinha/Tiradentes/Calama				245
Paraíso				35
Empreendimento FNHIS VII				72
Empreendimentos Arco Íris e Veredas				70
Empreendimento Pró Moradia Leste				275
TOTAL	998	3.181	2.060	3.879

Fonte: DRIS/SEMUR

Source: SEMUR Website.

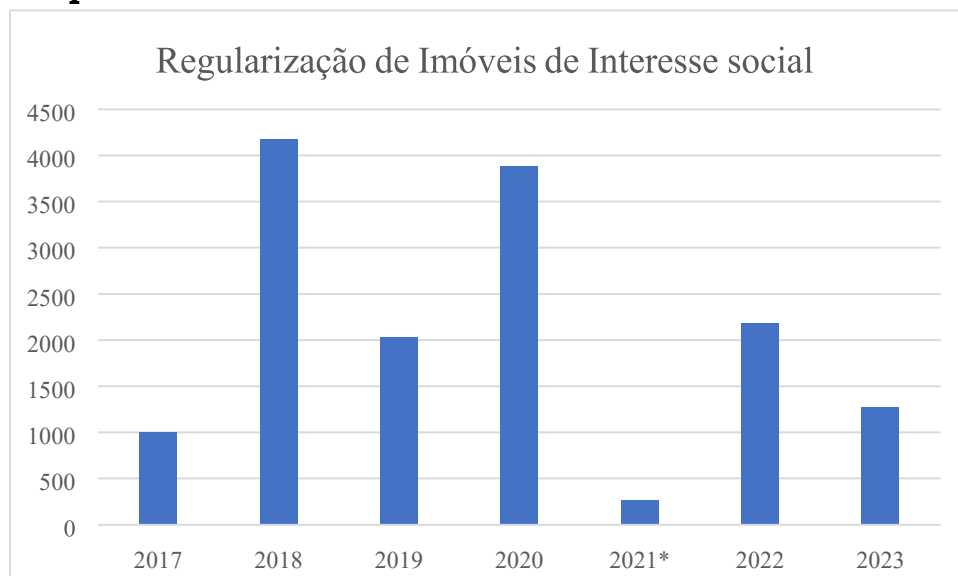
Table 2: Social Interest Land Regularization: Regularized Properties

#	LOCALIDADE	2021	2022	2023	SUBTOTAL
01	Agenor Martins de Carvalho, Lagoinha e Tiradentes	-	-	-	-
02	Distrito de União Bandeirantes	-	-	-	-
03	Empreendimento Arco-íris ⁽⁵⁰⁾ e Veredas I ⁽²⁰⁾	-	-	-	-
04	Empreendimento FNHIS VII	-	-	-	-
05	Empreendimento Pró-Moradia Leste ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ , FNHIS III ⁽⁵⁰⁾ , FNHIS IV ⁽⁴⁷⁾ e FNHIS VII ⁽¹⁴⁾	-	-	-	-
06	Loteamento Calama	-	-	-	-
07	Loteamento Paraíso	-	-	-	-
08	Rosalina de Carvalho	-	-	-	-
09	Quadra 113 (Conceição)	-	-	-	-
10	Empreendimento Pró-Moradia Sul ⁽²²¹⁾ e FNHIS I ⁽⁴⁸⁾	269	-	-	269
11	Associação de Moradores (Bairro Lagoa)	-	84	-	84
12	Comunidade Vila Calderita	-	109	-	109
13	Distrito de Jaci Paraná	-	1.501 ¹	-	1.501
14	Empreendimento Candelária I	-	98	-	98
15	Empreendimento Candelária II	-	25	-	25
16	Empreendimento Candelária III	-	58	-	58
17	Empreendimento Candelária IV	-	37	-	37
18	Empreendimento Habitar Brasil	-	156	-	156
19	Empreendimento Morar Melhor	-	30	-	30
20	Empreendimento Veredas II	-	25	-	25
21	Empreendimento Veredas III	-	56	-	56
22	Distrito de Extrema	-	-	1.272	1.272
	TOTAL	269	2.179	1.272	3.720

Fonte: DRIS/EMUR

Source: SEMUR Website.

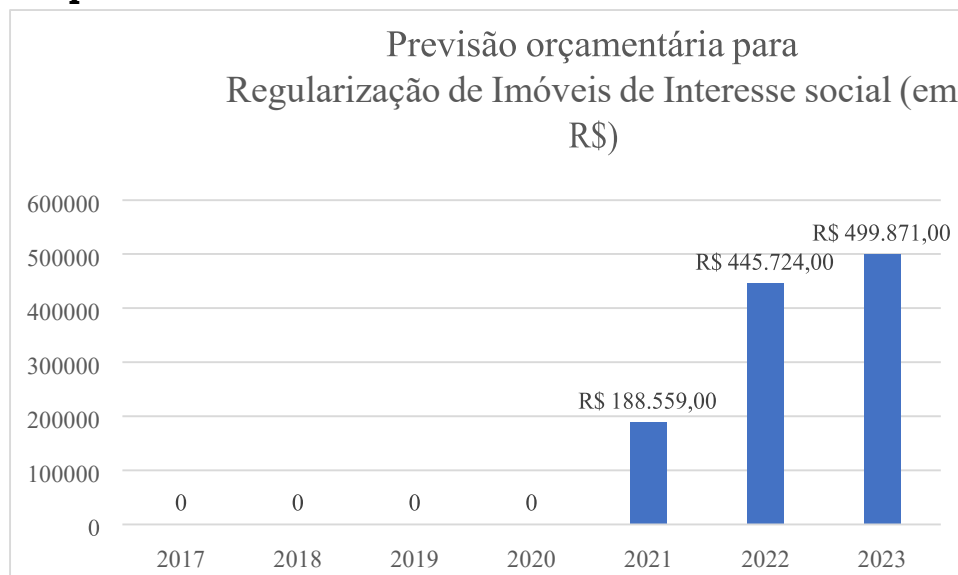
By comparing the studied period, it was possible to elaborate the Graph 1 below, which initially shows a significant leap between the years 2017 and 2018, much of this due to the application of the newly created Law No. 13,465, OF JULY 11, 2017, which establishes parameters and goals for land regularization, especially in urban areas located in the Legal Amazon, as well as the beginning of the "Regularizar é Progresso" program, instituted by SEMUR.

Graph 1

(* Procedures affected due to the pandemic)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

In the comparative table below, the specific budget for the execution of the land regularization program, Graph 2, was presented, for which it was not possible to present the values foreseen between the years 2017 and 2020, since in searches of the SEMUR documentary collection, this forecast was not located, being presented then only the years 2020 to 2023, which should be used for use in the "Regularizar é Progresso" program, instituted by SEMUR.

Graph 2

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

5 Analysis of urban land regularization in Porto Velho.

5.1 General context of reurb in Porto Velho

By the end of 2024, the City Hall of Porto Velho, through the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR), reached the mark of 20 thousand regularized properties, representing approximately 80% of the urban areas of the municipality. This historic achievement reflects a continuous effort over eight years, aiming to guarantee legal security and adequate infrastructure for the residents of these areas.

Brazilian legislation provides for two main modalities of REURB:

- REURB-S (Social Interest): Aimed at urban centers predominantly occupied by low-income populations.
- REURB-E (Specific Interest): Applicable to urban centers occupied by populations not classified as low-income, but who need regularization.

In Porto Velho, SEMUR has acted in both modalities, adapting actions according to the socioeconomic and legal characteristics of each area.

Land regularization involves collaboration between different governmental spheres:

- Municipality: Responsible for the direct execution of REURB, including mapping, georeferencing, and titling of properties.
- State: Participates in the regularization of areas under its jurisdiction and can act in partnership with the municipality.
- Union: Through bodies such as the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and the Secretariat of the Union's Heritage (SPU), it is responsible for Union areas, requiring specific processes for regularization.

In Porto Velho, the collaboration between these entities has been essential for the advancement of regularization, with emphasis on technical cooperation agreements signed between the City Hall, INCRA, and the Government of the State of Rondônia.

SEMUR provided detailed information about the regularization processes:

- Online Tool: The "Reurb Online" system allows citizens to start the regularization process digitally, facilitating access and transparency of information.
- Georeferencing: The update of the city's georeferencing, carried out in 2023, allowed a more precise analysis of the areas to be regularized, integrating data from different municipal secretariats.

Despite the advances, land regularization faces continuous challenges:

- Political Interference: Exemptions and changes in management can impact the continuity of processes, as observed in April 2025, when SEMUR faced stoppages due to changes in the technical team.
- Infrastructure and Investments: Regularization allows areas to receive investments in infrastructure, such as basic sanitation, paving, and public lighting, improving the quality of life of residents.

Porto Velho has demonstrated a significant commitment to land regularization, seeking to transform informal areas into planned and legally recognized urban spaces.

6 Results

Porto Velho faces specific challenges that complicate the land regularization process. The city deals with issues such as the high rate of irregular occupation of land, complex bureaucracy, and the lack of adequate basic infrastructure. Additionally, the management of land conflicts, especially those involving public and private lands, becomes a significant obstacle.

To address these challenges, an integrated approach is essential, involving the active participation of the municipal administration, state and federal governments, as well as civil society. The implementation of effective land regularization policies can not only resolve possession issues but also contribute to more balanced and sustainable urban development. In this context, the Municipal Secretariat of Land Regularization, Housing and Urbanism (SEMUR) performs its work, in order to carry out actions to reduce the distance between people who need possession of their properties and the public administration.

7 Conclusion

Urban land regularization in Porto Velho is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted approach. Although there have been significant advances, overcoming the identified obstacles is necessary to ensure sustainable and inclusive urban development. The implementation of effective strategies can not only resolve possession issues but also improve the quality of life for residents and promote orderly and just urban growth.

By comparing graphs 1 and 2, within the possible parameters, it was found that although the financial resources allocated for the application of public policies aimed at Urban Land Regularization – REURB have been increasing year by year, the same was not reflected in the indicators achieved regarding the number of regularized properties, thus evidencing that not only financial resources are necessary to materialize the applied programs, but also a combination of factors.

To advance land regularization in Porto Velho, it is necessary to adopt an integrated approach that considers the following points:

- **Bureaucratic Simplification:** Reducing the complexity of legal and administrative processes is essential to accelerate the regularization.
- **Infrastructure Investments:** Ensuring that areas to be regularized receive the necessary investments in infrastructure to improve the quality of life and enable formalization.
- **Socioeconomic Support:** Implementing financial and technical support programs for low-income residents can facilitate the regularization process and promote social inclusion.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Developing effective mechanisms to resolve property disputes and clarify the situation of public and private lands is crucial to avoid obstacles in regularization.

As Porto Velho is still a new municipality, compared to large Brazilian urban centers, and knowing that the issue of land regularization is a continuous work and demands monitoring over time, I suggest future work deepening the theme and verifying if the "Regularizar é Progresso" program really achieved the objectives for which it was conceived.

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