The Louisiana Architect

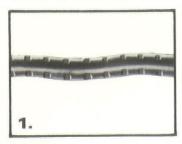
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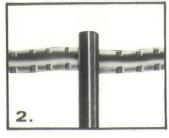
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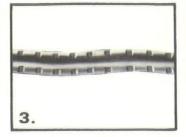


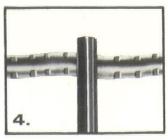
November-December, 1971

'71 LAA Honor Awards/Face of A Region Comprehensive Architecture







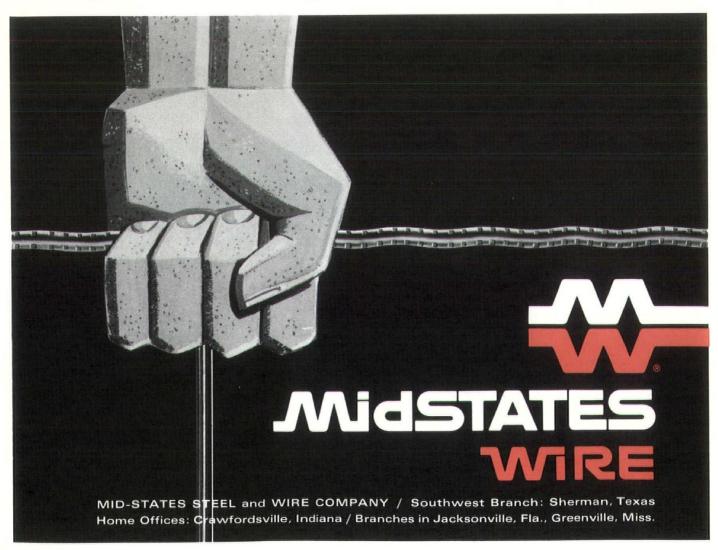


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EDITORIAL

Comprehensive Architectural Services — Owner Profits

Building owners, investors and developers in Louisiana are finding that comprehensive architectural services are not an expense, but rather a way to reduce investment risks and to plan for maximum profits. These services may include all or part of a number of valuable planning, design and construction talents such as: feasibility, site selection, investment cost-benefit ratios, cash flow and true rate of return on investment when taxes and depreciation are considered. The project owner or developer may want help in securing additional investor capital, or perhaps his problem is improved employee efficiency or materials handling. Construction management services can speed up construction time and savings on labor costs which far exceed the fee to the architect. Regardless of the situation, control of the controlable factors and estimation of the probabilities always works out better than trial and error.

Architects with special training and experience are succeeding quite well in the new market for project initiation, planning and development by applying comprehensive services. This issue includes two 1971 LAA Honor Award winning projects on which the architects furnished these comprehensive services. You should also find the article by William R. Brockway very informative.

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The Face of a Region

by John W. Lawrence, FAIA, deceased

Reprinted from The Tulanian

No one could adequately express the feeling John Lawrence carried in his heart for his native city; only John Lawrence, himself, was capable of that. The essay printed here, perhaps, best illustrates this point. The late dean of architecture first delivered the essay as a speech to a small civic group in January. Although the essay concentrates on the New Orleans area, it is apparent that many of the observations are applicable to the urban scene in general.

It is taken for granted that one cannot be entirely objective about someone or something he loves. I cannot, therefore, claim objectivity as I try to share with you some of my views and impressions of a city and its environs which was my birthplace and which has alternately nourished and offended me for most of my adult life.

Also heavily subscribed to is the notion that we hurt the ones we love—out of a distorted emotional concern for their welfare. My remarks shall certainly not be without emotion, but I hope will not hurt. They are not intended to do so.

What follows is a highly personal portrait. It is best that way, I think. Another, or an infinity of others, with different backgrounds, values and vantage points, would have as many different portraits, even totally opposite. I have purposely avoided a statistical approach-for one reason, that I am not a statistician, and for another, they can be most unreliable and indeed deceptive indications of reality. When Gross National Product, for example, counts the tearing down of good old buildings as a plus in the same way that it counts the building of bad new ones, or when armaments production has the same value as education or housing or health, we see how inadequate such devices really are. Gross National Product or Gross Regional Product can tell us only that we may be doing a lot of things, but it can tell us nothing about whether we are doing the right things. Reality is too metaphysical for statistics.

Is there an identifiable region about which we are speaking today? I think there is. We are talking about a metropolitan area of somewhat over a million people (a third of the state's people) which, under the protocols of the Regional Planning Commission, encompasses Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes. The Commission itself recognizes that it is incomplete without St. Tammany Parish. But that can be remedied.

It is a region whose geography is dominated by one of the world's great rivers and a remarkable collection of lakes and streams, natural beauty, and more than its share of natures' abundance. The family arguments now taking place in our regional house disclose, if nothing else, that political boundaries and the governments described by them are inherently incapable of dealing with issues of geographic and cultural regional significance. These boundaries are wholly artificial-historical accidentsand increasingly operate against regional integrity. The issues with which we must deal today have nothing to do with these kinds of boundaries.

The region has many faces and there are many components in a description of its anatomy: the land, our natural assets (and liabilities), the man-built environment and its cooperation or lack of same with nature, our institutions (education, health. religious, recreational, business, cultural, etc.), but, most of all, the region is its people, with their attitudes, traditions, aspirations and inspirations-Garden District blue-bloods and trappers, aspiring Garden District blue-bloods and gentlemen hunters, half-black, halfwhite, down and out aristocrats and nouveau riche. What a splendid mix!

Who would want to change it? Our ethnic richness, with all the inputs it invites, is one of our greatest assets. The composite is unique, and it is on this we must build.

This is not to say that all is well with our people. Far from it. If I were reduced to choosing only one word to describe our people, I believe it would be tolerant. Squares and hippies tolerate each other better than in most places. Although it may be an historical accident, we are the most geographically racially integrated city in the United States of America.

But, tolerance can have its abuses, and for us it is most apparent in that we have lost our capacity for outrage; and I have in mind especially our capacity to be outraged by low levels of governmental performance and the sheer callousness of some officialdom. Is it not cause for concern that a man prominent in government remains a major legislative spokesman for an industry from which he earns more than a quarter of a million dollars a year? Or again another, who is supposed to be "like us" in conservative outlook, whose political career has been built upon the fight against "creeping socialism," but who has been earning more than a hundred thousand dollars a year for not planting cotton? One wonders who are the creeps and who are the socialists?

Who can fail to wince when one sees lobbyists pressing legislators' voting buttons in our state legislature, or, despite the ingredients of comedy, a state official passing out candy and campaign buttons at a most unpropitious moment?

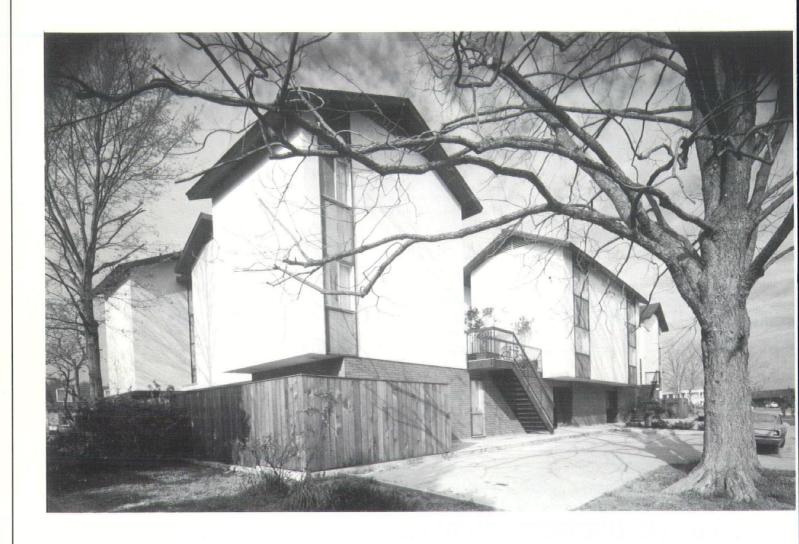
It is not a question of law-breaking so (cont. p. 16)

1971 LAA HONOR AWARD

THE VARSITYHOUSE APARTMENTS - BATON ROUGE

Architects: Claus & Claus

Owner: Bodo Claus



PROGRAM:

To design a project that will appeal to the university market.

Because of high land cost, place a maximum number of units, pool, laundry facilities, outdoor living areas and parking on a lot containing only 19,200 square feet.

To stay within a tight budget, in order to secure a revenue producing investment.

SOLUTION:

The cash-flow oriented program demanded high density. Utilizing three story construction, 24 1-bedroom units were placed on 19,000 square feet of land -- equivalent to 55 units per acre. Still, each unit has access to an outdoor area. The first floor apartments have private patios and the second floor townhouses are grouped around four landscaped deck areas.

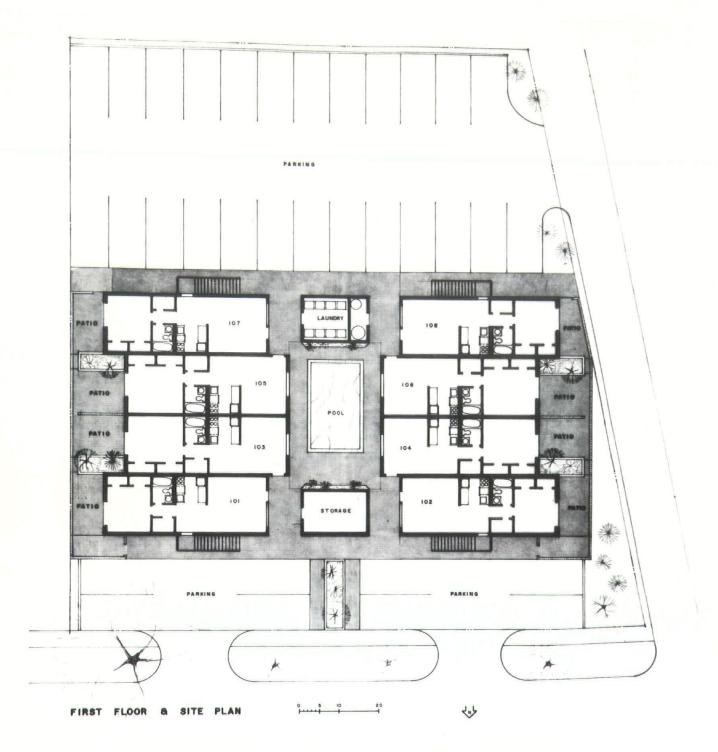
These deck areas combine with the central court area (pool) to form a continuous circulation pattern of a variety of shapes and sizes.

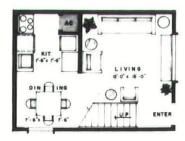
To avoid future maintenance, exterior detailing was kept simple and the massing of the building was developed into the primary architectural expression. Projections, variety of shapes, and changes in the direction of roof slopes were combined to emphasize individual apartment units within the complex.

A redwood fence on the ground floor level screens the patio areas and provides an architectural scale element against the massive three story structure.

Photos by David Gleason

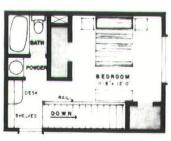






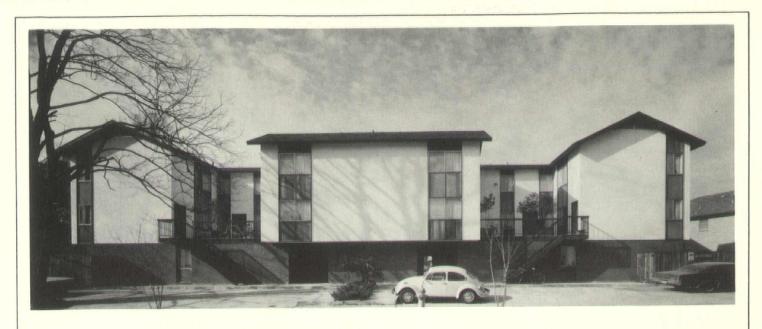
LOWER LEVEL

TYPICAL TOWNHOUSE FLOOR PLANS



UPPER LEVEL

-



CONGRATULATIONS, CLAUS AND CLAUS.

WINNER OF THE LOUISIANA ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATION HONOR AWARD. Pictured above is the Varsity Town House apartment complex designed and owned by architects Claus and Claus.

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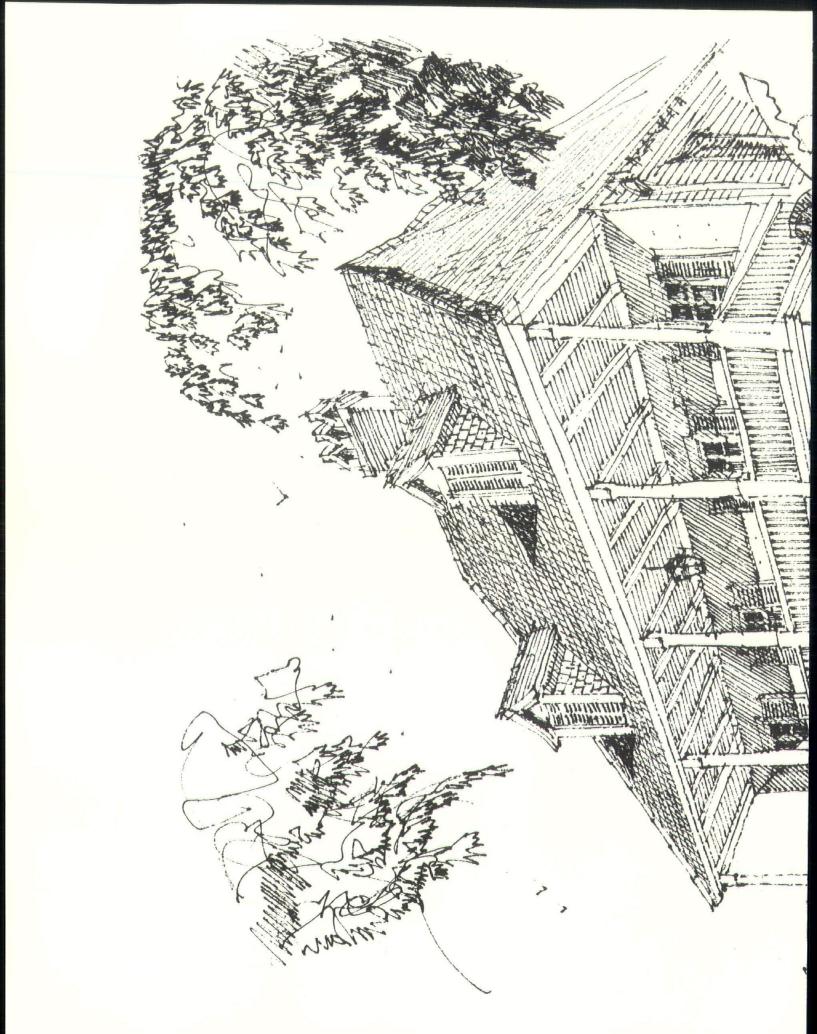


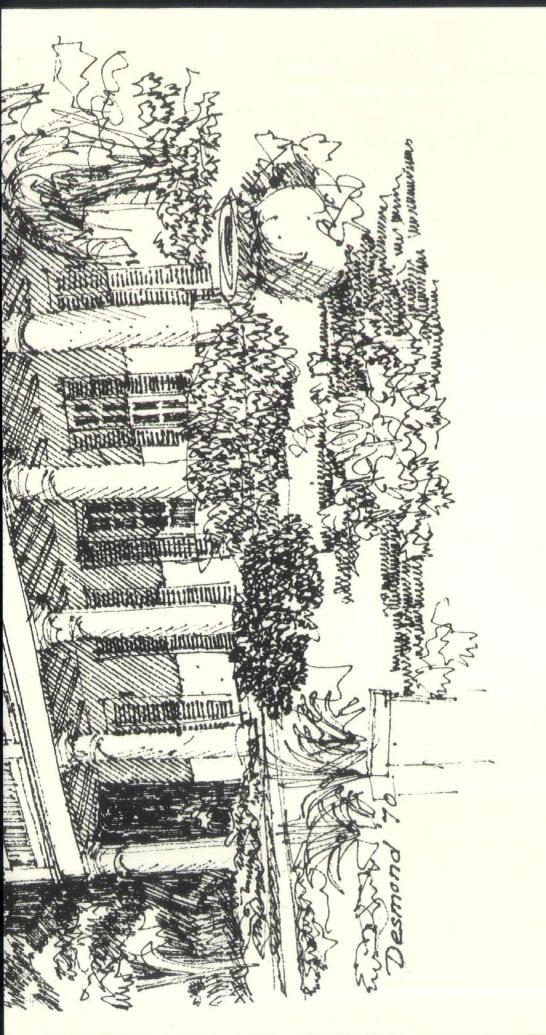
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Spanish Customs House

New Orleans

remain in this area. They all feature a masonry lower floor, with somewhat refined but direct and simple wood upper floors. The floor plans are such that they allow a direct cross ventilation in each room. This The so-called Spanish Customs House, built in 1784, is one of a collection of West Indian types which structure represents one of the periods in architecture when the forms had crystallized.

JOHN DESMOND, FAIA

1971 LAA HONOR AWARD

THE PARKTOWNE TOWNHOUSES - METAIRIE, LA.

Architects: Favrot and Shane Owner: Crusoe Properties



PROGRAM:

The program called for the design of a seventy-four unit complex of family rental housing on a four acre suburban site in as attractive a layout as possible, with a tight budget.

Each unit was to have a private yard area and off street parking and the requirements of the two-family zoning were to be strictly followed as to the layout of buildings on individual lots with proper setbacks.

SOLUTION:

In the solution, the buildings were staggered on the lots to preserve the existing trees and ground contours as much as possible and to provide the maximum variety.

In addition to the private fenced yards, a large common mall was developed for the use of all tenants, including three swimming pools, a variety of recreational facilities and landscaping. A maintenance and service building was also provided.

The buildings are of frame and brick veneer construction on concrete slabs and wood piles, with built up roofs and partial cedar shake exterior walls. The interiors contain all electric air conditioning and fully equipped kitchens and carpets and drapes.

All units consist of three bedrooms and 2 1/2 baths, and vary in size from 1700 to 1900 square feet.

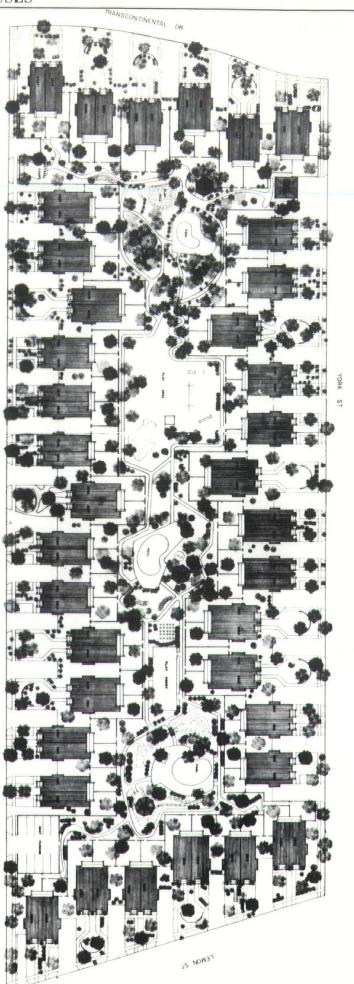
The total cost of the development, exclusive of land, landscaping, furniture and fees was \$1,218,000.00.

Photos by Frank Lotz Miller





SITE



14



In the past five years or so, a new word has gradually crept into the professional architect's lexicon. That word is "comprehensive," or, more accurately, "comprehensive services."

As the responsibilities and dependencies of modern life have multiplied and grown more complicated, so has the role of the architect. Originally just a fellow who designed buildings, the architect has, over the years, become not only a building designer, but also the coordinator, or administrator of a host of other functions improving on, or deriving from, the central act of building design. If he is to earn his keep, he must have at his command resources he had never heard of 15 or 20 years ago. Such things as feasibility studies of all sorts, land use and master planning, industrial flow patterns, construction management and a score of other, similar subjects that he never studied in school. Just how did the architect's job get so complicated?

It got that way because life in the 20th century is complicated. And the architect, in his essential role of planner, has become a planner of complicated things.

Once upon a time, J. P. Morgan decided to build a bank on Fifth Avenue. Mr. Morgan had no financing problems and he owned the site. So he hired the best known architect of his day, Stanford White, to design a prestigious, classical building. And that was all there was to it.

Today, the client is more likely to be a corporate body, the project big, complex and full

New Comprehensive Services

by Wm. R. Brockway, AIA

of technical problems. Very often the site for the project has not been selected at the time planning is begun. And financing must be planned as an integral part of the project development in order to obtain optimum benefits from the money and a maximum return on the investment. The project must be constructed in a limited period of time, for a limited budget, with a maximum degree of usefulness, structural integrity and beauty. If the project is very large, something like the Superdome in New Orleans or the Municipal Center in Baton Rouge, the architect's job can get very complicated indeed.

Construction management specialists are fond of breaking down the design professional's job into three categories: decision, design and delivery. The architect of J. P. Morgan's day was principally interested in only one of the three: design. Today, the architect is very much involved in the other two: decision and delivery. And this is what comprehensive services is all about.

Some of the "new" things architects are doing for their clients include:

Development Scheduling: The establishment of a time table for the development of the total project. This may include the development of a program, space planning and projections, site selection procedures, and financial planning.

Site Selection and Analysis: The study of alternative potential sites, to determine which is better, considering all factors. "All factors" may include studies of topography, soil conditions, utilities, accessibility and traffic flow, zoning, parking access, expansion possibilities and comparative development costs.

Site Utilization: A detailed study of a particular site to develop its maximum usefulness.

Economic Feasibility: This is a detailed study to determine whether the project, as proposed, will make money. This is done by comparing the probable development and operating costs against the probable merchandising potential, or perdicted income. This is a very specialized field and is frequently handled by consultants.

Land Use and Master Planning: The

preparation of a long-range plan for future overall development of the property, from which short-range objectives may be extrapolated.

Space Planning: A detailed study of the building area required for the project, based upon present requirements, numbers of personnel and special facilities, including projections for future expansion.

Function and Flow Studies: An analysis of the internal flow of materials and people to develop departmental adjacencies and interdepartmental circulation. This is the production-line concept of industry, applied to other situations.

Special Studies: In many instances, a particular project will require a technical analysis peculiar to that project alone, such as: materials handling, acoustical problems, power and utility usage, and other such engineering-oriented specialties.

Interior Design: The planning of the interior design and furnishing as an integral part of the overall project, rather than a later "add on."

Landscape Design: Planning the general site development, including streets and parking, walks, outdoor furniture, lighting, signs, lawns and planting.

Cost Control: The development of a procedure for periodically checking probable cost (or actual cost) against budgeted cost, during planning and construction phases, with alternatives planned to correct overruns as soon as they are detected.

Construction Management: This involves the planning, coordination and control of a project during construction. Full use is made of computer-oriented techniques of optimization. The two most prominent are PERT (Project Evaluation and Review Techniques) and CPM (Critical Path Method).

And that's about all there is to it. The architect is doing the same thing he has always done, and that is planning. The only difference is that planning means more now, both literally and figuratively, than it has at any other time in history.

And the job is getting bigger every day.

(cont. from p. 5)

much as the monumental insensitivity which wounds us more, I think, than we sometimes realize. Public officials are the curators of our public dignity, and we must stop having our dignity abused by them. We need not be a humorless people in demanding an end to it. Certainly those are the kinds of things which Patrick Moynihan had in mind when, recently, upon taking leave of the President's cabinet, he said, "What was once primarily a disdain for government has developed into a genuine mistrust." Our government must appear to be trustworthy before it can be. It is, after all, the only instrument for the orderly improvement of our social and cultural welfare, and the key to what is called quality of life.

Closer to home there is a war going on. (I am not talking about the longest and second largest war in our history, and the only one not engaged in according to constitutional prescription.) I am talking about the war between Jefferson Parish and the City of New Orleans. The bridge controversy is merely a skirmish in the larger war-a mere footnote on the whole story. At the moment, Jefferson Parish can flourish or appear to prosper only at the expense of New Orleans. The lure of no taxes is irresistible. What will happen, of course, and is happening, is that the racial balance in New Orleans, one of our greatest assets, will be destroyed and become irreversible about the time Jefferson Parish taxes must inevitably become competitive. But the damage will have been done, and God help us if this region becomes what so many in the north have become-a white doughnut with a black center!

There is a certain organic quality about our region. You can't find Los Angeles, even with its twelve million people. But here, there is a strong, identifiable center which, of course, is the historic City of New Orleans. The suburban parishes' fate is inexorably linked to that of New Orleans, and if New Orleans goes down so will they. There must be an end to petty parochial jealousies and offenses taken for alleged affronts. Consider these issues.

A virtually bankrupt City of New Orleans pays to the state seven times as much in property taxes as Jefferson Parish. That's bad enough, but Jefferson Parish gets back from the state five times as much as New Orleans! Who can belive in government like that? One

can only hope that the City's suit for redressing this patent injustice will be successful. What it amounts to is that the people of New Orleans are paying the taxes of the people in Jefferson Parish.

When the Mayor of New Orleans proposed that a tax be levied on those who sleep in suburbs but make their living in New Orleans and use its services, and that the suburban parishes have a similar and reciprocal tax, the same spiteful legislative paraphernalia which kept Urban Renewal out of this city for twenty years went into high gear. And then there is the mess about property assessments. Here, each parish has its own version of an intolerable situation. By high millage and low assessments, Jefferson Parish exacts more than its rightful share of revenue from the rest of the state, including New Orleans. In New Orleans, it is more a matter of inequality of assessments. The matter has been talked to death.

It is a problem of state-wide proportion—assessors brazenly ignoring the law they swear to uphold. (Incidentally, how's that for another side of the law and order issue?) It will be settled in the courts, and soon, we can hope, though not perhaps without constant and continuing public exposure. In the meantime, cracks are showing up in the notax, low-tax paradise, and without regional equality in taxation, will recur with greater frequency and be more serious in nature.

This all suggests to me that without effective and cooperative metropolitan government, the problems will get worse. New Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard and St. Tammany comprise a metropolitan whole, and to repeat, prosperity of one part at the expense of another can only be transient. The kinds of problems which exist today—in transportation, housing, racial distribution, pollution, and environmental harmony—cannot be solved within arbitrary lines or maps.

One face of the region is its physical face. An interstate highway roars through our center, trampling on a stable neighborhood of houses and shops and businesses. In the process, we destroyed what was perhaps the most beautiful grove of oak trees in Urban America—an irreplaceable luxury. We must never let this happen again. We seem to have developed something of a specialty for removing trees. Not only are trees beautiful, providing shape and

texture and color and shade, but they are necessary to the sustaining of life, since they are very much involved with the oxygen-carbon-dioxide equilibrium. Our sub-division planning has been very poor, removing mature trees by the thousands-making a desert of an oasis-and replacing a few of them with nursery saplings. I know that you can't fill low land around trees and have them survive, but I also know that subdivisions can be planned in such a way as to preserve clumps and groves. And who says all houses must be on slabs which, in turn, rest on fill? Working with the land and its natural features can give us something that others envy-the potential enriching of an indigenous architectural tradition.

And speaking of tradition, how sad it is to see it perverted by shutters nailed on the wall, by patronizing scraps of ironwork, and by mini-versions of plantation houses. There are obscenities other than the four-letter kind. We must face up to the fact that there has been an appallingly low level of public taste operative in our area. This can best be changed by a new commitment to quality, and the logical place to start is in public building. The design of a public building should not be a prize for a faithful or politically helpful friend, but should follow after a most careful consideration of the talent and other resources available; and this city has greatly neglected some of its best talent. It would be very much a step in the right direction if each division of government would publish explicitly how it hires architects and engineers, for example.

No civilization in all history has created such ugliness as we see on a drive from the airport to the center of New Orleans. Weeds, shells, trash, terrible buildings and thousands of worse signs. It must surely cause a visitor to wonder if this is indeed a city which forgot to care. But what does it do to us? We die a little every time we pass through it—numbed though we have been to this assault on our senses. By contrast, the more recent efforts to beautify some of the major boulevards in Jefferson Parish is a very hopeful development.

In eastern New Orleans, there is a road proposed which is dangerously close to two historic Indian mounds. There is still time to make a regional asset of these.

The presence of the past is a priceless advantage. Man cannot live only with

an ever-fleeting present and an unknown future. Visible remnants of our past are necessary to see what and where we have been. It is necessary for our sanity. The Vieux Carre is the region's best known, and its most important, man-made artifact. It is as important for its description of a vital style of urban living as it is for its historical significance, yet we blandly go on building stage sets, caricatures of reality. Our capacity for editing history seems boundless. Neither philosophical, artistic nor historical impulses are served in the process. As Professor Bernard Lemann (Tulane professor of architecture) has observed, "flaccid historicism is worse than other forms of destruction."

But the Vieux Carre and the Garden District are not all we have in the way of rich environmental fabric. Neighborhood after neighborhood, as catalogued throughout the city by Professor Lemann, has unique stores of vernacular architecture. Moreover, these are places where people want to live. The entire community must find ways to rehabilitate these houses where necessary, and to make them once again joyful places for black and white. It cannot be done without the help of government and the financial community. In Pittsburgh, banks have set aside a certain percentage of their reserves for these purposes, with remarkable results. Why can't we do the same?

A community in which more than 40 per cent of the houses are dilapidated or otherwise sub-standard is in deep trouble. Some few voices have been trying to alert us to this growing problem for a long time. The cost of housing is rising to the point where only one-fourth of the American public can now afford the median house cost of \$26,000. The housing crisis is spreading rapidly to the middle class. This is one reason why we must look as much to renewal as to new construction. And through renewal we retain a city with depth and historical dimension.

I am placing much hope in the mayor's announced plan to give the housing situation a whole new look. The other parishes of the region should be joined in this enterprised, for, like most everything else, housing is a metropolitan matter, and not merely a New Orleans problem. And it cannot be solved by the professional bureaucracy alone.

We must reclaim our river for much

more public use. The lake must be cleaned up. Let's make Canal Street beautiful. We can start with trees and paint, taking off, in the process, some of the instant architecture that's masking facades of character and distinction. A woman with beautiful hair doesn't wear wigs. Of course, most of the signs must go, or we're wasting our time. We have a hang-up about signs in this city. We even came in for prominent inclusion in a famous book on environmental atrocities.

I have not mentioned the port, but, quite obviously, it is our most important economic asset and a source of historical pride. It reminds us of why we are here. Others can particularize better than I can.

Now, is it all bad? Of course not. If it were, why would I or any of us be here? What's wrong can be remedied, if we will it to be, and what's right can be made better.

I was struck. . .when three former students visited the School on a Christmas holiday. Highly sophisticated young men, one is working as an architect in Amsterdam, another as a VISTA volunteer in New Hampshire, and the third is a graduate student at UCLA. If there wasn't something good for them about New Orleans, they wouldn't have been here. They lived here long enough to know the city and came to appreciate its qualities enough to come again. There are many others like them.

What is the source of the appeal? If it were easily described it wouldn't be worth having, and to describe it adequately is more than I can do. We can be sure it is compounded of the excitement of a great port, beautiful treed streets, layers of sophistication and naivete, a sense of place and identity, a civilized pace, charming neighborhoods which offer hope that the suburban antiseptic is not the only option, and perhaps it is even enriched on occasion by our colorful and pragmatic politics. Of one thing we can be certain—it is not based upon bigness. San Francisco is rejoicing because it has slipped from California's second to its fourth city in size. Venice is not large, but the world comes to its door. The modest Mediterranean cities of Arles, Aix-en-Provence, and Antibes are highly civilized places.

Houston, Dallas, Atlanta and Miami need not be our models. They are one thing, we another. If we set as our goal the making of a city which we want to live in—a decent and civilized place—and are willing to pay for it with money, imagination, and energy, there will be no shortage of tourists.

Cities' roles change in history. A narrow preservationist aloofness which fails to comprehend the dynamics of contemporary life will not do. Nor will the speculator who thinks the problem is to satisfy intricate government regulations instead of human needs do anything but harm. A sense of wholeness is needed by all, and, along with it, an uncompromising subscription to quality. From this alone, miracles can happen.

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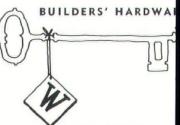
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