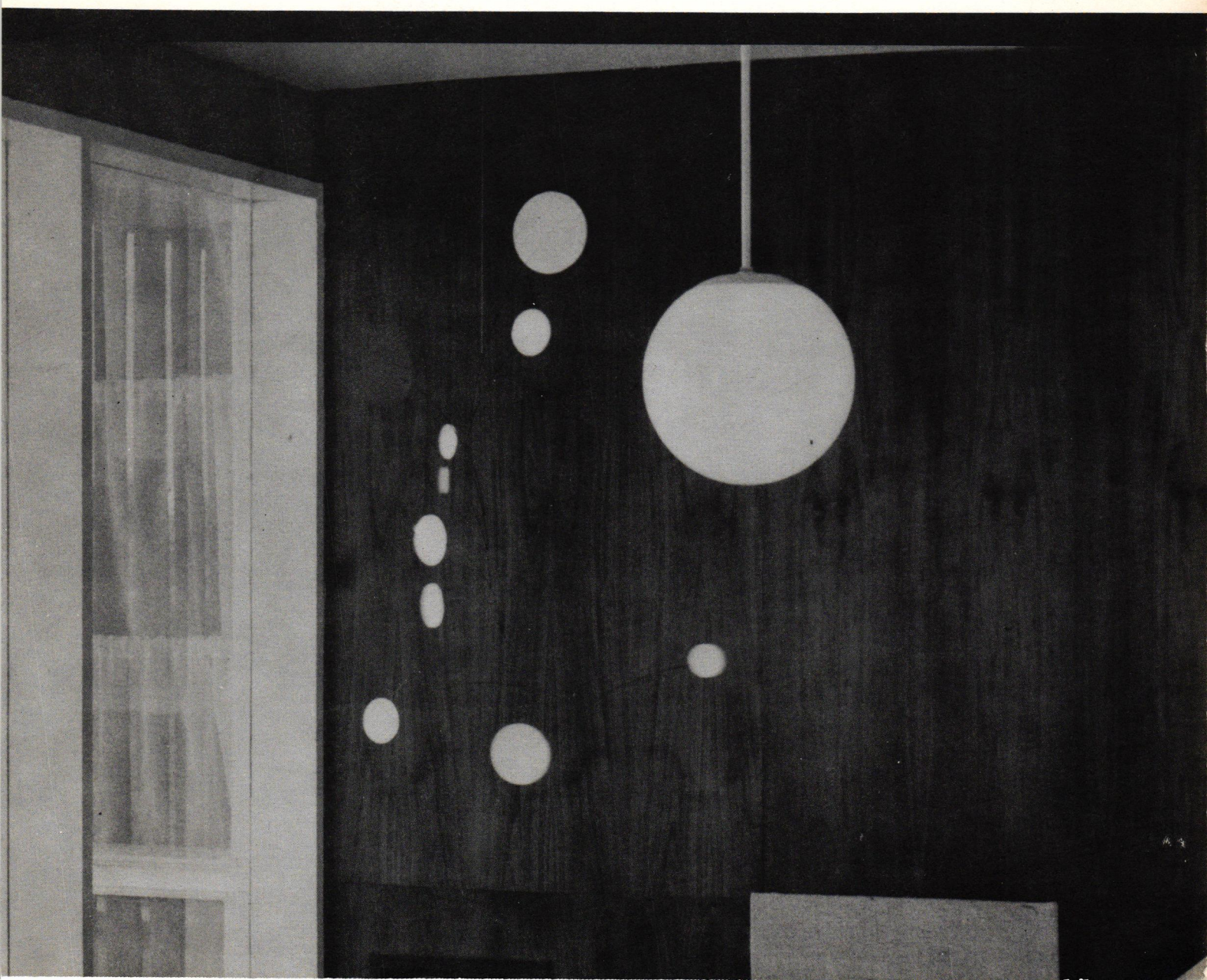


# ARCHITECTURE + MEMPHIS

*Dirp.*

JUNE, 1964

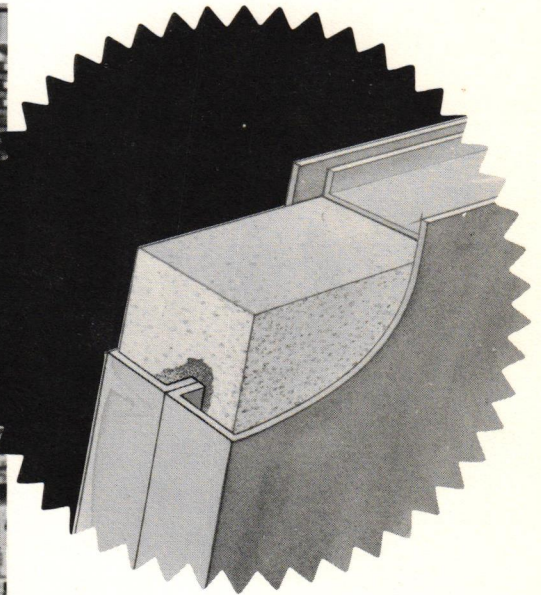
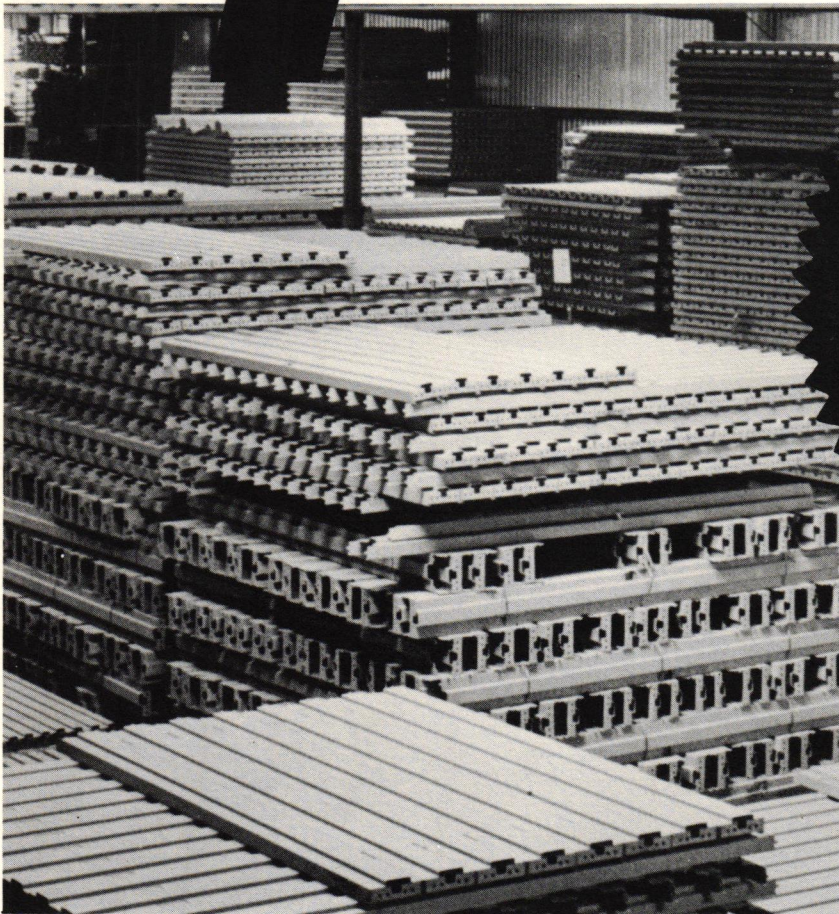




# 7

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## URBAN RENEWAL AND CHEAP CONSTRUCTION

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Memphis Housing Authority periodically advertises that it is ready to dispose of a particular piece of Urban Renewal land. The location, the zoning and usually a minimum asking price are included in the public notice. This information, supplemented by more specific information available at the MHA, is acted upon by interested promoters and developers. An economic analysis is made, costs are figured and anticipated profits are projected. The developer then submits a bid in dollars along with a schematic plan for the parcel in question.

It is the policy of the MHA to sell the land to the highest bidder as long as he agrees to build within the general framework as set out by MHA. To use the MHA phrase, the land goes to "the highest and best use". The decision as to which bid is acceptable is made by the MHA.

This sequence sounds quite proper and it would seem that the public is well served by the system. It has the hallmarks of healthy competition and one would assume that the public interest is well served. The question is, does the public receive the best possible return on the millions of tax dollars that are spent for Urban Renewal.

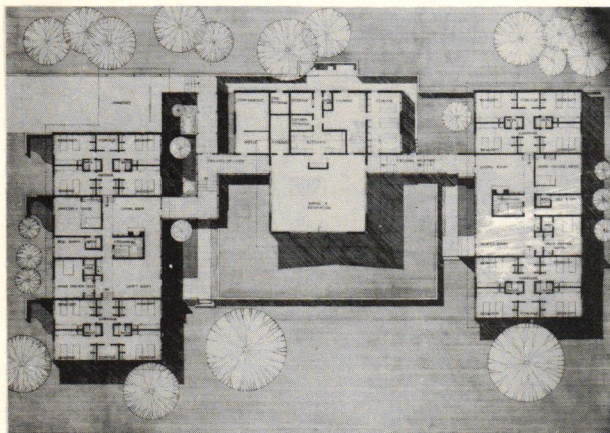
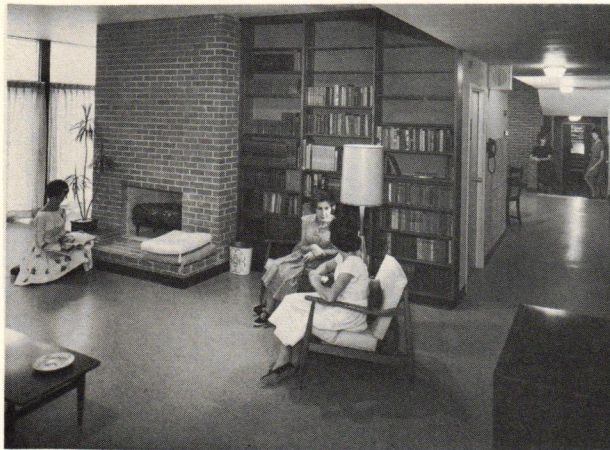
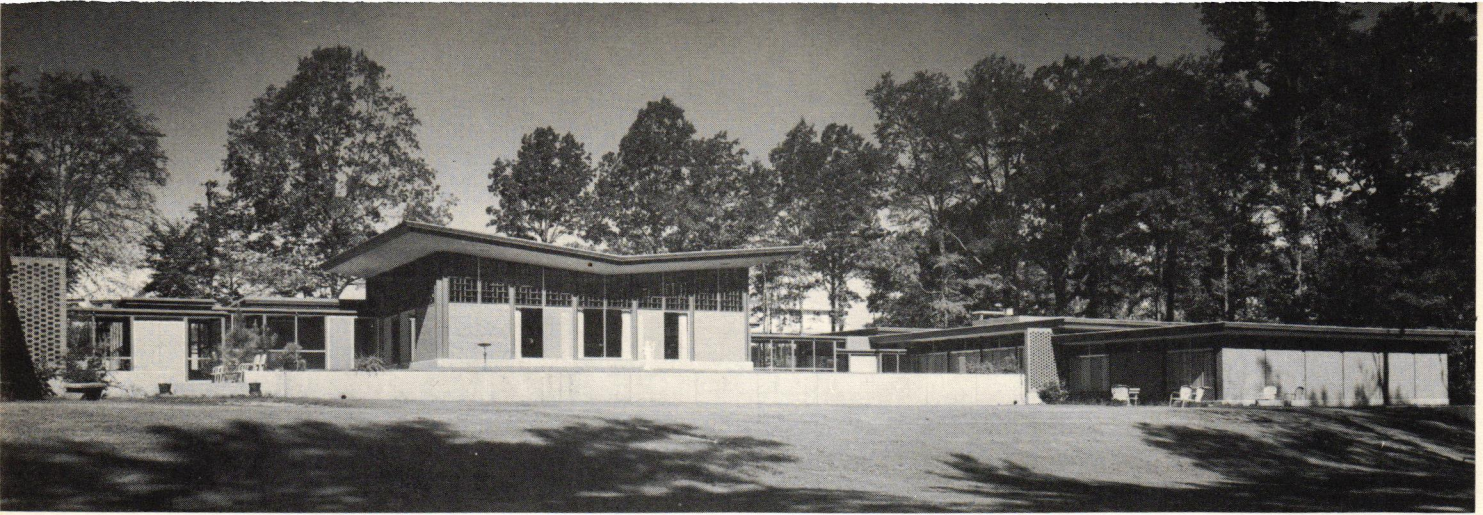
The developer is encouraged to bid as high as possible for the land in question, and in order to keep his profit margin at an acceptable level, he is indirectly forced to reduce his costs in other ways. The natural and inevitable result is that the developer builds as cheaply as he can. The system as it now operates discourages good design; it discourages quality construction, and it discourages the use of full, competent, architectural and engineering services. In short it replaces the old with the cheap and adds the strength of the Federal Government to the cause of the mediocre.

There is a solution of this apparent dilemma, it is one that would require the MHA to put much more emphasis on the architectural quality of a proposed project. To help the MHA set forth and recognize this needed good design, Memphis Chapter of the A.I.A. once again proposes the formation of a review board that would include architects to evaluate and pass on the quality of a particular development proposal.

MHA should not be concerned with getting the most money for a piece of ground; it should and must be concerned with providing the best possible solution to our pressing urban problems. The architects of this community are anxious to work for this goal.







## AN INSTITUTION THAT MEANS "HOME"

ARCHITECTS: GEORGE AWSUMB & SONS

Nestled among the shadows of many large trees at 3232 East Raines Road is an institution that is so in name only. Few people refer to it as an institution because it actually is "home" to more than 30 girls.

The Episcopal Church Home is an excellent example of mood creation through architecture as interpreted by the firm of George Awsumb & Sons. Their primary objective was to "design housing for 30 to 32 girls of school age from broken homes, provide the necessary dining and recreational facilities and supervisory arrangements without taking on an institutional character."

At the same time, the architects sought a design that would blend with the rolling, tree-covered site that eventually will be in the heart of a residential area.

Residents of the home are organized into four groups according to age and school levels. Each group of about eight girls is assigned a house-mother. The grouping and the architect's desire to achieve residential character led to a modified cottage type plan giving partial separation of the girls, yet consolidating eating, laundry and other common facilities.

Requirements of the dining and recreational facilities gave the designer on one hand an opportunity for further separation and on the other hand a means of unifying the program through the central dining and recreational hall. The hall became a strong design element with the two residential buildings balanced on either side.

*(Continued on page 12)*