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THE ARCHITECT AND THE PLANNER

by ARTHUR K. STELLHORN, *Director of Planning*
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Basically, the architect and the planner have much in common.

They are primarily concerned with the problem of achieving the best possible combination of the esthetic and functional in their designs; they strive for the most efficient use of land with which they are concerned; they attempt to provide a measure of flexibility with an eye to the changing needs and conditions of the future.

Both the architect and the planner have a wealth of tradition and theory to draw upon in adaptation of design to given situations. Each feels keenly the desire for self-expression through new and untried forms.

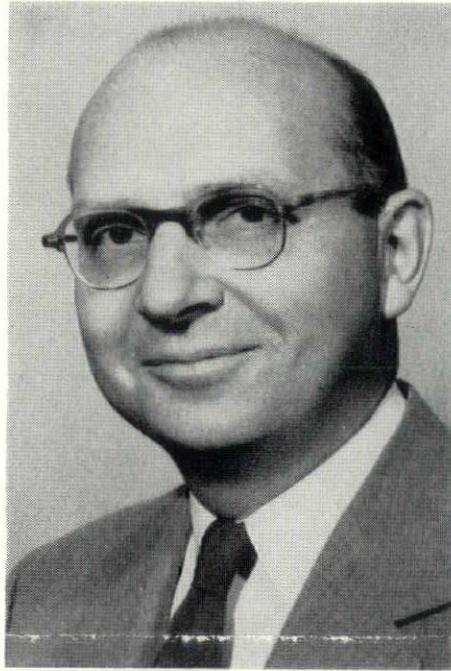
Of course there are many points of difference, not the least of which are the respective starting points of the two groups. The architect generally is called in by his client before the damage is done. That is to say, he is given the opportunity to start from the ground up with his design. He can change topography, within reasonable limits, to achieve the most harmonious relationship between building and land. For these reasons, the architect can, within limits of his client's financial ability, design exactly what his client desires.

Meanwhile, the planner is all too often a late-comer on the scene. He rarely has the opportunity to begin his design prior to the establishment of many fixed, and usually harmful, land uses. He must accept topography as he finds it. Thus he must be content with adapting his plan to existing man-made and natural conditions.

The methods used by the two professional groups offer striking parallels.

In the case of the architect the structural framework is the key to the ultimate design of a building. The framework must support the final design.

The planner must start with a structural framework also—in this case the highway network.



The Potomac Valley Architect is happy to present the views of the new Director of Planning for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the subject of the relationship of the architect and the planner.

Mr. Stellhorn has been with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission since 1954, prior to which time he served as a community planner in the Federal Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment Agency. With the resignation of William C. Burrage last December, Mr. Stellhorn was appointed the chief planning official of M-NCPPC.

Mr. Stellhorn, who is 49, is a graduate of the University of Michigan and holds a Master of Arts degree in landscape architecture and city planning. He resides in the Wheaton area of Montgomery County with his wife and two daughters.

Highways form the walls and partitions as well as the corridors for circulation in a community. They also provide the conduits for public utilities. Within this framework are many individual segments of land which may be compared to the floors of a modern building.

The planner has the opportunity to design within these areas, subject to the limitations of topography and existing land uses, the best possible arrangement of secondary roads, the locations for public services, such as schools and parks, and the intensity of residential, commercial or industrial development.

In so doing, he may not ignore the economic factors. Just as the architect does, the planner must give due consideration to the cost of development. Areas to be developed in different population densities—i.e., single family, garden type or high-rise apartments—should take into account locations with respect to access, utilities, terrain and compatibility of nearby land uses. A large commercial center could not be expected to survive amid a vast expanse of semi-rural land development. School facilities logically should be located as nearly as possible to the center of the area to be served. Industrial activities obviously should be separated from other land uses with which they clash.

The architect plays a major role in the achievement of the planner's land use designs. The urban planner of today is constantly seeking harmony among land uses. He attempts wherever possible to drive a wedge of open space between intensive land uses. In achieving this goal of openness he must rely to a great extent on the architect. A plan for a large commercial center, for example, can be so designed as to merely meet the minimum standards for open spaces around it or it can be so designed as to pro-

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NEXT REGULAR MEETING

12 Noon, March 2, 1959
Stone House Inn
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April Meeting — April 6, 1959

Two New County Projects

Plans are moving ahead for construction of a Gaithersburg Branch Library and a County detention facility for Montgomery County prisoners, according to John Blake Murphy, county architect.

Secretary Milt Prassas will do the Gaithersburg branch library which will be located on the northwest corner of Brooks and Park Avenues, and John F. Stann the detention facility which will occupy the county poor farm property at Seven Locks Road and U.S. 240.

The library, which will supplement existing library facilities in Gaithersburg, will be residential in character and contain general distribution areas plus adult and children study rooms. The structure which will contain five to six thousand square feet is budgeted at approximately \$85,000.

Because of the general character of offenses in Montgomery County requiring detention of inmates, the new detention building will have a very low percentage of maximum security facilities and a high percentage of minimum security accommodations.

The Architect and the Planner

(continued from page 1)

vide a maximum of open area both for parking and for esthetic effect. This choice is made by the architect and his client, not by the planner. This same principle applies whether the architect is designing an office building, an apartment project or a housing development.

The appearance of our community today mirrors the extent to which the architect and the planner have adhered to the basic principle—achieving the best possible combination of the esthetic and the functional.

Chapter Opposes Changes In Zoning Ordinances

A formal presentation opposing certain proposed changes in Montgomery County Zoning Ordinances was made by Chapter President Charles B. Soule at a hearing before the Montgomery County Council on February 9. The proposed text changes would prohibit lesser uses such as residential and apartment buildings in commercially and industrially zoned areas and would closely limit commercial uses in industrially zoned property.

In a statement which the Chapter had directed the Executive Committee to prepare, Mr. Soule pointed out that the incident which had provoked the council to change the ordinance was a remote one and unlikely to recur. (These text amendments were prepared in the wake of objection by residential landowners in an area of the county where a shopping center had originally been proposed on commercial land but where apartments are now to be included in the project.)

"The development of industrial and commercial land for uses of less density, such as retail stores in connection with industrial zones and apartments in commercial zones," Mr. Soule stated, "results in more open planning, a feature which is continually stressed by planners as desirable."

Mr. Soule further stated: "On large commercial tracts of land it is frequently unfeasible economically to develop them fully commercial. Apartments are needed not only to round out the project but to create a market for the

retail outlets and to serve as a buffer strip between shops and adjacent single family residential areas. The proposed amendments, then, would inflict hardship upon the developers and would tend to discourage large operations."

Noting the effect on existing structures of lesser use in commercial zones, our president pointed out that should this legislation pass these buildings would become subject to the Non-Conforming Use sections of the ordinance and that in the event of destruction or serious damage by fire, flood or similar cause, such buildings could not be reconstructed for the purpose of carrying on the non-conforming use and the owners would be virtually put out of business.

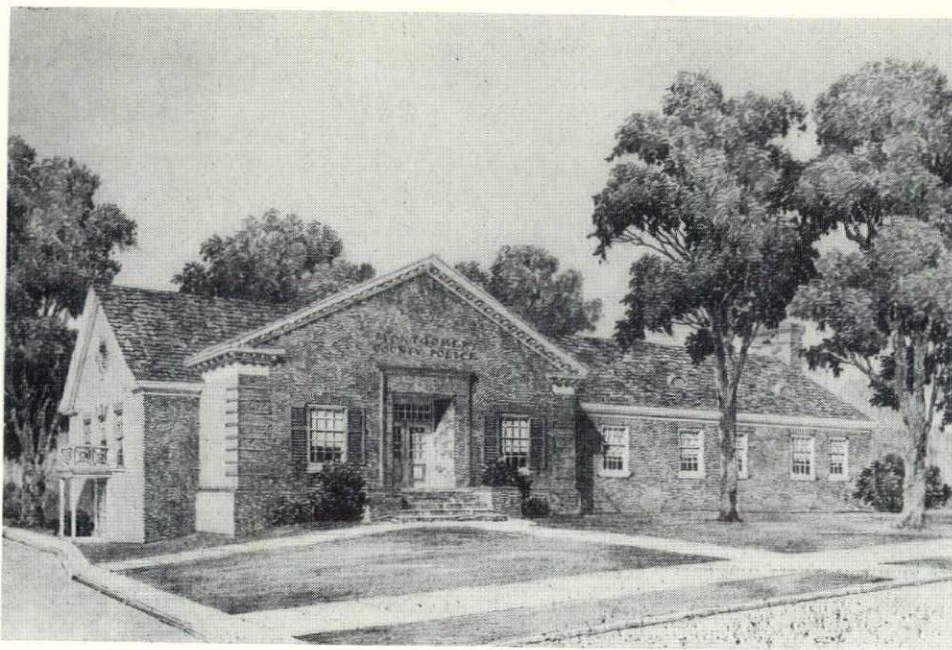
On the subject of restricted commercial uses in industrial zones, Mr. Soule cited the hardship in an industrial park should several industrial plants wish to collectively provide a restaurant, a small shopping center, or even a bowling alley for the convenience of their employees but by the proposed text would be restricted to the use of only a small percentage of space in each industrial building.

A group of over two hundred were present at the hearing with support and opposition almost equally divided among approximately thirty speakers. The County Council currently has the proposition under executive consideration.



SMILES OF APPRECIATION and approval by the Soules reflect the entire Chapter's gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Edwin B. Morris for the grand evening we had at Olney Inn on January 28. Left to right: Mr. Morris, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Charles Soule and Chapter President Soule.

Colonial Police Station



An attractive building of colonial design will house Montgomery County Police in their new location in Wheaton. Bagley-Soule & Associates are the architects for this spanking new addition to the fast-growing Wheaton community, which will look more like a library than the conventional precinct house.

Bids on the building will go out this month at a probable cost of \$160,000. The two-story structure will contain police lockers, storage and detention cells on the ground floor with public lobby, police offices, Justice of the Peace facilities, roll call room, detective offices

and police classroom on the first floor. Parking for 72 cars will be available in the rear.

The site of the building is about 400 feet from the intersection of Georgia Avenue and the Glenmont Road, adjacent to the Kensington Fire House. The building will house a police detachment of 45 at the beginning, with facilities for a 90-man detachment if necessary. The area to be covered by the headquarters force will be roughly the northeast segment of the County from Plyers Mill Road to the Howard County line.

AIA Federal Budget Report Shows Slack in New Starts

With Federal budget talk so prominent in the news today, AIA recently had Robinson Newcomb, prominent economic consultant, analyze budgetary proposals in the light of their impact on the architect's workload.

Mr. Newcomb's report: "Increased Federal spending for construction in 1960 will not mean more work for architects. In fact, work reaching architects' boards as a result of Federal action in fiscal 1960 will probably decrease compared to fiscal 1959. It may be still less in 1961, unless the present trend is reversed."

The reason for this prediction, according to Mr. Newcomb, seems to be the fact that any increased spending for construction will affect primarily those projects which have already been authorized and for which commitments have already been made.

Assuming that the proposed budget survives Democratic opposition in Congress, Economist Newcomb believes that there are not likely to be any new large-scale public works or construction projects or significant Federal boosts to private housing in the next two years.

Mr. Newcomb does point to some items in the budget which the architect should watch and

ventures some predictions on what the Democratic Congress may do about them. They are:

—Housing support. A slackening is indicated here also on the assumption that 1960 will be prosperous. The Democrats, however, are pressing for housing legislation in the face of a veto threat from the White House.

—FHA mortgage insurance authority would be continued with somewhat relaxed rules. The Democrats, however, would not only liberalize the terms but may propose special help to veterans and communities where credit is scarce.

—Urban renewal would be cut back from the present two-thirds to one-third Federal-Local ratio to one to one over a five-year period. The Democrats want more than the \$250 million requested but even if granted architects would not feel the impact for some time.

—College housing will be continued and there is some indication that local agencies may receive more help in selling their obligations to finance school outlays.

—Federal office building and Veterans hospitals would see no new rise in construction.

—An increase is expected, however, in Capitol Hill, GSA, and Post Office buildings as well as in Corps of Engineers construction.

HERE and ELSEWHERE

A REMINDER

The Regional Conference of the Middle Atlantic District is just two weeks away—March 13 and 14. The Greenbriar Hotel at White Sulphur Springs will supply a charming locale for what is billed as an "informal" get-together. John D. Owen, 612 First Colony Life Building, Lynchburg, Virginia, is the man to contact for reservations.

CAPITOL COLUMNS

A national competition may result from the suggestion of Horace Peaslee of the Washington Metropolitan Chapter that the original columns of the Capitol be used as a memorial.

The Awards and Exhibits Committee of the Chapter now has the matter under consideration and is expected to submit a program for a national competition on the design of such a memorial to be sponsored either by the Chapter in cooperation with other agencies or by the Institute.

Also of possible interest to Potomac Valley Chapter members is a suggestion by the Washington Chapter that their members take a stand pro or con on the subject of Preservation of Historic Buildings by writing letters to the editor or by other private action. The suggestion stems from a recent series of articles in the Washington Post on the question of preserving or demolishing the Old State Building in Washington.

ARCHITECTURAL PHOTO EXHIBIT UNDERWAY

The Octagon Gallery will be the scene of AIA's 3rd Exhibition of Architectural Photography through March 11. The thirty-six photographs currently on display were selected by a jury of architects and architectural photographers. Purpose of the exhibition, to which any professional photographer may submit entries, is to recognize and encourage outstanding work in the field and to demonstrate its value to the architectural profession.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PURSUES UNIV. OF MD. SCHOOL PROJECT

Maryland University officials continue to receive information from chapter members and AIA officials on the needs and requirements of a School of Architecture at the State institution.

The project which is under the supervision of Chairman MacIntire of the Education Committee in liaison with the Baltimore Chapter, is extremely long range in nature. If and when the school is established, University officials apparently will demand a top quality department and staff.

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