



POTOMAC VALLEY ARCHITECT

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Vol. 4, No. 5

The Architect and City Planning

LOUIS JUSTEMENT, F.A.I.A.
City Planner

Twenty years ago there was great activity in the Washington Chapter with respect to city planning. There was enough interest, among the younger members and associates, to prepare a rather ambitious exhibit called "Washington, the planned city without a plan" that stirred up quite a controversy.

Today interest in city planning—or for that matter, in architectural design—does not seem to be as keen as it was then. What has happened? Those young men who were then so active are no longer young but why has their place not been taken by the next generation? There are probably many reasons but here are a few that suggest themselves: Prosperity has made us all so busy that we have not had the leisure that so many of us disposed of—involuntarily—in the terrible thirties. Perhaps a certain amount of adversity is good for the development of an architect's character and ability.

Dispersion of the city has brought about dispersion of architects' homes—and a disinclination to come back downtown again for Chapter activities.

Complexity of city planning has brought about resignation and defeat on the part of creative planners and architects.

Traditional architectural design advocates are now in full retreat and there is no longer any controversy—except that now nobody knows what good design is.

It may be that all these things don't matter too much and that the world will go on very much the same whether we worry about them or not. But some of the old-timers who remember the—perhaps mistaken—zeal and enthusiasm for city planning and architecture which they experienced during those terrible thirties, feel that something is missing.

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Better Environment Thru Design

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

Ever since the first caveman decided to build a summer home in the valley below his hillside cavern, man has been seeking new ways to improve his surroundings. In the dawn of civilization these efforts were of little social consequence since men were few and far between and their building efforts lacked permanence.

Time and technology have had their effects on both of these factors so that today there is real concern about the dangers of both overpopulation and the durability of man's "improvements" upon his surroundings.

One need reflect only briefly on the ugliness of the smoke, traffic and people-clogged cities and the uninspired monotony of subdivisions on the treeless plains called suburbia to fully appreciate the quotation marks around the word improvements.

There is little that either the architect or the planner can do about population expansion beyond accepting the fact that our plans must be adapted to this phenomenon. But the second problem is clearly an area in which our professions have more than passing interest and responsibility.

Some months ago, in the March 1959 issue of this bulletin, I commented on the similarities of method and technique employed by both the architect and the planner. The theme of this article, one in a series on the topic "Better Environment Thru Design", offers an opportunity to point out another striking parallel between our two professions—our constant ei-

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Since all three of the above articles are related, we are publishing them in the same issue.*

Country Planning

JACK C. COHEN, A.I.A.

Our upper county is in the state of development that the lower county was in twenty years ago: we let the opportunity of properly planning for the development of the lower county slip through our fingers. How ironic that the District of Columbia should have a functioning and esthetic plan when it was planned without benefit of prior knowledge of the automobile, the great population growth, and the wealth of the community that was to come.

We knew all these things and many more and yet all but those less than ten years old have seen Wheaton and similar communities sprawl out right before our eyes with no apparent plan. Now we have another opportunity for proper development in the Rock Creek Watershed and many of our alert Citizens' Groups as well as our professional planners are aware of the golden opportunity for planned beauty that could be realized in this area. All are in agreement with the basic desire of open space, large park areas, and the desirability of protecting the Watershed from soil erosion.

Mr. Arthur K. Stelhorn, Director of Planning of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and his staff have approached this end by recommending that the majority of the residential land be zoned one acre, two acre and one-half acre minimum lot sizes. They feel that by limiting the density of land usage, they will preserve openness and cut down soil erosion. The large land owners of the Watershed feel that this type of zoning will only delay development of the sewerable land, as it will be uneconomical to run sewer and water to large lots, and as the economic pressure develops for sewerable land in the next ten years, the cycle of requests for spot zoning will repeat as it has in the lower county.

They further feel that zoning such large areas one zone will result in the monotonous same-

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NEXT REGULAR MEETING

12 Noon, January 6, 1960

Brook Farm Restaurant

7101 Brookville Rd., Chevy Chase, Md.
February Meeting — February 3, 1960

Chapter Donates To Help Acquire Rare Collection

In response to an appeal from the Maryland Historical Society that the society had an opportunity to acquire and retain in Maryland the Benjamin Latrobe architectural collection, the Potomac Valley Chapter has donated \$100 toward its acquisition.

The chapter is in receipt of a very nice letter from the Director of the Maryland Historical Society expressing the society's appreciation of this action.

Country Planning

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ness that is Wheaton, but on a grander scale. The land owners' organization plan which S. E. Sanders & Associates developed for the Watershed recommends doubling the number of families for the area but by concentrating them in the high areas and proposing some multi-family land usage, achieves 1,000 acres more park land than does the M-NCPPC plan. Both plans have many points both for and against them. It would behoove all the citizens, but most particularly the architects (who will have to work with this zoning as well as live with it) to carefully study each plan and gather the salient features of each into a recommended program.

As this is one of the most important phases of good design which will have a long range effect on the community and future generations, we must be sure we have achieved the best possible plan for our community. Failure to do so can only lead to the type of chaos of which there are now too many examples, and will foist the evils of our generation onto our children.

Architectural Journalism Awards Competition

Cash prizes totaling \$1500 have been offered by the American Institute of Architects for the best news or feature story on an architectural subject or personality published during 1959 in a newspaper or magazine.

The news or feature articles may be submitted by either the author, the publication or any chapter of the AIA.

Any daily newspaper or magazine available to the general public whose circulation is not limited to a specific membership group or organization is eligible to compete. Professional architectural magazines are excluded from the contest.

Entries must have been published between January 1, 1959 and December 31, 1959. A tear sheet of the published story or article should be submitted; not the original copy.

Two prizes will be awarded in each of the two categories—newspaper and magazine.

A \$500 cash award will go to the writer of the best news story or feature on an architectural subject or personality published in a United States newspaper during 1959. A \$250 award will be given to the writer of the news story chosen as second best.

Another \$500 cash award will go to the writer of the best article on an architectural subject or personality published by a United States magazine during 1959. The writer of the second best article will receive \$250.

Entries must be postmarked not later than January 30, 1960. No entries will be returned. Entries should be mailed to Architectural Journalism Awards, The American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

Each entry should be accompanied by a letter giving the name and address of the author; the name and address of the newspaper or magazine in which the story was published; and a notation as to whether the entry is submitted in the newspaper or magazine class. Each envelope or package should be clearly marked ARCHITECTURAL JOURNALISM AWARDS.

Entries will be judged by a jury of professional writers and architects. The awards will be announced not later than April 1, 1960. Presentation of cash awards and Certificates of Merit will be made by AIA Chapters in the communities of the winners.

This competition presents an opportunity for individual chapter members to bring to the attention of their chapter any worthwhile article for possible submission by the chapter.

January Guest

Guest of the Potomac Valley Chapter at its January 6 luncheon meeting will be Archibald C. Rogers, outgoing president of the Baltimore Chapter AIA.

Environment

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fort to combine beauty and harmony within the framework of functional design. By contrast, the engineer's concern is primarily one of functional design—whether he is charting an express highway or blueprinting a new subdivision. This is simply a statement of fact and is not intended as a criticism of the creative effort and talent of the engineering profession.

It is the very durability of man's constructive genius with which we are and should be concerned as professional people, for what we are building today may well be the ghosts that will haunt future generations. Today's teeming tenements, the answer of an earlier generation to the housing problems generated by another population boom, should cause us to reflect on the alternative means of housing today's spiraling population growth. The chaotic condition of our transportation network, due largely to the failure to provide for the future expansion of major thoroughfares, should force an idealistic rather than mechanistic appraisal of such devices as building setback requirements. And the loss of the one major amenity we all sought in our flight to the suburbs, open space, should cause us to more fully explore the rationale of our fetish to "get the most out of" a given developmental effort.

Like a mirror, the community will reflect the collective character of its builders. The danger stems from our unwillingness to hold up our community to the mirror of critical self-analysis, to discover where we have erred and to remedy the shortcomings of law which permitted the mistakes to occur.

If we sincerely wish to create a better community environment, it surely can come about only by constant adherence to the basic principle of good design—that is, achieving the best possible combination of the esthetic and the functional.

Washington CSI Unit To Meet

The next meeting of the Washington Chapter of the Construction Specification Institute will be held on January 19 at 7:30 P.M. at the National Housing Center.

The subject of the meeting will be: Electrical Work and Illumination.

City Planning

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Perhaps there is a way out of the complacency which seems to have overcome the profession. Perhaps a few of us could discuss design and planning problems at lunch as though they were serious and worth-while subjects even though it is too much to expect that an entire chapter would be interested in devoting an evening to them.

Good Design Pays

The Baltimore Chapter, through its fine publication, ARCHITECTS REPORT, recently answered a "mild controversy about the aesthetics of our public buildings" with the following provocative editorial on the subject, "Good Design Pays":

"The principle is, to wit, that it is good to have professional architectural opinion exercised on the plans for new public structures to make certain that they are economical, embody the best principles of design and are indeed suitable for their sites. This seemingly uncontroversial principle became the pinwheel for discussion when, in the words of one public official, there appeared to be some question about the quality of architectural service received by the City of Baltimore in years past. To this questioning note was added the further fear that an architectural review board, such as that proposed to the City, could as easily be bad as it could be good for the city—good if it stimulated municipal officials and taxpayers to be aware of design and architecture, but bad if it merely presented a roadblock to plans and improvements.

"What concerns us, as professional architects, is not this specific question. What really disturbs us is the underlying misconception, even suspiciousness, of architecture which it represents. The superficial debates about the superiority of one building to another will always be present; to translate that familiar Latin proverb, 'about taste there can be no dispute.' And, so long as the architectural profession remains a free, unfettered and unregimented art, it's certain that one architect, seeing the problem through his own eyes, will design his structure quite unlike his fellow architect might design his. Further, it is pure nonsense to say that 'bad architecture' inevitably stems from 'low budgets', for any responsible architect is competent to achieve economical and workable buildings which, notwithstanding, are aesthetically pleasing.

"The nub of this question is not isolated opinions about architecture, but what the architectural profession, as a democratic force in the community, has to offer to the client—be it the individual house-builder or the municipal engineer. And the answer to this is that above all else the architect stands foursquare on the principle that good design pays. It pays the entrepreneur. It pays the municipal government. And, in this sense, it likewise rewards the taxpayer who, after all, pays for public construction and has to live in it, work in it, and look at it long after the architect has departed the scene."

Awards Issue

It's not too soon to start preparing for the Potomac Valley Chapter's Biennial Awards Competition which will be featured in our special June Awards Issue. It will be open to all registered Maryland architects. Details coming soon.

Industry Invited

Industrial architecture is highlighted in a recently released booklet prepared by the Potomac Electric Power Company of Washington, D. C., designed to attract industry to the rapidly growing Washington Metropolitan area.

The attractive twenty-one page brochure contains air view maps of some of the many industrial parks which have sprung up in Maryland and Virginia with inset photographs of the many modern "garden type" industries which are already located here.

In addition reproductions are also inserted showing large modern institutions which are not necessarily part of an industrial park.

Some of the benefits cited for industry locating in the area are the wealth of highly skilled personnel, a strategic location, excellent transportation facilities, high income level, vibrant growth record and outstanding cultural, educational and recreational advantages.

The individual industrial parks which are air-viewed in detail are also keyed on a master map covering the broad general area.

A fund of information sources are listed such as the locations and addresses of the various chambers of commerce, industrial development groups, and public bodies such as the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Scheduled for wide distribution and as an adjunct to the various brochures already available both privately and publicly, the booklet presents a most attractive picture of industrial life in the Washington Metropolitan area.

Chapter Firms Make Studies On Two County Buildings

Two chapter firms have undertaken schematic studies of two Montgomery County buildings.

The firm of Thomen and Cromar is working on a schematic study of a county service building and parking building for Bethesda to be erected on existing county property.

A similar type study of a county service building for Silver Spring at Grove St. and Sligo Ave. on a site selected by the Montgomery County Council is being processed by the firm of Rinaudot and Coupard.

Tentative Dinner Dance Cancelled

A review of chapter activities for the remainder of the year—governed generally by the extent of the work necessary for the Potomac Valley Chapter's Awards Competition and Banquet—has led to a decision to cancel the chapter Dinner-Dance tentatively planned for January 30.

It is planned that such an event will become part of the chapter program during the intervening year between Awards Competitions.

HERE and ELSEWHERE

Governor Appoints Rogers

Archibald C. Rogers, outgoing president of the Baltimore Chapter AIA, has been appointed by Maryland's Governor Tawes to a five-year term on the Board of Examination and Registration of Architects.

He fills a vacancy on the Board which was held by William F. Stone, Jr.

Baltimore CSI Group Growing

Reports from the Baltimore Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute which was formed less than a year ago on April 30, 1959 are that the organization has grown to more than thirty members.

Temporary officers for this group are: President, Alan Gerson; Vice President, James R. Edmunds III; and Secretary-Treasurer, Andrew B. Koppleman.

Washington Chapter Secretary Honored

Mrs. MacHatton, well-known Executive Secretary of the Washington Chapter, was recently honored at a chapter Christmas Dinner on the occasion of her retirement after many years of faithful service to the chapter.

Succeeding Mrs. MacHatton will be Mrs. Mageau, whose husband is associated with the Octagon.

Convention Bound?

With the New Year rolling around, time is already creeping up on the AIA Convention which will be held in San Francisco on April 18-22.

It's not too early to be making some plans and checking with fellow chapter members as to who will be going.

Metal Lath Suspended Ceiling Supplement

Technical Bulletin No. 12, Supplement No. 3 relating to Metal Lath Suspended Ceilings is now available for free distribution from the Metal Lath Manufacturers Association, Engineers Building, Cleveland, Ohio.

With special emphasis on "Lighting Details", this 2-page supplement is a valuable aid in providing metal lath and plaster data. Details relating to light troughs in a suspended metal lath and plaster ceiling; light trough attached to a wall; reflected ceiling plans with troffer openings; and a typical section through a light troffer in membrane fireproofing are included.

Available for architects, engineers, contractors, and specification writers in the design and construction fields, TB 12-3 is a time saver, according to the Association.

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