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POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER OF MARYLAND

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The articles in this magazine represent the personal opinions of the authors and/or the editor and should not be construed as representing the viewpoint of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the A.I.A.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

A view of the Stavrou Building, Silver Spring, Maryland. Architects are Cohen, Haft, AIA & Associates. Photo by Robert C. Lautman.

NEW ADDRESSES

Stann & Hilleary, AIA, Architects have dissolved their partnership and will practice architecture individually. Their addresses are

JOHN F. STANN, AIA
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JAMES F. HILLEARY, AIA
1749 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Maryland
Telephone 427-7086

JUNE MEETING

Time and Place to be Announced

NEWS and OPINION

by NEIL R. GREENE AIA

Silver Spring Building Boom is accelerating, and this on the surface is a healthy sign. Not so — for there is neither plan nor planners. With the enthusiasm now current, now is the time for developing a pattern for an intelligent urban planning scheme. Now is the time to prevent the ultimate congestion and characterless facade that accompanies poorly planned higher density. It is the responsibility of the County Council and the Planning Commission to recognize that Maryland's second largest city needs its own City Planning Commission. The Commission will need graduate city planners, planners who plan cities, not just the sewers, streets and subdivisions. The Council and the Commission know of the work of SILVER SPRING PROGRESS and the SILVER SPRING MASTER PLAN of the Potomac Valley Chapter, AIA.

Why is there no action? How long can a city exist with impressive "World," "Summit" and "Metro" office buildings, still have 3-foot sidewalks, stockade fences around parking lots, uncontrolled ugliness everywhere and yet still be without a single worthwhile planning project — not even a nice place to visit?

More Dam Plans revealed by the Corps of Engineers report. The \$500 million plan, in a 9-volume report for the development of the Potomac River Basin, includes a high dam at Seneca, 15 other dams and 418 headwater reservoirs in a 50-year development. Objections to the plan are widespread, particularly concerning the flooding of the C & O Canal footpaths, wiping out the present Seneca as we know it, exposing miles of mudflats in dry spells, and inundating thousands of acres of choice farm and residential areas. The sensible and economical plea of the citizenry is in favor of purification, which has been demonstrated to be 100 per cent effective, and better control of industrial sewage. This surely is superior to the Corps plan for

EVENTS and EXHIBITIONS

AIA OCTAGON

Opening May 22
School Architecture

NATIONAL HOUSING CENTER

Through May 26

Interiors Coast to Coast

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Through May 26

John Sloan

Through May 26

30th Annual Miniature Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers Society of Washington Exhibition

Through May 31

Landscapes by Yuan Chiang and His School

Through June 2

Etchings by Liliana Gramberg

Through June 12

Photographs by Alfred Eisenstaedt

Through Summer

Early 19th Century Staffordshire Ware

Opening May 17

Selected Exhibits from High School Science Fairs

PHILLIPS COLLECTION

Opening May 12

Paintings by Jean Paul Riopelle

WASHINGTON GALLERY OF

MODERN ART

The Popular Image

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

The New Tradition — Modern Americans before 1940

PAN AMERICAN UNION

Through May 20

Federico Martini

TEXTILE MUSEUM

Caucasian Carpets

Textiles Found in Egypt

Ancient Peruvian Textiles

"flushing the Potomac" periodically.

The Aquarium will be located on a site at either Hains Point or East Potomac Park. The Federal City Council proposed that the new \$10 million aquarium be located near the S.W. Redevelopment area on axis with Chloethiel Smith's delightful Ponte Vecchio pedestrian and shop-lined bridge. The Council reasons that more use would be made of the aquarium if it were tied into the marina area scheme where people could stroll and use the proposed minibus rather than provide hundreds of parking places concentrated at Hains Point. The Council suggestion appears to be an excellent planning proposal.

IN WASHINGTON

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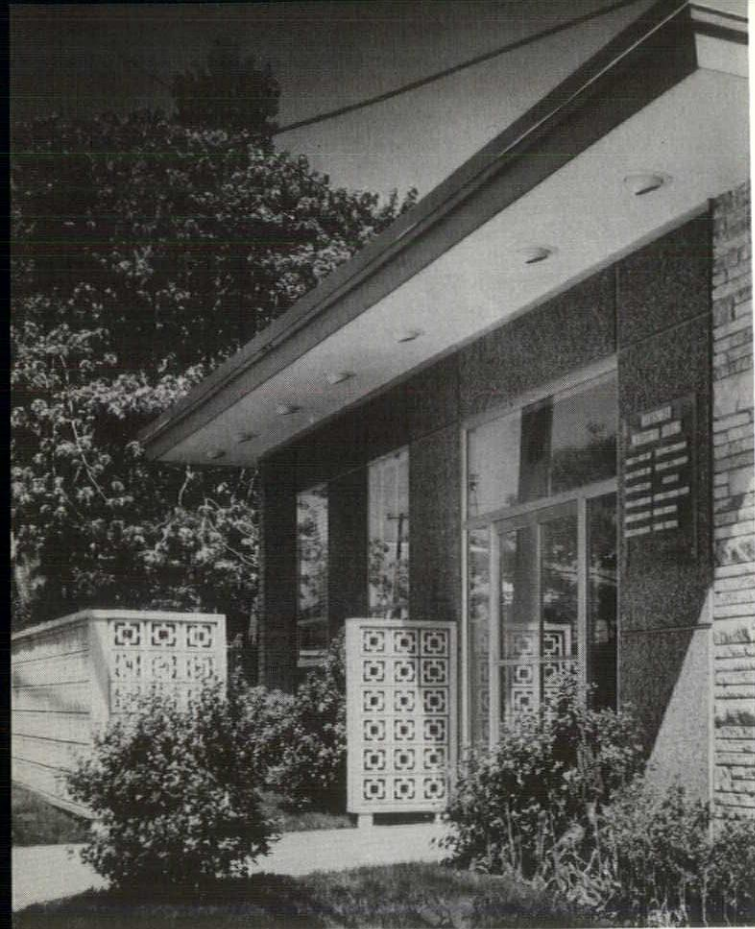
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CHAPTER WORK



An address given to the Washington Metropolitan Chapter of the AIA by the Chief of Project Design of the RLA.

The Redevelopment Land Agency

an evaluation of its accomplishments and future prospects

by S. M. SHERMAN

The Redevelopment Land Agency is currently concerned with 8 different projects whose total acreage is roughly 1,000, excluding Anacostia-Bolling whose boundaries and acreage are not yet fixed. The largest of these, of course, is Southwest, actually three separate projects, with a combined total of 560 acres. Within the boundaries of renewal projects the Agency is authorized to buy and sell land, relocate families and businesses and engage in various construction, usually site improvements as well as aid in the planning, all with the prime purpose of administering a Urban Renewal Plan approved by the National Capital Planning Commission and adopted by the District Commissioners.

It is hard to know what the ideal pace of rebuilding a portion of a city should be. One judges progress by measuring it against some acceptable standard. This is almost impossible with urban renewal since there is no precedent for the kind of program presently administered. It's no wonder then that we can't know whether our pace is fast or slow. We like to say, as a result, that we've gone slow enough to avoid making too many mistakes, but fast enough so as to have something to show for our efforts. Remember after all, that the unique joint effort of public and private enterprise is only about 12 or 13 years old. In that time, not only have we *not* found all the answers but we still don't know all the questions. Questions and questioning is something we get constantly. For example, I frequently accompany visitors touring the Southwest and I have yet to undergo such a tour when the question was not asked "What happened to all the people who lived here before?" We know the answer to that one; nearly all were relocated within the District, roughly one quarter in public housing. But there is a larger question behind this one tied to the racial pattern of the city and surrounding states. I don't think there's any hiding the existence of *de facto* segregation in the Metropolitan area, making the problem of relocation one of the most difficult ones the Agency has to face. Urban renewal may grind to a shuddering halt if the fundamental need for housing for all races, creeds and incomes that is inherent in relocation is not met. The Agency has an enviable record on relocation but its continual progress depends on many factors presently outside its control.

The next most frequently asked question we get

concerns how much renewal is costing and who is paying for it. The unspoken question underlying these is generally "Can we afford it?" My own reaction is to ask rhetorically "Can we not afford it?" But as far as figures are concerned we can supply a few. I'll limit myself to S.W. for the moment. From a project standpoint the public cost, which includes acquiring property, relocating families and building certain public facilities is presently estimated at 65 million dollars for all of S.W. This figure is not to be confused with public expenditures such as building new Federal office buildings or part of the Inner Loop expressway system. Nor does this figure give any clue as to total expenditure, because you must remember that renewal is a joint enterprise of public and private efforts. It is extremely hard to predict accurately what the many different developers will invest, but the best educated guess at the moment is they may spend about \$277 million, better than four times the public cost. As to how the public cost is met, there we get into the system of loans and grants administered by the Urban Renewal Administration and anyone who thinks I am going to try and summarize their 3-volume Manual on splitting the 1/3 - 2/3 local-federal shares of the cost is due for disappointment. Insofar as progress is concerned, however, I think there is much to be said for any program in which for every dollar of public spending private enterprise puts four dollars into the economy.

The Agency has thus far sold, leased or dedicated 65 parcels, aggregating approximately 145 acres or a little more than one quarter of the total acreage of the three projects. Since streets total nearly 230 acres, or 41% of the total you can see that better than three fifths of the project is accounted for. But this is still by no means the whole picture, for the figures I have given relate only to land formally committed. A great deal of the remainder is fairly well spoken for. The waterfront, the largest uncommitted section remaining in S.W., is roughly 25 acres, a very small part of the total picture, from a percentage standpoint.

I realize that in walking around the area you won't get the impression the S.W. is built up, so let me put the figures another way. Out of 24 expected elevator apartment buildings in the residential areas 9 are already complete. Before the end of the year we expect construction to start on another 11. This will also mean that of the probable 450 town houses pro-

posed south of M Street all but 80 will be complete or under construction. Of the 5 F.O.B.'s along the Mall all but one will be complete by the end of the year. Of 8 new churches all allied facilities, 4 will be complete by the end of the year and another 2 under construction. Bit by bit the pieces are fitting together.

The redevelopment area in South West has been thoroughly covered in the local and national press, and a description here of its existing and planned buildings would be redundant. Let me content myself with two specific comments:

The first new residential building completed was the Capital Park Apartments by Satterlee and Smith. For a long time the building stood isolated among cleared surroundings. Now the single structure has been joined by a number of others, bringing forcefully home the point that the impressions one has of a building change as the surroundings change. Important as the design of individual structures is, the space between them takes on even more importance once the buildings are built, almost shunting the latter to background. Satterlee and Smith are certainly aware of this, and I think it only fair to say there has been almost universal approval of the work of Landscape Architect Dan Kiley in this connection. Incidentally, the taxes collected by the city on this single improved property exceeded the entire amount collected on the residential sections of Area "B" prior to renewal.

One of the interesting features of South West is the design concept of the Town Center complex. Here I. M. Pei has taken a considerably different approach to designing a double loaded corridor apartment building as compared to the other examples in South West. His buildings reflect a concern for pure structural clarity that I consider classic in effect if not in conception. The landscaping that accompanies this approach, by Robert Zion is sympathetic to this concern, and the basic simplicity of the shops which accompany these units is an almost inevitable outcome of the design approach.

I might add, at this point, that the symmetrical pattern of shops and apartment buildings that has thus far marked the site plan of the Town Center, is undergoing some reconsideration. Much criticism has been directed against the suburban nature of the shopping facilities, and the public agencies involved, recognizing the merit of these comments are undertaking studies to determine possible means of improvement. This is another example of why it is hard to judge the ideal pace of renewal because since the shops are not completed we still have the opportunity of working toward the best arrangement of their final form.

South West has to date maintained a high level of architectural achievement. Shall we be keeping up this progress in the forthcoming efforts? I think it is a safe bet that we will. For the new things that are to be built shortly will be showing the results of the Agency's Design Competitions as well as other

methods. A few words on those, therefore, are in order.

I don't suppose it is necessary for me to justify design competitions in this magazine. I will therefore only describe briefly how the Agency conducted its four in order to make a few comments. On four separate sites, the smallest about 4 1/2 acres, the largest somewhat more than 10, proposals were solicited from developers and their architects with land price fixed by independent appraisals and concurred in by the Urban Renewal Administration. The architectural proposals were judged by special juries of architects, landscape architects and planners under contract to and acting as consultants for the Agency. The final choice remained the prerogative of the Agency's Board of Directors acting on the panel's recommendations and staff analysis of the developers financial status. In each of the four competitions the recommendations of the Panel were ultimately the choices of the Agency.

In view of the fact that we have received considerable praise both as to the method utilized in disposing of these attractive sites and as to the choice resulting therefrom it may seem like excessive self-criticism to suggest possible alternates. But two things ought to be said. First, without reflecting on the merit of the winners, it may be that we didn't get the best architectural solution simply because it couldn't be submitted to us. The requirements called for a submission of a developer with an architect engaged by him. It may be the architect with the best solution couldn't find a developer. An alternate method is for the Agency to conduct a competition for architectural solutions first, with the winning solution becoming the property of the Agency. This might encourage a number of solutions and increase the chances of getting the best solution. Offers could then be solicited from developers on the chosen plans and a fixed minimum land price.

The second comment on the competitions is that we did not allow for continuing review, nor for the possibility of improvements occurring to an architect with detailed development. Some of this we are trying to correct with our current Architectural Advisory Panel. The present membership is J. Miller, A. Rogers and H. Sasaki, though we expect a constant utilization of professional aid in the makeup of the group. While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions from this means, we are extremely encouraged by the work the Panel has done to date. Conceived originally to maintain a measure of design control on sites that are disposed of via a sealed bid method, for example—being too small to lend themselves to design competitions—we have found that developers and their architects welcome the opportunity to utilize the panel. The developers like it because they realize the value of their property is enhanced when they get disinterested expert design advice from consultants to a public agency; the architects like it—usually—because they get strong backing in their discussions with

clients. And, of course, the Agency likes it because not only are these better designed buildings and a better ensemble, as is the concern of design in renewal, but we get both on parcels disposed of through competitive bidding.

I have naturally concentrated here on the Southwest Project, as it comprises the oldest, as well as the largest of those the Agency is currently administering. We fully expect that within another few years all parcels will have been disposed of. And, speaking for myself, I expect that the visual progress will be accompanied by a high level of design. Other project areas also show progress; particularly the Columbia Plaza proposal in Foggy Bottom, designed by Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon.

In addition to these projects the Agency is concerned with 3 others that are in a more advanced stage, Northeast One and Northwest One and Adams-Morgan. All are undergoing a period of hiatus while awaiting some action at the District Building. The need for them is clear; one has only to drive through the Second Precinct to realize the dichotomous nature of Washington, split between the haves and have nots. And the unique nature of the Adams-Morgan project, the direct outgrowth of the response of citizens to their environment combining clearance, private and possibly public rehabilitation, provides a challenge that — if one reads between the lines of newspaper accounts emanating from certain officials — may die a-borning.

Progress takes many forms, and my account of it has been necessarily sketchy and incomplete. I've emphasized individual works up to now, but in concluding these remarks I want to return again to a point I mentioned earlier. I am especially concerned that there be an increase in awareness of the space between buildings not only as a setting for the building but as a key factor in creating a viable community life. There is much more contact outside of buildings than within, and a society after all is made up of the multiplicity of such contacts. But equally important, the spaces between buildings are a positive element in helping perceive the organization of the physical form of the city. Think of the strong influence the rectangular grid streets of N.Y. which are, of course, a form of open space, have had on the pattern of building there. The intimate detail as well as the defined communal space become important and influence one's reaction to the actual buildings.

A theory of urban design, which I touch on now as a conclusion, claims that it is necessary to organize and coordinate the building — free spaces of a city. Such organization could be considered a reflection, in communal activities, of a society utilizing those spaces. If we are moved by what we see, we may say the result is beautiful, though we may distort the picture if we call the result architecture. That is, unless we all agree that architecture must look beyond a single building if it would help create a beautiful city. And if architecture does so, I for one would say that it meets its greatest challenge.

DRAFTSMEN'S COMPETITION

There is still time to enter the Potomac Valley Chapter Draftsmen's Competition. Any draftsman or registered architect who is employed by a member of the Potomac Valley Chapter and who is not a principal is eligible to submit a drawing.

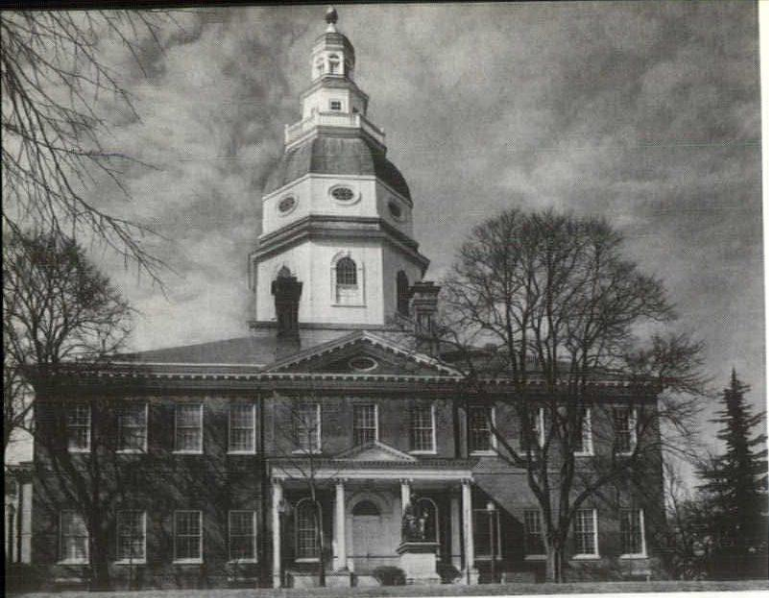
Detailed regulations and entry vouchers have been sent to all chapter members, and are also available from the chapter office.

Remember, the success of this competition depends upon you encouraging entries. Do it now.

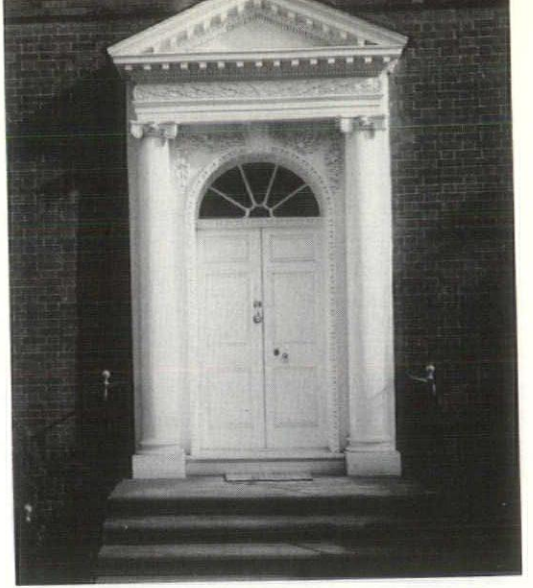
Winners will receive awards at a Chapter function in June.

ENTRIES

DUE MAY 17



The State House



Doorway, Hammond Harwood House

HISTORIC ANNAPOLIS

Photographs from an exhibition of that name being circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

"Cedar Park," one of the oldest houses in Anne Arundel County



Ten short years ago eclecticism, the old fox, was considered securely in its trap the past, in architecture, however, is a wily beast well armed with "richness," "meaning," and even "humanity," quick to escape traps. In the absence of bigger quarry architects will always go on a fox hunt, and the cry today is tallyho, tradition.

Walter McQuade in ARCHITECTURAL FORUM

. . . It may be questioned whether the fundamental nature of the transport revolution has yet been grasped, whether it is appreciated that the advent of a means of personal mechanical locomotion adaptable for a host of everyday journeys has, by turning the streets into rivers of jostling, lethal vehicles, rendered out of date at a stroke the conventional arrangement of streets and buildings that has served us for so long."

Colin Buchanan

One way is to regard it (the past) as a useful dictionary from which one can select forms and shapes. The nineteenth century did this, using the past as a means of escape from its own time by masking itself with the shells of bygone periods.

The fashion of the 1960's is more refined. It only flirts with the past, nibbling at random details — pointed arches, renaissance porticoes, cupolas — giving them a surrealistic flavoring, so as to achieve a "poetic" expression.

Sigfried Giedion . . . SPACE TIME and ARCHITECTURE

Blessed are they who conserve the resources of the Nation; blessed are they who have thought for the air their children breathe; blessed are they who labor for physical fitness; blessed are they who have care for the human scale of the city scape and flit not; verily, blessed are they who clutter not the highways one to a car; blessed above all indeed are they who bicycle to work.

John Dixon in the WASHINGTON POST

New Yorkers, and most Americans for that matter, do not believe that anything less than a monumental classic pile signifies historic architecture. The kind of anonymous "street architecture" that does so much more to define the true spirit and style of an era is little understood, although New York is—or has been particularly rich in examples. In fact, it is just this irreplaceable street architecture that suffers most from our large scale plans for urban renewal, and that accounts for most lamentable, and unlamented, losses.

Ada Louise Huxtable in ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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