An ordinance was passed in Santa Fe in 1957 with the stated purpose of preserving the "charm and character of Santa Fe and its distinctive architectural style." The ordinance created an Historical District or "H" Zone comprising about one-fourth of the city area, including the central business district and much of the older residential area. This ordinance can be classed under the "look-alike" type of architectural control laws; that is, it sets up a series of facade standards to which all new work must conform.

To be sure Santa Fe is distinctive—"The City Different" as it is called—and there are buildings and areas within its boundaries worth preserving. But, in a larger sense, there is much more that is worth continuing. It has landscape, a cityscape, an architectural heritage which is unique; it has a way of life that is informal, friendly, relaxed. It is also true that these characteristics are in danger of being engulfed by the blight of uniformity that envelops the rest of our country. However, a look-alike control ordinance concerning itself only with superficial appearances is no answer to that threat.

The Santa Fe New Mexican in a recent editorial asks how to save the City’s few surviving historical buildings. It points to the lack of budgeted funds to purchase such structures and ponders how to ensure the survival of historically valuable buildings. Certainly a comprehensive survey of Santa Fe’s architectural heritage should be undertaken, but such an inventory should include all buildings and neighborhoods which help depict the city’s history. It should not be limited to Territorial and Pueblo type buildings alone—the sole styles currently legitimized by the Ordinance. This project could be undertaken within the existing framework of the "Old Santa Fe Association". Indeed, much of this work has already been done by the Association.

In this same editorial the newspaper goes on to take some measure of comfort and satisfaction in the "protection" offered by the Historical Ordinance. This measure spells out standards under which all new work must be built: "No door or window in a publicly visible facade shall be located nearer than three feet from the corner of the facade. . . . Not less than eighty percent of the surface area of any publicly visible facade shall be adobe finish, or stucco simulating adobe finish. . . . Single panes of glass larger than 30 inches square are not permissible, except that buildings with portals may have larger plate glass areas for windows under portals only. . . . The publicly visible facade . . . shall be of one color, which color shall simulate a light earth or dark earth color. . . ."

In my opinion, the only thing that such an ordinance can guarantee is that Santa Fe’s architecture will become a mockery and a lie. New construction will be forced to masquerade in century-old costumes, with no distinction made between genuinely old edifices and recent imitations. It seems to me that our venerable historical buildings deserve to be treated with more respect!

On another occasion the New Mexican editorializes that Santa Fe should "rebuild itself to reflect the Spanish Colonial heritage of the Southwest as Williamsburg reflects the English colonial heritage of the East. In this respect the Historical Zone Ordinance and the philosophy it represents are the key to Santa Fe’s future." I cannot believe that the backers of the Ordinance would seriously want to put Santa Fe into a vacuum like that at Williamsburg. Williamsburg is a dead—and in many ways fake—museum. It is the product of a single Foundation, entirely owned, restored, built and maintained by this Foundation. Families formerly living in the historical area have been bought out and moved out. The citizens, most on the Foundation payroll, now live deep in the past for the benefit of the tourist. Many of the buildings rebuilt in Williamsburg were designed "by-guess and by-golly" without foundation of authentic records or drawings. A restriction to seventeenth and eighteenth century architectural styles arbitrarily resulted in the destruction of many fine homes and buildings of the nineteenth century.

The philosophy expounded by the newspaper calls for the use of applied archaeology upon the visible facades of all “H” Zone buildings, and this archaeology is limited to two accepted “styles”: Pueblo and Territorial. But any true understanding of these styles in light of the needs, materials, technology or the social structure of the period has not been considered. Throughout history architectural forms have arisen as the result of spiritual and practical needs; true architectural qualities cannot be legislated. Even as a stop-gap measure, legal restrictions cannot substitute for the loss of cultural values in a society. As architectural design quality results from these values, it cannot be legislated. The proper approach to Santa Fe’s architecture should be based squarely upon twentieth century technology though at the same time considering carefully what the City’s past offers as a starting point.

Santa Fe was founded in 1610 as the capital of this remote portion of New Spain, but its heritage extends on the one hand back to the Indian cultures of New Mexico and, on the other hand, to Spain and even further to the Arab world from which Spain acquired the knowledge of adobe brick construction. These cultures met and fused here in New Mexico and the result was what we now call Pueblo style architecture. From this beginning, Santa Fe has grown and changed and developed. Each phase of the development has left its mark upon the face of the city. Some of these marks are good, some not so good, but all are embedded in and help produce the "charm and character" of the community. Examples

—continued on page 15
It is difficult to define the emotional and visual qualities which comprise the spirit of Santa Fe. A decided need exists, however, to understand this essence if one is to guide the City's future development.

We can never be certain of the extent to which we can suppress instincts. Just as man's need for fire cannot be suppressed and the barren houses and apartments built a few years ago are now being provided with fireplaces, so it is entirely possible that man's need for the earth and its fundamental warmth and reassurance goes too deep to be eradicated by two generations of working in skyscrapers and living in steel and glass apartments. At least that appears to be a reasonable explanation for the magnetism that adobe construction holds for countless persons, many of whom are not in any way connected with the arts.

It may appear to be incongruous to house modern appliances and a modern way of life in a structure simulating old pueblo design. However, for the Santa Fean who moved to his city by choice, perhaps giving up greater possibilities elsewhere, there is enough real pleasure in the look and feel of irregular adobe walls and wooden vigas to overcome his innate distaste for the design and material and finish of contemporary (but necessary) kitchen ranges or plumbing fixtures. There still are people without automobiles or TV sets, and surprisingly many of them select Santa Fe as their home. Humble people not out to conquer nature or Santa Fe, those who do have automobiles drive small cars compatible with the scale of the older streets of the City. They find that slight inconvenience is a very worthwhile price to pay for a beautiful city.

Dubbed die-hards by some, these people may, on the other hand, be preserving for future re-discovery a way of life which could be the necessary antidote to certain facets of the plastic age, the atomic age, the space age, or whatever age it is on whose threshold we find ourselves. Since we do seem to be headed for a large increase in population, we can think of ourselves as pioneers on whose groundwork future generations will rely. Even if only the minutest fraction of the population of the future should need the human touch, the handmade look, the adventure available in such a place as Santa Fe, this city would have been worth the effort of saving for them.

What is it that we would be trying to save? It need not be the entire city of Santa Fe, which, like all cities, is very likely to grow to tremendous proportions, encompassing the entire countryside until it merges with the periphery of adjoining growing cities. We would be trying to save only a portion of the present city, a community developed in rambling harmony with the mountains around it, scaled to human beings, as unpredictable, slow-moving and imperfect as they are. In our time we are afraid of sentiment, of personal attachment to a place or a way

Presented herewith are two opinions regarding the Historical Style Ordinance adopted by the city of Santa Fe in 1957. Written concurrently, the two articles make no attempt to answer or refute one another. Instead, they formulate divergent positions on this controversial problem in terms of basic philosophical attitudes and in the light of three years experience. Likewise the accompanying photographs are not intended to argue either case or support specific points in the text but to illustrate the varieties of Santa Fe cityscape both old and new.

Irene von Horvath

yes!
of life—increasingly so, unfortunately. Yet it is inconceivable that all men will eventually be nothing more than machines or components of machines, and it is for those who manage to keep any spark of humanity, of sympathetic understanding that we must plan now. The world is changing with unimaginable rapidity and all that some of us love so deeply could be obliterated as thoroughly as all that which was Carthage or Karakorum. The difference is that now, rather than being obliterated by conquering armies, we are obliterating ourselves in the name of progress.

A beginning has to be made somewhere, some application of brakes to a run-away situation being preferable to no brakes at all. Santa Fe was well on its way to becoming just another American town in the early part of this century when various citizens, such as Sylvanus Morley, Kenneth Chapman, Jesse Nusbaum and Harry Dorman, devoted a great deal of effort to the education of a lethargic citizenry concerning their great heritage which was on the way to extinction and the great possibilities for the City were it to follow a course different from the general tendencies of typical American towns. Santa Fe coasted along on this labor of love for many years, acquiring a wonderful reputation, began to be regarded as a shrine by Americans and Mexicans alike, a place “not to miss” when on tour of the United States.

The city grew for many reasons: as a seat of government, as a tourist attraction, as a place chosen by many persons to be called home. The increase in population brought with it a certain growth in commerce, and increased commercial activity brought persons not accustomed to pondering matters of aesthetics and planning, people whose idea of the good life is to trade in the old car every year or two, to move every few years, perhaps even to live in a trailer. Meanwhile no program continued the previously quickened interest of citizens in the Santa Fe character. Children were not, as in Philadelphia schools today, taught about the historical values of their city and about planning in general. Once again Santa Fe was back on its way to becoming another typical American town, indistinguishable except for its name and setting. Those who had moved to Santa Fe by choice began to worry very seriously about this gradual lapse, and so did the Mayor of Santa Fe who requested the City Planning Commission to submit to the City Council a historical ordinance.

Here the controversy began. Some said you cannot legislate good taste, others felt you can at least attempt to legislate against bad taste; some thought that a voluntary restriction would work while others maintained that architecture would wither and die under any control. There were those who favored the control of public building only, but another group opined that the entire city, not just a portion of it, should be completely under control.

The committee which set work on the required ordinance started with a summary of the historically significant buildings in Santa Fe. To its utter amazement, it found that only some twenty-five buildings comprised the great antiquity of this world-renowned tourist mecca! This as compared to 2,200 historically valuable edifices in just the central portion of Philadelphia! The obvious conclusion of the committee was that in addition to the preservation of these few buildings, a certain “Santa Fe character” had to be preserved.

The study of this character centered around a nucleus already in existence—the old Plaza, the old winding trails leading into the city from the south, and the Santa Fe river valley eastward to the Sangre de Cristo range. The older part of the city, that which over the years had attracted numerous artists and writers because of its charm, was the logical area to maintain in its previously established character, meanwhile allowing for the filling in of vacant areas. There was no intention to freeze the appearance of that portion of the city at that moment in the City’s history, but simply to foster harmony within an already established framework. An early draft of the required ordinance attempted two things: to preserve existing historical sites and buildings and to outline the general character of the chosen portion of the City, at the same time providing for a carefully selected review board to pass on new construction on the broad basis of harmony with existing construction in the area. There was certainly no intention of excluding imaginative variations on the theme of traditional Santa Fe architecture.

This approach, however, did not suffice for a legal document. Owners of historical buildings could not be required to maintain them unless compensated; the review board could only function as a subcommittee of the City Planning Commission. A broad statement of “general character” was not deemed sufficient for an ordinance. Instead a detailed account was required stating what was or was not to be permitted in the designated area. This led to the adoption in 1957 of the Historical Style Ordinance which, in its full three years of existence, has already had revisions, and which should continue to be revised whenever improvements are needed to keep it a living element in preserving the character of our city.

That the Ordinance fosters monotony can readily be countered by suggesting that a little imagination will lead to an interesting and harmonious solution. After all, each one of us falls within a type with two eyes, a nose and a mouth, but rarely looks enough like someone else to be considered “monotonously” like everyone else. So it is with the variety of tree shapes within the same species in a forest, and so it appears to be with the natural growth of shapes in adobe architecture. Granted, there have been several unfortunate architectural designs passed by the committee within the Historical Zone. But when one considers that 31 applications for new buildings, 49 applications for alterations or additions, 76 for color of buildings and 45 for erection of signs have been approved by this group, it is a wonder that so few controversial designs have been passed. Furthermore, the Ordinance and its administration have been a means of conveying an awareness to home offices of national concerns, to newcomers to Santa Fe, to sign erection companies from other cities, to home craftsmen and out-of-town architects — an awareness that Santa Fe is not just another city, but has a spirit all its own, worthy of consideration. But most important of all, though a question for which no exact statistics can ever be found, how much inappropriate design has the Ordinance thwarted? The End.