



Winter 1964

Wingo, Jr., Lowdon, *Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land*

Fred A. Clarenbach

Recommended Citation

Fred A. Clarenbach, *Wingo, Jr., Lowdon, Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land*, 4 Nat. Resources J. 199 (1964).

Available at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nrj/vol4/iss1/17>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Natural Resources Journal by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, lsloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land

Edited By

LOWDON WINGO, JR.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1963.

Pp. 261, \$5.50

These essays from the Fourth Resources for the Future Forum (1962) make up an attractive, well-conceived, and nourishing smorgasbord of thought about urban growth and policies for the use of earth space.

In the introductory piece, the editor discusses "urban space in a policy perspective." The problems attending the birth of a metropolitan or megalopolitan civilization are, says Wingo, confounding the collective wisdom of our society. What kinds of plans and planning processes can better guide the current revolutionary transformation toward more humanly satisfying patterns of urban living?

Efficient organization of activities in metropolitan space depends heavily on public facilities for transportation and communication. Hence public planning and plan implementation by public investment and other means are of prime importance. Current policies and emerging technologies suggest to Wingo a much more dispersed urban pattern—"no longer the centrally articulated, classical city, but a loosely knit, weakly centered, low-density urban region spread over a wide hinterland." Residential location and related development will be influenced relatively much more by climate and landscape and by range and quality of public services, and "selective gregariousness" seems unlikely to disappear.

Wingo points to several great issues: What to do about the physical and economic deterioration of large areas of central cities? Is the battle for mass transportation already irreversibly lost to the private automobile? How shall we plan for and manage the open lands mingled with areas of urban development in a decentralizing region? In their different ways the collaborators address, and sometimes fail to address, the issues thus posed by the editor.

A prominent Detroitier, having returned from a visit to Los Angeles, announced to his fellowtownsmen the sad tidings, "I have seen

the future and it won't work." In strong contrast, Melvin M. Webber, a professor of planning at the University of California, Berkeley, here delivers the glad tidings that it can work and can be good. "We would do well . . . to accept the private vehicle as an indispensable medium of metropolitan interaction—more, as an important instrument of personal freedom The dispersed developments accompanying the current freeways suggest the type of pattern that seems probable. Here, again, Los Angeles offers the best prototype available." And, "a much greater degree of dispersion is both likely and desirable, while centers and subcenters of various compositions and densities persist and grow in a range of sizes spanning the whole spectrum from 'center' to 'sprawl.'" Webber contends that "all space is urban space, since interaction among urbanites takes place through, or is inhibited by, all space." Other "land" uses (*e.g.*, agriculture, forestry, mining, and outdoor recreation) do compete with "urban space" uses, and "each site must be subjected to an analysis of the welfare implications implicit in the substitutable uses." We need "to equip ourselves to make more rational allocations than would occur under unguided market conditions." The kind of order to be sought does not reside in "simple mappable patterns" but is "hiding in extremely complex social organization, instead." In a separate communication to Henry Fagin (quoted in Fagin's essay), Webber wrote: "The locational planning task is to find that spatial arrangement that will optimize human interactions and the conduct of human activities, while simultaneously allocating mineral, land, and other resources in some optimal fashion for the production processes. This becomes so complex a job as to defy my efforts to comprehend what it means, much less to discuss it effectively."

Roland Artle, an economist colleague of Webber's at Berkeley, nevertheless does explain briefly how more carefully designed decision-models can be used to improve the processes of decision-making on the urban scene under conditions of uncertainty. At the same time, Artle points out great difficulties and shortcomings of the "maximum efficiency" approach. In the present state of the arts of economics, he seemingly would settle for a procedure of specifying a set of separate goals as target values and then seeking to adjust the instrumental variables to achieve the goals approximately. Experience and change will bring revisions of goals, too. This rather common sense view (perhaps unexactly Artle's) does not make intelligent decision-making depend upon impossible knowledge of conditions under which general equilibrium would prevail in a radically dynamic social

economy. It is not rational-comprehensive, but it is an available procedure for planners who must try to operate sensibly in an overly complex present to help shape an incredibly complex future.

By far the longest essay of the lot, and a deep-probing one, is that of Harvard law professor Charles M. Haar, who discusses the social control of urban space. He believes that "the law" is likely to be adapted without extreme lag in response to social needs and pressures. Zoning tends to become more flexible, subdivision controls less so. Financial incentives and technical assistance, stemming mainly from federal programs, will be of major significance. Public acquisition of limited property rights in otherwise privately owned land promises to grow in importance. Judicial review will continue to focus on the reasonableness of means as related to public welfare ends. Judges will be more inclined to approve new varieties and combinations of collective action if the objectives are in line with policies stated in an authoritative master plan. "Hence, the ultimate conclusion: the pressing need is the guidance of a plan formulated and adopted by the local legislature, or, on the regional level, by the state legislature." Moreover, "the key to rational policy is to integrate local master plans with federal economic and monetary programs." (Does the shade of Senator Robert Kerr nod smiling as- sent?) An adequate framework for planning will also need: a stress on the private dynamics of land development; new relationships between public controls and the private controls judicially administered through common law channels; and new state-wide agencies both for administration and adjudication.

Dr. Leonard J. Duhl, a psychiatrist at the National Institute of Mental Health, is here concerned mainly with the psycho-social needs of disadvantaged urban people in relation to urban renewal and planning generally. Slums need not be preserved but, Duhl argues eloquently, planners and discerning collaborators must better understand the devastating impact on individuals and groups of being uprooted and having a way of life changed involuntarily. "The kind of vitality found in the slums can be preserved in older communities by rehabilitation and community development and built into the new developments in our urban communities. Too often newly planned communities reject the values of this vitality in favor of a kind of design purity which feverishly excites only city planners and architects We need to think in terms of many kinds of communities making possible lively alternatives in living arrangements."

The three essays by Catherine Bauer Wurster, Frederick Gu-

them, and Stanley B. Tankel focus on form and structure, design, and open space. Mrs. Wurster, another scholar in city and regional planning at the University of California, Berkeley, contributes a lucid and valuable discussion of a range of alternatives for the spatial organization of the future urban complex. She suggests that current shiftings—wider dispersal of some functions and greater concentration of others—are likely to be unstable. She is not convinced by Melvin Webber that “general dispersion” is either generally probable or desirable. She doubts “that people living at exurban densities can participate effectively in numerous realms, including a strong local community, and enjoy urban values along with their private space and mobility.” The least likely alternative, except perhaps for the New York region, is a swing toward a concentrated super-city on the Manhattan pattern. The favored alternative, briefly but attractively examined, is “a constellation of relatively diversified and integrated cities” avoiding both extreme concentration and great scatteration.

Gutheim, head of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, quotes and agrees with G. Holmes Perkins that “our cities today are probably the best cities we have ever had in the history of man.” Nevertheless, properly criticizing from potential, Gutheim avers that these same cities are “neither an expression of civilization nor a creator of civilized men.” Urban anarchy and ugliness remorselessly and unremittingly assault the senses, and this outstanding fact of modern life is “an expression of brutalism as harsh and as significant as slave labor, atomic warfare or genocide—and it reveals the same disregard for life.” Far too many urbanities are aesthetic cripples, victims of the Ugly American City, incapable of conceiving of any better alternative, and permanently brutalized by urban anarchy, says Gutheim. Extreme perhaps, but it is worth pondering. What to do besides ponder? Gutheim offers no grand program or panacea. He notes that research in the aesthetics of urban form remains in a very undeveloped state, and he recommends that we study also much more carefully the economic value of the aesthetic environment. An important specific suggestion is that well-designed provision be made for the simple outdoor recreations of walking and bicycling.

Open space is the subject of the essay by Stanley B. Tankel, planning director of the Regional Plan Association of New York City. The problem of open space, Tankel points out, is not “how much” but *where* in relation to buildings and to the uses people want to

make of both "covered" and "open" space. Street-scale open space, immediately associated with homes and workplaces, is of prime importance; and the arrangement is more significant in determining its social usefulness than is its extent—except at very high population densities. Comprehensive development planning at street-scale and also at the scale of the community and region inescapably includes planning for open spaces. Clustering is recommended, of course, but the greenbelt principle is rejected. "A greenbelt is about as useful as a leather belt in containing development. For flexibility in the regional development pattern and for general access to regional open space, the green wedge makes more sense." Much regional open space (some at community scale) has natural features identifiable as worth preserving, even if no comprehensive plan has been prepared, and Tanel believes it essential that more of such areas be captured quickly. Future urban development, he predicts, "will tend toward a more dense, more nucleated, more clustered pattern than we are now building in our suburban areas. Accompanying the tighter development and stronger centers, there will be less private open space (that is, we will have smaller lots) and, at every scale of development, substantial continuous open space, commonly enjoyed and publicly or commonly owned."

The planners of the symposium seem to have thought of almost everything, even to providing for a final essay as a built-in review of the eight preceding papers. This ultimate effort is contributed by Henry Fagin, professor of planning at the University of Wisconsin. To review Professor Fagin's excellent commentary would be supererogatory. Suffice it to say that the summing up is in an optimistic tone: the planners' primary focus will shift from land development to human development; decision-model studies and other research will enable us better to spell out consequences of policy alternatives; and "our society will invent political means for working with the forces of contemporary life to fashion a human environment of true splendor."

I am somewhat less sanguine about prospective results of large and complex decision-model efforts for "rational-comprehensive" regional planning. Some less elaborate varieties of benefit-cost analyses, using limited available data, seem likely for a long time to prove more serviceable in making decisions from day-to-day and year-to-year in a highly dynamic country. Better political means for decision-making and implementation will evolve no doubt, but will these developments come only after long and exhausting struggles?

New requirements for legislative apportionment may be cause for optimism now.

This volume of essays is a valuable part of the growing effort to make creative intelligence count more in shaping the cities of the future. It is recommended to any fairly mature person who seeks a deeper and clearer understanding of the problems and issues respecting the use of urban space.

FRED A. CLARENBACH*

* Professor of Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.