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Communities For A New Generation

The ideal future city will be free of slums, poor layouts, billboards. A resident will consider his city as extending to the limits of a 100 mile radius, yet will live in a 25,000-50,000 population district separated by continuous parks from other parts of the urban region. These are expectations of certain recent graduates and students of city planning, as interpreted by the author, a senior planner.

THE CITY SHOULD SERVE the people who live in it. This seems self-evident, yet it is a principle almost universally violated in the American city. Our cities do not serve their inhabitants. Rather they are almost entirely an accretion of decades of land speculation and speculative building—the means of livelihood for the one to two percent of the population in the urban real estate and building construction industries.

City building is the most backward of our technological processes, and the "lead-in" time for application of new techniques is unbelievably long. We are not yet applying all of the city planning techniques that were recognized in city planning schools and taught to me in the 1930's. Use of "density zoning" for flexible subdivision design has become accepted in St. Louis County, Missouri only in the last five years; yet it was an integral part of the County's first zoning ordinance proposed in 1940.

Coupled with this long lead-in time is the almost incredible durability of urban construction. Most of our buildings last 75 to 100 years; subdivision street layouts, whether good or bad (Santa Fe, for example), are still with us several centuries after they were built. With a design lead-in time of 30 to 50 years and with an average building life of 75 to 100 years, we cannot expect an urban environment to serve people satisfactorily when it is 100 to 150 years out of phase with them.

The lead-in time can be reduced. Areas of old buildings can be done away with or replaced by a "God bless the bulldozer" urban renewal approach—or they can be abandoned; many have been deserted and more will be. Perhaps one reason we have been so

slow to reduce this lead-in time is that we have not dramatized the alternatives or built examples of new urban areas so superior that they compel the more universal imposition of improved principles and standards.

It was in the spring of the year when I was asked to contribute to this journal. This is the time when our planning firm adds new graduates of planning, engineering, and landscape architectural schools to our staff and also the time when we engage a small group of students to work for us during the summer. I am not too likely to live in the postindustrial city and thus I have only an academic interest in it. However, these young people will, and they are being trained to be sensitive to the values that the postindustrial city should have. I asked several of them two questions:

In what respect does your generation differ from mine?

How would you design a city to serve the characteristics of your generation, particularly those that differ from mine?

Let me summarize their replies to the first question:

1. They believe that the most important relationships are between people rather than one's identification with a religion, a philosophy, or a government.
2. They reject ideologies or apparent certainties based only on faith and dogma.
3. They do not accept traditional values, old moral codes, intense patriotism, or loyalty to an institution such as a school. They are less disciplined and have less respect for their elders or for property.
4. They earnestly believe that the world can and should be improved. Many of this new generation can be expected to devote themselves unselfishly to this purpose. Their motivation would be personal and their approach pragmatic.
5. Many of them believe that this world is of supreme importance, the hereafter of little importance. This is coupled with the fact that they are better educated, have traveled more widely, and are more aware of what is going on in the world.
6. On the other hand, their feelings of empathy are weakened by a lack of familiarity with hardship, hunger, poverty.
7. Because easy credit and time payments have made it possible for them to buy almost anything, success is no longer measured by material things.
8. Rising expectations as to the quality of life have made them less tolerant of the problems of society.

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9. They are influenced by the complicated scientific society, one feature of which has been the atomic weapons which make the world so insecure.

10. They are more geared to specialties, more professionally oriented.

11. They are not tied to a place but are very mobile.

12. They place a high value on those persons who help them get ahead. They see themselves as living in a much more competitive world, one in which it is harder to get to the top. It is a world in which intelligence and creativeness, instead of mere diligence, are the keys to success.

What kind of a city should be designed to serve this new generation? How should this city differ from the present city or from the cities we seem to be trying to design? These questions are much more difficult to answer. However, a number of suggestions were made by our young staff members:

1. A major objective of the city of the future must be to maximize relationships among people—to promote human interaction by persuasive elements in the physical environment.

2. Small urban cells should be created in the larger settlement. These should be the fundamental units of the community. "Cluster design" may be used to create them.

3. More sophisticated urban design should be used to bring about both higher population densities and more open space. The design should permit privacy for the individual and the family but at the same time allow the opportunity to mix with others.

4. The city design should combine the small "cells" into neighborhoods and then into districts, which then combine to form the metropolis. The objective is an arrangement that permits the individual to know who he is and where he fits into the life of the city. Further, he should be able to see these patterned relationships outdoors, and the city should cease being visually chaotic.

5. The city should be built on a human scale. Grandiose, baroque concepts should go.

6. The city should be livable. The super-human scale that characterizes such major technological improvements as highways, rapid transit lines, and airports should be mitigated by careful design that respects the human scale.

7. Educational facilities should become a more dominant feature of the physical city, reflecting more adequately their importance in

society—as, in the past, churches, business offices, and government building have dominated.

8. There should be more open space and it should fit in with the new pattern of the city, winding through it everywhere rather than existing here and there haphazardly as isolated chunks.

9. There should be no barriers in the city that express any distinctions of class or race.

10. The new city should be natural in design without any ostentation or faking, with the emphasis on qualities and amenities which promote human wellbeing. Those existing areas which reduce wellbeing or create tension, such as stereotyped high density, all high rise residential areas (the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, for example), dilapidated or run-down areas, residential neighborhoods without parks or those next to heavy industries, would all be eliminated.

11. The person would have priority over the automobile: each would have separate paths, and crossings would be minimized. Separation of human and vehicular traffic would also be characteristic of shopping areas.

In summary, the new city would be orderly, attractive, and intimate, with the most offensive products of today's technology (pollution, billboards, overhead wires, litter and dirt) no longer tolerated. Design would be given new importance. Habitations would be built with a view toward the relations of the individual building to the whole structure of the city. Livability and technological problemsolving would go hand in hand.

Urban areas develop to enable people to do things together better than they can do them apart. The large metropolis permits a wide spectrum of specialized training and interactions between an ever increasing number of disciplines. Seemingly, all factors influence the continuation of large concentrations of people. However, improvements in transportation—notably the freeway—enable these concentrations to be dispersed and loosely organized. Beyond the large concentrations (such as Albuquerque) we find the smaller cities serving as trade centers for a decreasing agricultural population; as government centers (Santa Fe, for example); as tourist centers; or serving a specialized economic activity (potash mining at Carlsbad, for example). These smaller cities are likely to become more and more dependent upon the metropolis for many functions. Those within one-hundred miles of the metropolis are likely to be, in reality, functioning parts of the metropolis itself.

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.To deal with the "city" alone is ridiculous. The urban environment must be dealt with by a *regional* approach. Fundamental to this is the correct allocation of the small area which will be used for strictly urban purposes. With ·five million persons, more than twice what we have now, two-thirds of the 3,600 square mile St. Louis Metropolitan Area will be vacant or in agriculture, and this is *after* generous land allocations for recreation. If we deal with a 100 mile radius region, the proportion of land in urban use will be even smaller. For the nation as a whole, even the largest estimates of urban population do not require urban occupancy of more than three percent of our land area. We should not lose sight of the other 97 percent.

Largely inspired by the federal government through the continuous transportation planning requirements of the Federal Highway Act, the requirements of Section 204 of the Housing Act of 1966, and the availability of Federal grants for two-thirds of the cost under Section 701 of the Housing Act, there has recently been a flurry of regional planning. Some of this has been handled by "Councils of Government," which are representative of the elected officials of all or most of the affected local government agencies.

Behind this regional planning program so largely financed by the federal government is the premise that applications for federal grants will be reviewed by the regional planning agency and theoretically turned down if they do not conform to the regional plan. Perhaps local and state expenditures will be subjected to similar review and consequent approval or disapproval. Normal log-rolling procedures, however, make it most unlikely that any loosely organized and voluntary "Councils of Government" will disapprove any application for a federal grant by one of its members.

More important is the fact that control of land use is the basis for all planning. If you cannot predetermine where the shopping centers or the industrial areas or the apartment complexes go, what luck will you have in planning the highways, or the sewers, or even the open space? From the point of view of most transportation planners, land use planning is more a matter of *prediction* than planning. The future community pattern is anticipated by computer formulae and not *designed* by anyone. The only "choice" is the haphazard operation 'of the real estate market; the only problem is how to predict this.

' Thus from the standpoint of improving urban environment or achieving the objectives cited by our young staff members, the current regional planning is likely to be an exercise in frustration
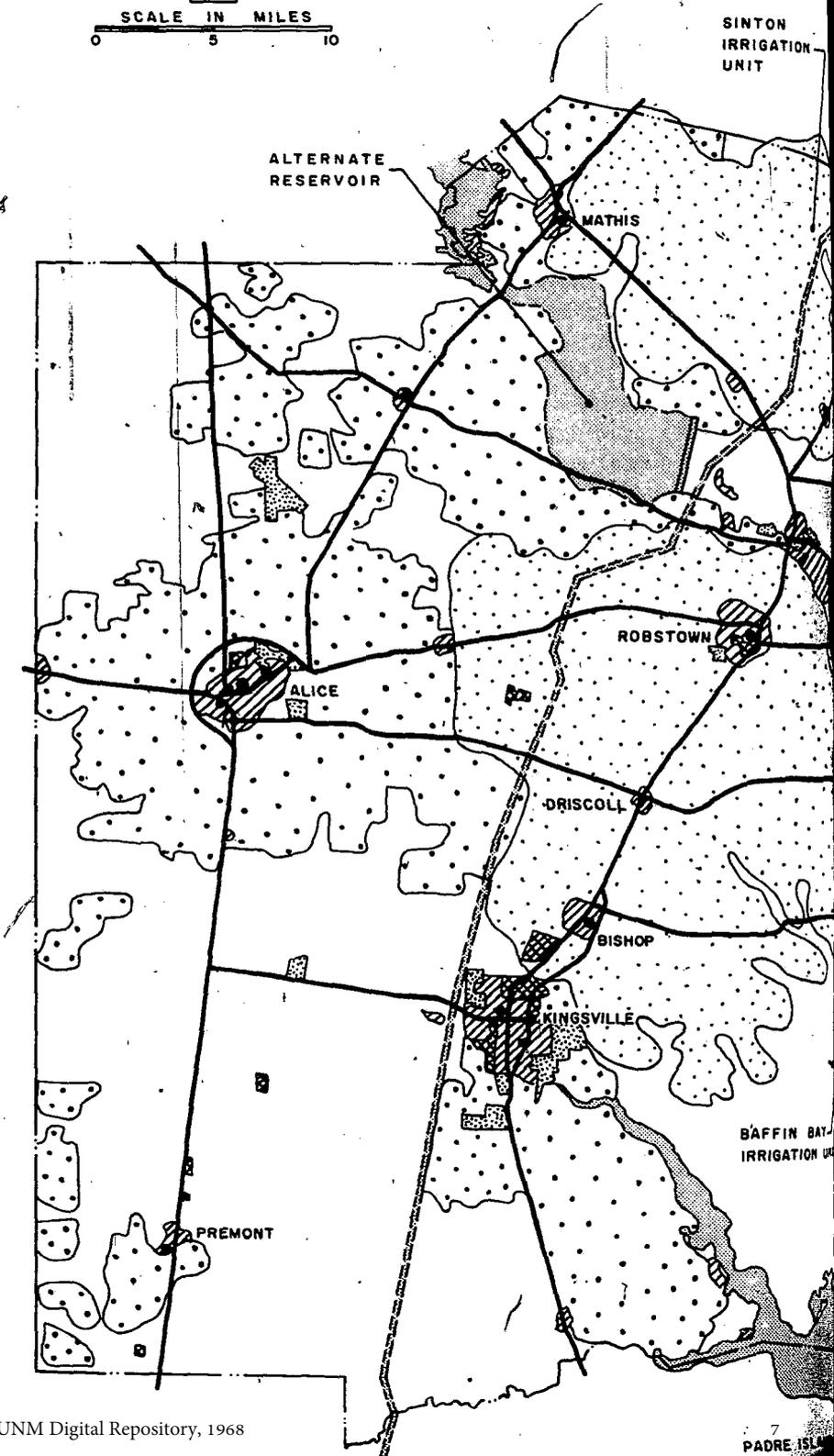
and futility. This does not mean that many useful lessons are not being learned and many good things accomplished. We are like a batter who is hitting .050 when his average should be .350.
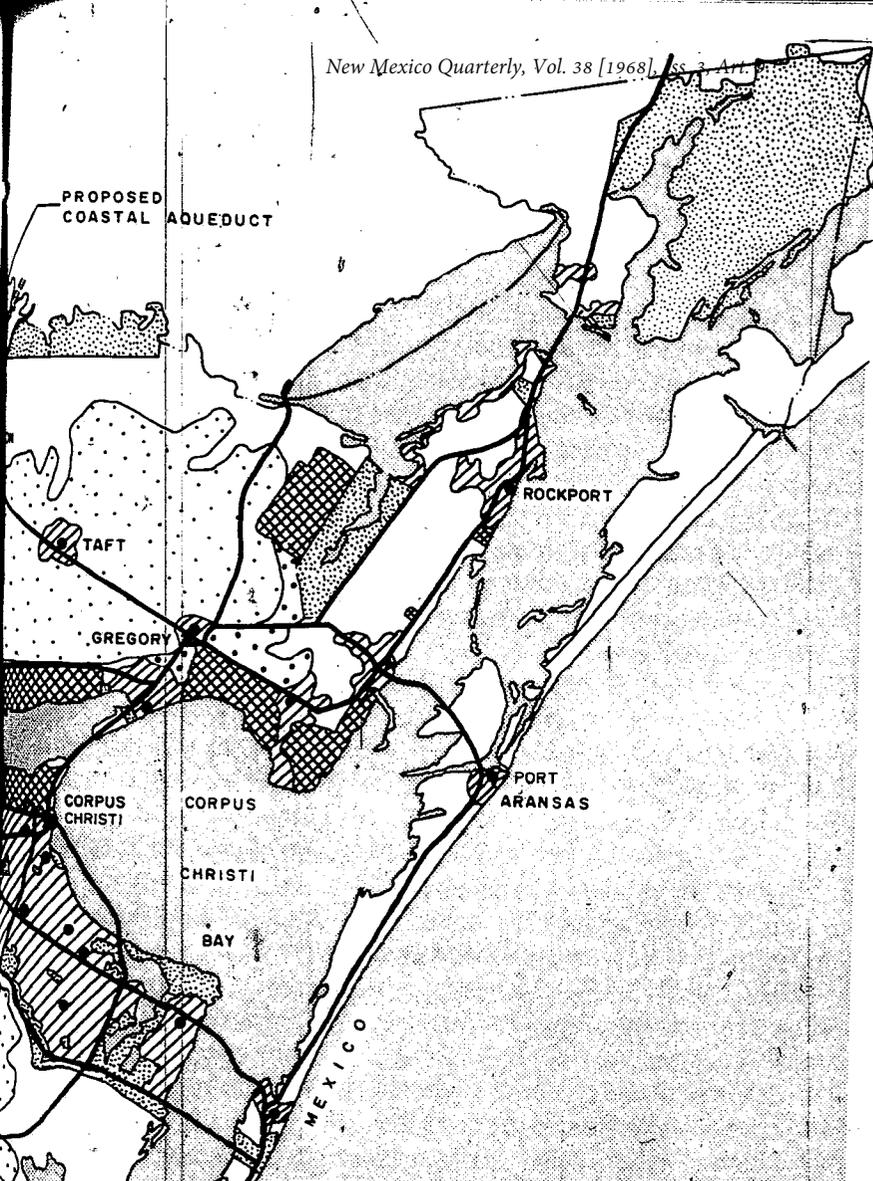
· Our firm recently completed a regional plan for the Coastal Bend Region of Texas, an area of 11,400 square miles (larger than Maryland) centered on Corpus Christi. The regional commission represents 12 counties and 13 cities. The population of 420,000 in 1965 is expected to be 750,000 by 1990 and 1,200,000 by 2020. The region has common problems of land use, industrial development, recreation, tourist promotion, and water. Our regional plan revealed an unexpectedly large reservoir of public interest in the region *as a region*, far transcending the usual parochial interest solely in the home town. It is probable that the public is actually ahead of the planners and public officials in its thinking and would be affirmative, even enthusiastic, in its support of measures required to carry out a regional plan.

One fundamental difficulty in current regional planning is the implicit assumption that 50 to 100 (or more) independent local government agencies are voluntarily going to adjust their land use planning (zoning ordinances) to a regional plan. This is incredibly naïve. In many metropolitan regions the various agencies compete with each other for such tax plums as regional shopping centers or large industrial districts. The dependence of local governments (and especially school districts) on the real estate tax results in high taxes when the suburb (or satellite city) is completely residential. Thus each area or agency tries to secure a "balanced" tax base. The objective, if you have 35 or 40 school districts in a metropolitan area, is to have an industrial district, an office complex, or a shopping center in every one. This is a silly way to lay out a metropolis. In many instances the looked-for result will not be achieved, and in others the growth of the metropolis will be distorted.

We must find a way to use all the economic resources of the metropolis equitably for all its people. This is not an insurmountable problem but we are taking too long a time getting to it. Until we do, it will be impossible to carry out a sound regional land use plan.

Keeping the "new generation" ideals in mind, why can we not devise regional patterns conducive to their realization? Much could be accomplished if, on a state-wide or regional basis, we do no more than zone the land into agricultural, conservation, and urban areas, as has been done in Hawaii. We should use zoning as a planning rather than as a housekeeping tool. Yet if we do not begin to use land properly in the general interest of the entire region, most of

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SCALE IN MILES

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SINTON
IRRIGATION
UNIT

ALTERNATE
RESERVOIR

MATHIS

ROBSTOWN

ALICE

DRISCOLL

BISHOP

KINGSVILLE

BAFFIN BAY
IRRIGATION UN

PREMONT

7

PADRE ISL
NATIO

PROPOSED
COASTAL AQUEDUCT

ROCKPORT

TAFT

GREGORY

PORT
ARANSAS

CORPUS
CHRISTI

CORPUS

CHRISTI

BAY

GULF OF MEXICO

CORPUS CHRISTI
METROPOLITAN AREA

LAND USE PLAN
L E G E N D

AGRICULTURE IRRIGATED
OTHER AGRICULTURE
RANCHING
URBAN AREAS
● MAJOR COMMERCIAL CENTERS
MAJOR INDUSTRIAL & PORT FACILITIES
— PROPOSED, HIGHWAY SYSTEM
MAJOR PUBLIC AREAS
===== PROPOSED COASTAL AQUEDUCT

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what we propose for solutions of urban problems will be just talk, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

The pattern of a region should be an arrangement of communities around a center limited in size and surrounded by a greenbelt. The individual communities should be separated from each other by open and agricultural areas. The individual communities should differ in size and function, and each should have carefully assigned local governmental responsibilities, yet operate under reasonably firm regional controls exercised by a regional government or by the state itself.

But what of the old central city? Obviously, under a regional arrangement it should be split up into a number of smaller parts, each of a size to foster the "personal interaction" rightfully so dear to our young planners. With populations of 25,000 to 50,000, St. Louis, for example, could be divided into 15 to 20 such parts.

There are straws in the wind. The Model City Program has evoked cries for more neighborhood participation, and this has led to demands for some neighborhood control to justify this participation. Responsible legal authorities propose allocating some municipal functions to a neighborhood government, a proposal reminiscent of one made in the 1930's by the National Association of Real Estate Boards. Population densities in the ghettos are being reduced "naturally."[2] Is it really so fantastic to think of rebuilding central city areas for low density residence with a very generous allocation of open space, and then accommodating new neighborhoods in satellite cities 25 to 50 miles away? The old areas can be rebuilt so they are similar in character and local governmental organization to the satellite cities and yet still retain their priceless heritage of historic landmarks and distinctive character. Rebuilding need not be merely sterile high rises interspersed with parking lots and sewer pipe playgrounds.

Technological change seems to occur ever more rapidly. Among other things, this means that buildings become obsolete more rapidly, and this in turn lends appeal to buildings with interchangeable parts that can be put up, taken down, and changed around with ease.[3] The apparent success of prefabricated row houses in Chicago and the increasing popularity of the mobile home are also significant.

One of our young staff members said: "The city of the future must maximize relationships between people. It must promote human interaction." How is this to be done? Interaction can be a by-product of "density zoning" or "cluster planning."[4] In the zoning process a developer is allowed to build row houses or apartments

or single-family homes on smaller lots if he sets aside equivalent open space for the use of the project residents and, usually, if he does not increase the overall population density. This leaves the problem of who takes care of the quasi-public open space. The city or county frequently cannot or will not. But property owners associations can be established[5] and these can become excellent vehicles for personal interaction on a scale that is manageable and purposeful. Subdivisions of this type are becoming popular. A recent study of a 12 square mile area in St. Louis County (only one-third built up) disclosed that 320 acres had already been set aside in "common ground."

On a more informal basis there has been some success with citizens' advisory committees in various communities, though often these have proved abortive when they have tried to be more than sounding boards. The Model City approaches are too new to be conclusive, but some of them, such as that in St. Louis, appear to be successful.

Apparently we need urban "cells" of, say, 500 to 2,000 people. (These might be "subdivisions" in new areas or groups of blocks in older neighborhoods). Then we need "communities" of 25,000 to 50,000 persons. (These are what have long been called cities, but now larger cities would be subdivided into smaller ones.) Then, finally, we need the great metropolitan regions, such as the 11,000 square mile, 12-county region around Corpus Christi.

The magnitude of the entire problem may be lessened by the "pill" and its resulting slowing down of population growth. Yet even with a stable population (which is not at all likely), the task of restructuring our urban areas and bringing them close to the objectives expressed by the new generation is formidable. That generation will need a commitment, an involvement, an understanding, and an enthusiasm for this far more than anything evoked by Eugene McCarthy. And the commitment and enthusiasm will need to be sustained over a much longer period.

NOTES

1. Richard F. Babcock and Fred P. Bosselman, "Citizen Participation: A Suburban Suggestion for the Central City," Symposium on Housing, *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Duke University School of Law (Spring, 1967).

The Neighborhood Improvement Act, a Suggested State Statute for the Protection and Improvement of Neighborhoods through Action of Property Owners, National Association of Real Estate Boards.

2. See: "The Negro and the City," *Wall Street Journal* (August 20, 1968), p. 14.

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3. "Construction Isn't Moving Fast Enough," article on Ezra Ehrenhrantz and the California School Construction System Development, *Engineering News Record*, (June 20, 1968), 84.

4. Eldridge Lovelace and William L. Weismantel, *Organic Zoning for Planned Residential Developments*, Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin 42; Joint Committee from the Urban Land Institute and National Association of Home Builders, *New Approaches to Residential Land Development, A Study of Concepts and Innovations*, Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin 40; Joint Committee from the Urban Land Institute and National Association of Home Builders, *Innovations versus Traditions in Community Development, A Comparative Study in Residential Land Use*, Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin 47.

5. See: *The Homes Association Handbook*, Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin 50.

6. See: Harold Keen, "San Diego Plan Revisited," *Cry California* (Summer, 1968) 35.