

## Building Communities

What makes a community out of a group of housing units is one of the subjects Regional Plan Association is studying in this final three-year phase of preparing the Second Regional Plan. (See REGIONAL PLAN NEWS #75, November 1964.)

Here are two ideas, one for suburban development, one for cities.

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# Radburn Revisited

by Anthony Bailey

Finding Radburn is no longer easy. You need a bright eye to spot on a New Jersey road map the unindexed name, planted in the upper right-hand corner of the yellow patch (cities of 50,000 and over) that forms Paterson, the former silk capital of the world. And driving out from Manhattan, the metropolis, over the George Washington Bridge, along Route 4, past Teaneck, Paramus, and Arcola, past the old landmarks of the Hackensack and Saddle Rivers, past the new landmark of the Bergen County shopping mall, through the suburban, speculative, at once over and under-developed savannah of split-levels, super-markets, parking lots, kiddie-zoos, realtors, loan offices, and cars, cars, cars, and finally into an area—it scarcely seems a "place"—called Fair Lawn, it is a little like being a radarless, pre-loran navigator in thick fog. Radburn, if it were ever here, may have gone forever. The acned greasemonkey in the gas station says, "Huh? That's the old name for the place. Go up to the traffic lights, turn right, and when you get to the stores, I think that's what they used to call Radburn."

Well, it is a mile and a half, and he is wrong. It is still called Radburn. "Radburn Plaza" are the words on the red-brick tower of shops and offices at the junction of Plaza Road and Fair Lawn Avenue, which figured on a map of George Washington's. "Radburn Association," say signs by the tennis courts, by two small parks that nestle amid houses built on cul-de-sacs radiating from perimeter roads (the houses somewhat mock-Tudor, mock-New England, mock-anything respectable), and by paths that weave through the parks and behind the houses, now, in mid-afternoon, thronged with school children running, skipping and dawdling along them, out of sight, touch, and almost the sound of cars. Which

was precisely the point of Radburn. There isn't much of it, and there are plenty of people in surrounding Fair Lawn who don't know it exists, or that it was there, aeons ago in 1929, when Fair Lawn itself was mostly green pasture.

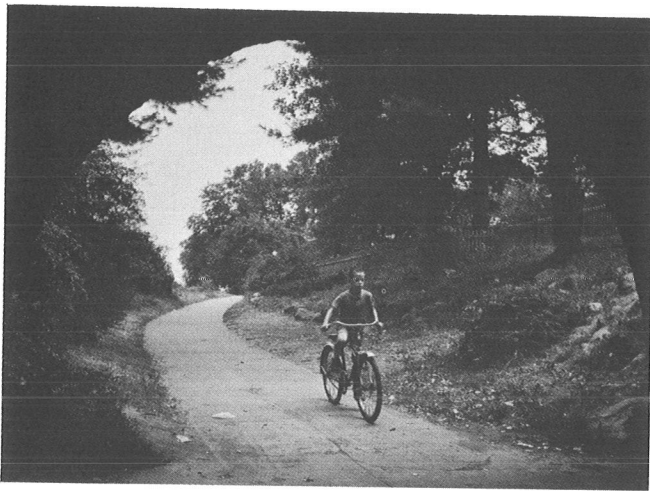
## "... the most significant single notion ..."

Radburn—"the town for the motor age." Perhaps the most significant single notion in 20th Century urban development. The Radburn Idea, admired, copied, and improved on in England, Scandinavia, India, Canada, and, of all places, Russia. "A finger exercise," says Mumford bravely, "preparing for symphonies yet to come." And which in this country are still yet to come. Somehow when you look at Fair Lawn today, it seems amazing that Radburn hasn't been gobbled up, that it survives at all. It is historical.

Radburn was born in *annus mirabilis* 1928. It was chiefly the idea of Clarence Stein and the late Henry Wright, architects and planners, who were fortunate to have the backing of Alexander Bing, a financier who believed that intelligent building and progressive, indeed revolutionary, planning was financially feasible. With Stein and Wright, Bing had already proved this on a small scale at Sunnyside Gardens in Queens. It was the idea of a garden city, where people could live and work, close to nature and protected from sudden death-by-automobile. It was an idea that had been partly stated in Ebenezer Howard's work and writings in England. It was an idea nurtured by weekend meetings at the Hudson Guild Farm in Netcong, N.J., where, with square dances and Appalachian folk-ballads in the background, people like Mumford, Stein, Wright, and Catherine Bauer discussed America as though they

believed, if not in the perfectability of Western Hemisphere man, at least in his desire and ability to win back an environment already dominated by Henry Ford's creation. And, as Clarence Stein recalls today on his 12th floor balcony at 64th Street and Central Park West, it was an idea that had been vividly expressed by Frederick Olmstead in the park below. There, in 1858, he and Calvert Vaux challenged the gridiron with a system of paths, sunken roads, bridges, underpasses and greenery that separated pedestrian, equestrian and vehicular traffic for the benefit of each.

Stein is 82, a small, trim man with the energy and spryness architects seem to preserve when members of other professions have been long packed under. "You see," he says, "what we were after was a community with natural beauty, and with safety, particularly for



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children. Security and happiness—Aristotle's requirements for a city.

"So we did several things. We made superblocks, which the Dutch had in New Amsterdam in 1660, the rows of houses surrounding farms and gardens in the middle. We made two parks as the cores of our superblocks. We built the houses close together, some separate, some in rows, but all on cul-de-sacs, which the British long ago proved peaceful (no through traffic) and economical for utilities and upkeep. And we turned the houses back to front, with the back doors and garages on the cul-de-sacs, where the cars came in, and the front doors, living rooms and bedrooms facing the parks, gardens and pedestrian paths. We fitted roads and parks together like the interlocked fingers of your right and left hands."

On two square miles of undulating farmland, 16 miles from Manhattan, Bing's corporation began what they intended to be a town of 25,000 people, with schools, stores, and small factories served by the nearby

Erie Railroad. Stein and Wright were fortunate to have a client who thought to that scale. They were lucky rural Fair Lawn hadn't yet been sold an orthodox zoning law or a gridiron street plan. The houses went up around the first park, whose cost, Stein proved, could be balanced by the lower cost of utility and street construction with the superblock and cul-de-sac pattern.\*

Despite the fact that the George Washington Bridge was not yet built and Paterson was losing its silk industry, and perhaps because, as separate pieces of architecture, the buildings showed little of the imagination or spirit that went into the total plan, the first houses were snapped up. Radburn looked rosy. And at this point the stock market collapsed, the country began to receive its long, between-the-wars reminder of the Great Absurd, and construction at Radburn gradually slowed down, until in 1933 only 12 houses were built. None of the factories arrived. Many people who had so recently moved in had to move out, their mortgages foreclosed. Bing's corporation was able to rent a few of the houses thus returned to them, but the rents were too small to help. Bing's scheme needed continuous development to succeed, and when this didn't come, and land, bought at fairly high prices, sank to 10 percent of its value, the corporation went bankrupt. Radburn was lucky to squeak through, a small, etiolated, but nevertheless unique flower.

That it preserves today, within the municipal framework of Fair Lawn, a semi-independent existence is a tribute to the basic Stein-Wright plan. Six hundred and seventy-seven families live in their own houses, another 100 in apartments—a total of nearly 5,000 residents. Radburn never acquired factories or the people who work in them, and its original white-collar character has been, if anything, bleached rather than blued by the years. Sixty percent of the breadwinners commute to New York to such jobs as advertising, engineering, law, and medicine. Although the Church-in-Radburn is interdenominational, the denominations of Radburn are chiefly Protestant, the politics Republican, and the race white. It is, perforce, a suburban

\*"In fact, the area in streets and the length of utilities is 25 percent less than in the typical American street plan. The saving in cost of these not only paid for the 12 to 14 percent of the total area that went into internal parks, but also covered the cost of grading and landscaping the play spaces and green links connecting the central block commons . . ." Stein, in his book, "Toward New Towns For America."

dormitory, more of a country club without a golf course than a garden city, more a continuously-running social event than a town.

### Extra taxes, extra value

But those who live there are grateful enough for this. The houses (valued from \$17,000 to \$45,000) come on the market infrequently, and the turnover is largely internal, with older families moving to smaller houses and younger, growing families moving to larger ones. The most striking compliment comes from Fair Lawn, which enviously regards Radburn as over-privileged. The consequent sense of superiority Radburn people feel is probably enough to balance the fact that, long ago, Fair Lawn outvoted them on schools, and that most Fair Lawners irritatingly forget that Radburn residents pay not only borough taxes but an assessment to the Radburn Association for their coveted privileges—this year, \$2.61 per \$100 assessed value. (In other words, a Radburn house assessed at \$5,350 would pay an Association fee of \$133.22, as well as a Fair Lawn tax of \$400.) It isn't bad value.

The Association has its offices, library and well-equipped gym in the old Grange Building on Fair Lawn Avenue. Robert Fralick, former Fair Lawn recreation director who is now recreation director and manager of the Radburn Association, says vigorously, "In the summer we reckon to keep children busy from sunrise to sunset. Anyone here who sends his kids to camp is really missing the boat." Activities include tennis, soccer, archery, softball, baseball, wrestling, choral singing, life-saving, baton-swirling, cheerleading, arts-and-crafts, trips to New York, and swimming in the two Radburn pools. There are two "tot-lots" where three trained women look after children under five, five days a week, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. During the school year Fralick supervises children who use the Grange gym after school, and there is a story hour in the library for small children. Adults are allowed the sole use of the pool on certain evenings during the week. There are bridge and bowling clubs, the weekly *Radburn Bulletin*, and the Radburn Players (the oldest amateur drama group in the state), who do three or four productions a year, such as *Guys and Dolls* and *Sunday in New York*.

### Running a "capitalist kibbutz"

The problems in a capitalist kibbutz of this sort devolve largely on Fralick and his staff (seven year-round and 39 summer). The parks and paths have to be main-

tained and patrolled. Pools and tennis courts have to be kept in good repair. Houses are close together, and neighbors' approval has to be obtained before changing the paint, building a car-port or selling the house. Most of the complaints Fralick receives are to the effect that somebody's garbage can has been left out three days running, or that so-and-so has his patio television on at full *Gunsmoke* blast. Stein and Wright brought the park close to the houses, and some people can't get used to unofficial ball games going on outside the living room window. "It's mostly small things like that," says Fralick, who, for the insulation's sake, still lives in Fair Lawn. "But now and then someone will mention that part of the summer program was great, and that's



like being given a thousand dollars." The Association has nine elected Trustees and a compact set of Protective Restrictions, designed to create harmony in the way of finances, nuisances, and permitted uses.

Theoretically, Radburn could grow, but it is over a dozen years since additional Fair Lawn houses were let in. Although the trustees recently were able to purchase a small strip of unused grassed land, they think of it as a buffer-strip; there is insufficient space and service to incorporate several adjacent Fair Lawn residents who might like to join. George Sporn is a trustee. He runs the Radburn-Fair Lawn Esso service station, and has lived in Radburn for more than 20 years. He says, "If you want to own a lot of spacious private property, then Radburn isn't the answer. But if you like a place which is at the same time busy and safe for children, where you don't have to spend all your time driving them round, and where you have beautiful parks and great public amenities, then it's dandy. We're now getting back the kids of the first residents, kids who



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grew up here, went to college, married, and now have kids of their own. They want to live in Radburn, and I don't blame them."

Thirty years, of course, have seen changes and suggestions for change. The footbridge across Fair Lawn Avenue that used to link the two sections of Radburn has been removed by municipal authorities, who said it was unsafe, and who replaced it with elderly crossing guards. "It was a lovely thing," says Mr. Sporn, showing visitors the spot where it stood. But in fact Radburn's safety record remains good. In a common gridiron system walkers risk 20 street crossings a mile, and children play in through-streets. Radburn has had two traffic deaths, both on the main roads that cut through the community. In the lanes laid out by Stein and Wright, a child's broken arm has been the only injury in 35 years. Children now and then play ball in the cul-de-sac lanes, because they're not supposed to, because balls bounce better there, or because the kitchens are on that side of the house and mothers can keep an eye on them. The lanes, moreover, were designed for the 1930 runabout, one per family. Today's compact seems large in Radburn. The family with two cars, and one small garage, runs into the Fair Lawn ordinance forbidding on-street parking. Although visitors' cars get away with this, they make the cul-de-sacs even harder to negotiate.

Another problem is snow removal, because a plough can't simply push the snow through a street that doesn't have two open ends. Fralick thinks wide sewer gratings or manholes would be an answer. Radburn's

superior parks, made to play and stroll in, occasionally attract youngsters from elsewhere who use the novel space and freedom to drink beer and break lamps. But the paths, well laid-out for pedestrian errands and intentions, are used and liked to a satisfying degree.

### To do it today . . .

If he had to start again, Mr. Stein would merely increase the size of the lanes and garages, provide more paved areas for ballplaying, and extend the kitchen-dining rooms from back to front of the house. "As time goes by," he says, "I'm convinced that architects must plan spaciouly, allowing for the growth and change of all equipment."

Mr. Stein is also convinced that Radburn remains as timely and entertaining a solution to any 20th Century motor-age country's housing problems as it was 35 years ago. In such projects of his own as Chatham Village at Pittsburgh and Baldwin Hills in Los Angeles, the Radburn idea was expressed. Most of the British New Towns follow the Radburn plan of cul-de-sacs and separate pedestrian paths, and older cities like Sheffield and Coventry have rebuilt bombed areas on those lines. At Vallingby in Sweden, Kitimat in Canada, and several towns in Russia, Radburn has influenced the layout. "Radburn" turns up in the indexes and glossaries of every modern book on the subject of architecture and housing.

### How relevant, yet how removed

To Radburn itself come engineers, architects and planners from all over the world, and Mr. Sporn takes them around to see the parks, lanes, paths, pools and the famous Olmstead-type underpass beneath Howard Avenue. They enjoy the tour, although they are a little surprised at how small Radburn is, and how hemmed in by Fair Lawn—by streets and houses built as if Radburn had never existed. There also come study groups from the Urban Land Institute and the FHA in Washington, and students from Harvard, Princeton and Cornell, who may reflect on how relevant Radburn seems, and how removed from the American course of things. It is curious that Europe is about 20 years behind America in entering the motor-age, and perhaps 10 years ahead of it in looking for long-term solutions. Colin Buchanan, the British town-planner, believes one reason for this is that "so much [American] development is so low in density that there is not a great deal of walking around." Moreover, the application of Rad-

burn principles involves "comprehensive designing over sizable areas. This is possible when the work is being done by local authorities or [government-sponsored] New Town corporations, but it is very difficult to secure better layouts from private developers with the conditions of piece-meal development in which so much private housing is built."

Most American builders, as Clarence Stein patiently recognizes, build what they know they can sell. Encouraged by the post-war mortgage policy of the FHA, their ideas of privacy and space and freedom are expressed by quarter-acre free-standing house plots and a front-door automobile; and thus whole regions of this country are becoming giant Fair Lawns, offering housing that is neither dense nor spacious, that has neither the safe, cultivated proximity of towns nor the abandon of the countryside. What is a ranch house if, instead of having a ranch around it, it has 100,000 other ranch houses?

But Mr. Stein has hopes. The President has delivered a message demanding a concerted effort to plan the nation's housing future. A few American builders are making trips to Europe to see the New Towns there. Although Alexander Bing demonstrated the immense

difficulties facing any man who attempts single-handed to make a New Town in this country, Mr. Robert Simon is trying again, at Reston, Virginia. Hopefully he will prove that the difficulties are less in the depression-free '60s. Then Reston will be up-to-date evidence of the fact that a terraced town-house with a small garden offers more privacy than a free-standing ranch-house, a communal park more space than an open patch of lawn, and separated paths and lanes more peace and safety than the common sidewalk and road. It will be evidence, moreover, of a comprehensive grasp of the 20th Century relation of man to his work and leisure. Presently roads are built, houses are built, stores are built, fields vanish, and public transportation systems fall apart. The Eastern seaboard particularly is presented with numerous short-term solutions by single-minded pragmatists subject to little co-ordination or control. It is toward the antithesis of this—toward a sweeping concern that takes in not only new towns but every contemporary means of making a motor-age society fit for people—that Radburn was and is a step. A small step, perhaps, but at least a conscious act that seems particularly lucid when compared to the vegetable-like growth that has crept all around it.

# The Case for the Sub-City

by Albert Mayer

In the last several years, a few small-scale developments have been started or proposed in our city that have received comparatively little extended notice. But each in itself, and especially in total implication, these are far more important and significant for humane living and civic enjoyment in New York than, say, the gargantuan Lincoln Center with its streams of millions in contributions, and its rivers of publicity. The Richard Rodgers Amphitheater for drama and music, to be built in Mt. Morris Park in Harlem; The Loula Lasker pool and center at the meeting point of Harlem and East Harlem; the East Harlem Plaza—these could well be the nuclei of a spiritually and socially transformed city and the prototypes of transformations elsewhere.

These are large and buoyant claims, but in light of the problems and requirements of our cities, these claims are justified.

In the hierarchy of contemporary American worry,

the parlous questions confronting our cities stand near or at the top. Consideration of their mephitic present, their destinies if any, cover miles of thought, square miles of research reports and discussions, unmeasurable thickness of books. And in some directions even more of this is needed.

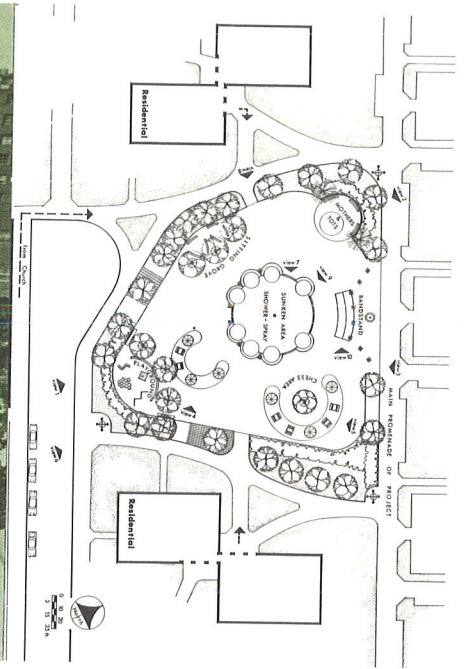
However, even in the midst of this welter of study and discussion, there is one potent facet that is scarcely considered in the circles where power and money resources reside and produce action. This is a two-headed situation which exists in all our cities, is particularly virulent in our bigger cities, and is probably most virulent and persuasive of all here in New York.

## Localities within the city

All our cities have two things in common in varying degrees. First, the mass is agglutinated and amorphous, with something of a single or plural heart or central-



East Harlem Plaza, designed by Albert Mayer



ization of whatever excellence and distinction there is. Except in the negative sense of inescapable ghetto, the localities do not have a sense of prideful identification; nor generally any sense of intimate allegiance. There are no *local* centers or meeting places to evoke it. Whatever excellence there is in our cities is remote in a major center of great and prestigious scale, pleasing to the big shots and to out-of-town visitors. Something of this we need, surely. But what we need deeply, what is scarcely considered, is a crystalline city structure, with *local* glitter, *local* peaks and sub-peaks of excellence, or, in another metaphor, active throbbing *local* cells.

Second, even in the central glitter, or what passes for it, we almost always find what might be called "project glitter." We find separate gigantesque entities injected into a welter of undistinction. Consider the seedy hotels and disreputable dives that crowd the side streets off glittering Broadway. Perhaps the most dramatic and cynical confrontations are the Times Square and Grand Central subway stations—musty, dirty, sleazy, disgusting—under some of the most grandiose buildings of our city. Compare these to Stockholm, Tokyo, Vienna's under-crossings.

We also note what is not well realized: that in order to be healthy, the existing political city itself must be reconsidered. New York would do well to consider, as other great cities abroad have been doing, the demarcation and recognition of "sub-cities" of, generally, 100,000 to 250,000 population. We would do well to

consider the devolution of municipal decision and operation (marriages, births, deaths, housing, welfare) to districts and neighborhoods. It would sharply modify the sense of remoteness, of citizen-futility: an important political innovation. Here, we consider the physical-social counterpart.

### Community Lincoln Centers

We want, then, to consider the creation of local meeting-places, festive local plazas and squares, local cultural centers and even "sub-city museums," connected by eventful pedestrian promenades. These are not only happy municipal incidents; they are essential galvanizing elements in the anatomy or structure of the city; anatomy and structure to vitalize and animate the dull drab magna which characterizes many square miles of our city—those parts of New York which the conceivers and promoters of the Lincoln Centers, and the prestige-dazzled contributors of the \$2 million Rembrandt to the Metropolitan Museum of Art have never visited and probably are scarcely aware of. How many happy and essential "municipal incidents" could be called into life for even half the cost of a Lincoln Center? How many of our East Harlems, Brownsvilles, Bushwicks, Morris-anias—and middle-class Elmhursts, too—could reach a new spirited level of community consciousness, community enjoyment, counterpoint to gray anonymity and the gas station glitter?

Not much actually exists of what we are talking about, but enough has happened and enough is known

to convince me that much is possible.

First, consider the "sub-city" center. Of course, a sub-city is not an independent city. Hence its center will not have the full panoply of functions of even the small new city of Stevenage in England, whose planned population is 80-100,000 and whose present population is almost that. Stevenage has a distinctive square, a landmark clock tower, a festive architectural character, a gay and varied social scene.

### It'll never work here . . . but it does

I hear somebody say: Oh, don't be naive. It'll never work here. Vandalism. Rowdiness. Race. Nationality. Conflict. Answer: don't you believe it. That is, don't you believe it *provided* that proved ways of planning development, operation, social allegiance, are followed.

This is not theory. This is continuing fact. The fact comes from a continuing, waxing social-recreational center on the next lower scale, in an actual neighborhood, working and glowing since five years ago, contradicting all your cliches. Where? Right here in Manhattan, in East Harlem, on 114th Street. Originally, one heard all the cliches: vandalism, rowdiness, race, nationality. What, no fences? And this in an area of delightfully mixed population: Italians, Puerto Ricans, Negroes, some Jamaicans.

In addition to its normal day-to-day recreational opportunities, there are school graduating exercises, neighborhood or district art exhibits, straw hat entertainment: generally, eight shows a summer. They run from an abbreviated *Barber of Seville* by the Amato Opera Company through Louise Delcena Caribbean Calypso, and Olatunji's African drummers and dancers.

Audiences and participants: from several hundred to two thousand. Plus uncounted faces in the windows of buildings surrounding the Plaza.

Vandalism vs. allegiance. The architecture and landscaping, which have won some notable professional awards, are as fresh and un-murdered as they were five years ago. Not a single physical fence, but the social fence of local opinion. The local Plaza Committee of some 25 members is active, alert, takes charge of behavior at performances.

Sloganeering: success is no accident. Originally sought by local social workers close to the people, notably Mildred Zucker of the James Weldon Johnson Community Center, the original idea and original sketches for East Harlem Plaza were gone over with numerous local groups (as well as the sympathetic New York City

Housing Authority), modified, and finally embraced by the people—before anything was done. Thus, learning from the YMCA scene in *West Side Story*, there has been no such story here. The positives have triumphed, continue to flourish. The Plaza continues to supply the leaven of distinction, gaiety, community assembly.

The finished product is ridiculously inexpensive, is only the visible top of the underlying body of sensitivity, understanding, preparation, eager participation. . . . Excuse the long case-history, but it is unfortunately, the only fully-documented one I know of.

### And a proposal in Washington

Another illustration is of a proposed enterprise in Washington, quite different, you will see, in specific working-out, but the same principles. It is an eventful mall, in a low-income neighborhood in the Southwest section, flanked on one side by housing, on the other by existing large playing fields and active recreational activities. As it is adjacent to a vast new Urban Renewal project on the luxury level in Washington's new Southwest, the thought suddenly formed: why not a glittering animating focus for the others too, for the least of these?

In the case of these two last examples, I am almost ashamed to say that the cost is well under \$100,000. They should, of course, also have an endowment for imaginative operation, and local and visiting performing companies. One might put the total at, say, around a quarter of a million each. What a set of opportunities! What a gratifying experience and results lie latent for those who will make them possible.

### Sub-city culture and center-city culture

And what a varied profusion of adventurous applications. Consider just one: the "sub-city museum." Consider the philosophy and characteristics of this imagined new kind of museum:

*Nearness at hand:* no enormous distance or effort or outing to central museums. A commencement of interest among the people, a stimulation, *leading* into the urge to visit the huge exhaustive places, and a better understanding of them.

*What it is:* a range of interesting things in and from our world, of things the ordinary city-born-and-bred child or adolescent or adult is not closely and excitingly aware of. Not many of each exhibit—i.e., not exhaustive or exhausting as in the big central museum. But on the other hand, not a miscellany or few specimens

running into each other confusingly and pseudo-comprehensively. Half a dozen or a dozen handsome exciting mineral specimens; some wonderfully and romantically shaped leaves; some spectacular shells, corals, sea-fans; each leading into a parallel of tree-growth process, of crystal formation; of shell structure and morphology. Also, some evocative African sculptures, which can be readily felt by unsophisticated people without theories or self-consciousness; possibly illustrations of selected "houses through the ages," from the primitive conical and circular to Buckminster Fuller's spaceframe; possibly a sequence of the hieroglyph, the illuminating manuscript, Gutenberg, the printing press in "separated" sections. Separated, for example, by color background, by differing intensity of lighting, by different scales, by captions in different letter size and style, by some being operable, etc. All, of course, enhanced by traveling exhibits.

*At whom should the Museum and exhibits be directed?* Answer: at people of a cultural level not too sophisticated, whose eagerness and curiosity and "world-view" are still latent, whose normal stimuli are nothing like as deeply exciting as I think they could be, and to which they could be developed and "stretched." There should be a holiday-like quality about it. Perhaps it could be considered a miniature, compact "East Harlem World's Fair."

Pin-pointed note on portions of exhibit content: they should be of particular interest and applicability to the citizens in the particular area. For example, if in East Harlem: of Italian, Puerto Rican and Negro provenance and significant achievement; interesting in themselves, silent evidence of our validity and importance; and being only three among a number of exhibits, not blatant or anything like a Hard Sell.

The sub-museum would cost a good deal more than the open-air plazas just described. I commend it to the attention of those who in the last couple of years have contributed so lavishly to the expansion of the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum. I ask them to de-centralize a portion of their wealth and attention; from the macro-level, which is just awash with great wealth and contributions, to the throbbing micro-levels, where it is totally and grimly lacking.

It has been emphasized here that even if one is aroused by such thinking as this and such challenges as these, one can't simply chuck in a money contribution without a fertile soil and imaginative preparation and a degree of local awareness. But there are indeed ample

areas of local awareness, latent or crystallized. I have noted East Harlem. Another is Brownsville.

This area is, to this provincial Manhattanite at least, in a remote part of Brooklyn, a sort of terra incognita to most of us. I was invited out to the Brownsville Centenary anniversary celebration last June. Before attending, I asked to look around this potential sub-city. I needn't describe the details of rundown-ness, the absence of distinction or distinguishability. What a thorough trip; what a thorough briefing; what varied and animated committee members, talking over the lunch table. What hopes and plans, realistic and unrealistic, they broached. But energized with funds and skills, what might not come out of this. I thought, leaving Brownsville, paraphrasing Miranda, "Oh brave small world, that has such people in it."



Ed Bagwell

So, coming back to where I started from, you can see why I so highly prize the Rodgers amphitheater, the Loula Lasker complex, the East Harlem Plaza, and why I so keenly advocate many more at various scales and in various locations.

It is well known that New York has no statesmen-like, comprehensive, architectural or social plan—or, indeed, any plan; that it is far behind many other cities in this respect. Heaven knows, with our powerful concentration here of large-scale developer-entrepreneurs manifesting themselves in huge, separate, anarchic single buildings and projects, whether it ever will develop the effective corporate spirit which must underlie humane total concept in time to arrest and reverse galloping disorganization and human deterioration.

But with its incomparable and latently available wealth, with its power and brains, it could leap beyond



most cities, and maybe beyond every city in the world in excellence, in social-architectural imagination and sympathy. It could do this in a way almost uniquely available to it—because of its separate powerwealth nodules that could transform themselves and express themselves at these various scales of local level.

Let us—let them—let each of them, working closely and sensitively with a selected locality or sub-city and its active committees, work out some specific plans on the basis of specific needs as determined through a carefully cultivated local consensus. Then let each of them supply the funds and the skills to make its creation possible and its operation feasible. It will take time and imagination and delicacy to work it through, to help create and nurture the organism. Just a money gesture can't accomplish it. But I know it can be done and what



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it can accomplish, if it is imaginatively cultivated with our best and most devoted social knowledge and local grasp. I know that it can galvanize local allegiance, enthusiasm, sense of fiesta and sense of self-reliance and sense of responsibility and initiative. I know and grant that no single kind of enterprise can take on such a complex of problems as a city consists of and, by itself, solve it. But I do fervidly contend that the awakening of impulse and challenge that we can accomplish this way will flower into a most powerful positive release of individual and social energy and spirit.

### The money IS available

Let a foundation, let a great bank, let a New York Stock Exchange, let a United States Steel Corporation, let a great labor union each undertake one; singly or jointly. That would be, say, five to start with. I mention

banks specifically, because our great banks have scores of branches, many of them in just such areas as we are talking about. Thus our great banks have a locality-stake; indeed their advertising emphasizes this local friendliness, understanding and interest even more pointedly. I will mention the Chase Manhattan Bank because of an additional factor. Its new main building in the Wall Street area has broken new ground in two ways: the fine ambient plaza in this traditionally canyon-congested area; and the policy of purchasing fine paintings spread through the offices in this building. What we are seeking is an imaginative but logical extension; another new step, imperative and exciting, similar in impulse but of much deeper penetration.

And specifically, I appeal to the contributors to the \$2,300,000 Rembrandt, or their equivalents, to create, for the same cost, a number of living Rembrandts—or rather, as the Stevenage and East Harlem plazas show, living Brueghels. I also appeal to those who, jointly leaning on each other's approvals, make possible the great and important central enterprises, to singly or jointly tackle the neglected hinterlands of our city.

Perhaps these possibilities will appear as glittering to readers as they do to me. But the reaction may be: it's the government that should do this. Answer: In New York's finance-beleaguered situation and with so many un-met burdens, we just cannot expect this. But, more positively and creatively, in our country, this is just the opportunity and occasion that private initiative at its best means: intellectually, economically, spiritually, to originate thinking and initiate action for new dimensions in our common enterprise of living.

And finally, New York has the greatest concentration of private enterprise money, brilliance, originality of any city in the world. This is true in the "private-private" sector of individuals; in the "private-corporate" sector of business-industry; in the "private-exploratory" sector of foundations. Let them all find further, localized expression in this new dimension: localized expression with inspiring national implications.

We don't want to do too many of these until we have tested ourselves, proved out our optimism. On completion of the first such project, let there be a fine local intimate dedication *without* the President of the United States or other big shots. Then, a year after it is in operation and we see it throbbing with life and purpose, let us have a re-dedication *with* the President of the United States because we will have initiated thinking and work of national significance.

# STATUS REPORT

## Railroad finance crisis

The New Haven, Erie-Lackawanna and Jersey Central Railroads are in extremely serious financial straits.

The New Haven, in bankruptcy, has warned that it has insufficient funds for adequate maintenance during the winter and probably will have to withdraw cars as they become unsafe—perhaps whole trains. Efforts to purchase new cars, financed by Connecticut and Westchester County through New York State's credit (but actually purchased by the Port of New York Authority), were halted by Westchester's refusal to contribute \$400,000. Some Westchester Town Supervisors on the County Board objected that their communities were not served by the New Haven so it wasn't their problem, but the main objection seemed to be the lack of a long-range plan for maintaining New Haven service.

The New Haven has been in bankruptcy since 1961, run by the court through three court-appointed trustees. It appears to be losing money on all types of service, freight as well as passenger; in fact, commuter service provides an important benefit during these desperate days because it provides cash in advance.

Connecticut has provided \$500,000 a year in bridge and crossing maintenance for the New Haven, and it has appropriated \$1 million and bonding power of \$2 million to the Connecticut Transportation Authority to deal with the New Haven's problems, but no plan has been made for using the appropriation.

New Jersey is contributing an estimated \$7.3 million in cash subsidies to the New Jersey commuter railroads this year—the fifth consecutive year of subsidies to the commuter lines. Nevertheless, the Erie-Lackawanna claims to have lost \$5 million on commuter operations last year and furthermore requires \$80 million worth of modernization which it is in no financial condition to carry out. The Jersey Central also lost \$5 million on commuter service.

Some relief is in sight when Highway Commissioner Palmer's Aldene Plan is completed next October, tying Erie and Jersey Central service to the Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) tubes, which will allow the railroads to abandon ferry service. This has been adding considerably to their deficits.

In 1966, the Long Island Rail Road must face its future; it has been operating as a redevelopment corporation since 1954, an arrangement in lieu of bankruptcy, and reverts to its previous owner, the Pennsylvania Railroad, after twelve years. Governor Rockefeller has named a committee, consisting of his secretary, William Ronan, Long Island business execu-

tives and a lawyer, to suggest a future for the LIRR. The line has accumulated \$7-1/2 million in deficits since 1954 after receiving real estate tax relief, more than \$500,000 in station maintenance aid by New York City and Nassau County (Suffolk has refused it), and \$600,000 from New York State to eliminate grade crossings.

For the fourth time in the last three years, Regional Plan Association has publicly called for a regional agency that can contract for or otherwise insure the continuation and modernization of the commuter railroad system. It is generally accepted that there is no reasonable substitute for most of the railroad commuter lines now operating. (The Institute of Public Administration confirmed this in a careful examination of bus alternatives from the north in "Suburbs to Grand Central," released early this year.) From the point of view of the Region's economy—affecting those who work outside of Manhattan as well as those working there—the service must be maintained. It appears only reasonable, then, to provide the most efficient rush-hour transportation from the suburbs and outer areas of the City. This is modernized railroad service. Since the railroad companies are not in financial condition to modernize and have no prospect of sufficient profit to warrant such an investment—yet much better service could be provided at much lower cost, debt service included, if the commuter services were modernized and integrated—it seems reasonable to invest in modernization through a public agency, the Regional Plan statement explained.

Lower fares and more frequent railroad runs in the Philadelphia area have increased passengers on the Reading Railroad 34.9 percent, comparing the first half of 1964 with the first half of 1963, and on the Pennsylvania by 94.9 percent over the same period. This experiment has been sponsored by public agencies responsible for maintaining and improving public transportation.

The Pennsylvania legislature recently established a new agency covering Philadelphia and surrounding counties in the state—Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority—which can issue revenue bonds, accept contributions from other levels of government and make up deficits on railroad commuter service into Philadelphia from contributions of the counties involved. This will replace two older agencies which have similar though more limited responsibilities.

The Massachusetts legislature set up a similar agency this year covering the Boston commuter area. It is financed by a state cigarette tax.

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# BOOKSHELF

**The Heart of Our Cities: The Urban Crisis—Diagnosis and Cure** by Victor Gruen. Simon and Schuster, 1964. 368 pp. \$8.50

Mr. Gruen's cure for "the urban crisis" consists of well-defined neighborhoods, communities, towns, and cities, each with its own individual life and sphere of government, separated by open recreational areas within reach of all inhabitants, easily accessible to each other and to the metropolitan core. He indicates the optimum size, population, and density for each segment of a metropolis covering 695 square miles (more than twice the size of New York City) and containing 3.3 million people (about 40 percent of the City's population)—though a much lower density than New York City's, a more compact but less congested pattern than most of our metropolitan areas have today.

**The Homes Association Handbook.** Technical Bulletin 50. Urban Land Institute, 1200 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 1964. 406 pp. \$10.00

A comprehensive guide for neighborhood groups owning property in common (e.g., the open space in some cluster subdivisions), with detailed advice on legal, financial, and social aspects of home association establishment and operation. Evidence from 470 subdivisions with some type of organization for ownership of common property by residents convinced the Urban Land Institute that automatic membership of all lot owners, each assessed a proportionate share of the expenses, is the most successful arrangement.

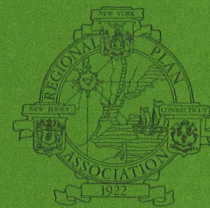
**Urban Landscape Design** by Garrett Eckbo. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964. 248 pp. \$16.50

An excellent book by a landscape architect concerned with the quality of environment, from a patio to a region. Photographs and drawings illustrate design solutions, desirable and less desirable, for courts and gardens, buildings alone or in groups, parks and playgrounds, streets and squares, neighborhoods, communities, and regions.

**Break-through to the Hudson River: A Plan for Yonkers to Peekskill.** School of Architecture, Columbia University, New York, 1964

A plan to restore "the lordly Hudson" to its original majesty by ending pollution of its waters, making its banks accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, cleaning up the blighted waterfronts of its old towns, and conserving its open spaces by controlling growth in planned residential and industrial centers. The planners, under the sponsorship of Representative-elect Richard L. Ottinger and his family, developed their suggestions after eight weeks of exploring the eastern shore last summer.

*Sarah H. Smith*



## Regional Plan Association

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