

Who Will Plan Your Town? A Report

By Max Flatow

Representing the New Mexico Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Robert W. Fairburn attended the Governor's Conference on Urban Planning held in Santa Fe on September 3rd and 4th. His notes intended for a report to the Chapter were given to me for finalizing due to Mr. Fairburn's departure from the city. The summation as such can be best described in one word, "sad."

Perhaps the best possible approach to keeping you informed on what is happening in this field is to review the progress made to date by these so called "planners" who will plan your community and mine.

When the Governor signed into law the enabling legislation that qualifies New Mexico to participate in Federal Aid for slum clearance and planning, he created a State Planning Office which is now in operation in Santa Fe and whose duty it will be to monitor the planning work in the state. Mr. Don M. Hopkins under the State Finance Office in Santa Fe has been appointed Director of this State Planning Office, and he has a list of firms and individuals who have notified his office that they are planners and qualified with supposedly eight years of experience in planning work. Statement of qualifications to this office will be accepted and placed on this roster. Those who receive a commission to do planning work for a community in the State will have to submit some kind of proof to that office of stated qualifications. Under this arrangement many out of state firms and many individuals here in the state are now on the state list of planners. As of this date there are no architects on the list.

The list carries the names of firms who send salesmen to any state immediately upon pas-

sage of enabling legislation and sell patterned plans on stock formats. These firms place plans in a surprisingly large number of villages throughout the United States; your town may have bought one. From each of these towns they collect a fee ranging from \$10.00 to \$20,000.00, and up. It is a beautiful job of printing, a compilation of statistics chiefly obtained from the Census Bureau and records of the Chamber of Commerce. These plans are decorated with a few maps printed in red, blues, and greens and presented to a joint meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, the City Fathers and the Kiwanis Club. These nicely done little books are collecting dust on desks in the city offices in hundreds of central and midwest towns.

At the meeting in Santa Fe, salesmen from these planning concerns met with well-meaning and outstanding citizens from your communities for the purpose of delivering their sales pitch. The people from our communities who attended this conference did so with the sincere belief that they could and would get sound advice on how to improve their town. Whose duty is it to protect them from these fast "cure all" schemes? Who will take the time and the energy to detail for them the true nature of planning? You, the architect, who belong to the only profession with training in this field, stayed at home.

Can our towns be planned by people who cannot design houses, plan parks or schools? Will people be allowed to plan cities who do not know the principles of good design and who are not qualified to design the elements of the city? Why not give this subject serious thought.

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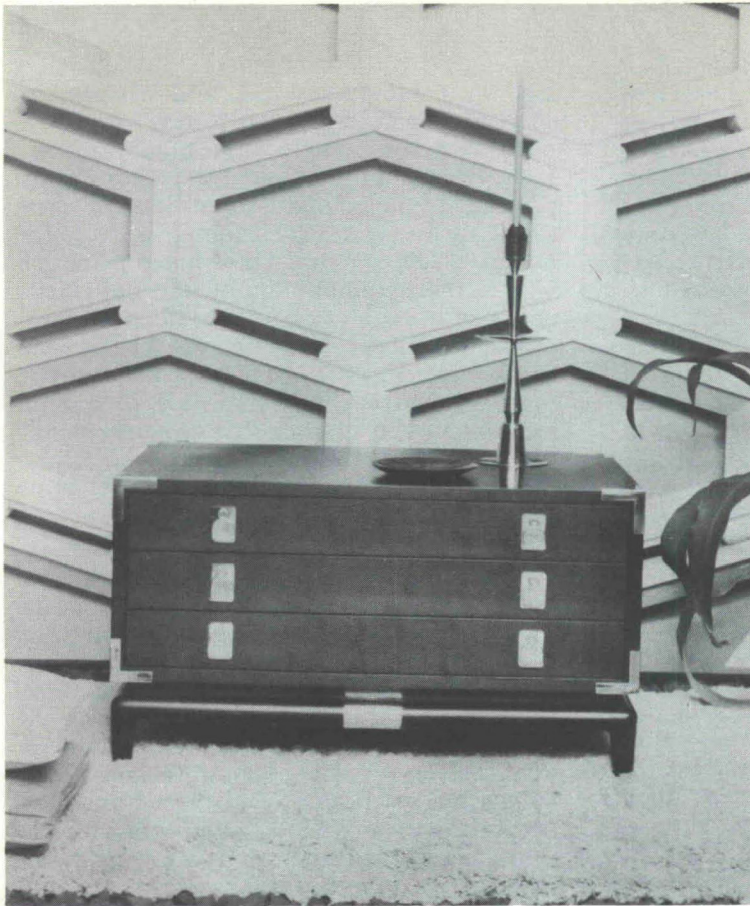
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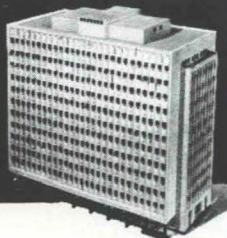
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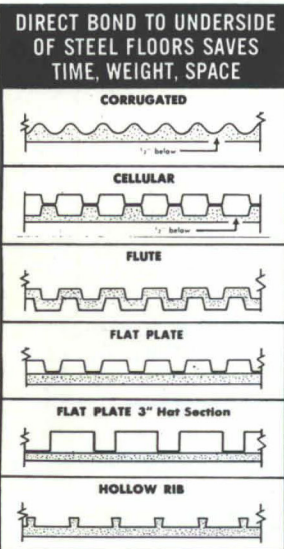
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