



 THE TEXAS
ARCHITECT

DECEMBER

1966

CLARITY OF
CONCEPTION
AND
EXECUTION
IN PLAN AND DETAIL
MAKE THE
JAMES H. CLARK
RESIDENCE
IN DALLAS
A STUDY IN
SUBTLETY
ENSLIE OGLESBY AIA
ARCHITECT

Official Publication of
THE TEXAS SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

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THE TEXAS
ARCHITECT
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For the past six years the *Texas Architect* has tried to make itself a medium by which our readers, mostly non-architects, could have an opportunity to see examples of buildings that have been judged superior and to read of those causes that architects consider important to our society.

We have ranged across broad areas: from articles about Texas artists to pleas for preservation of our State's history; from reporting efforts toward cooperative border planning with Mexico to lauding outstanding civic undertakings; from discussing what architecture really is to adding our voice to the battle cry of America's war on ugliness.

We see ourselves as unseeing; blind to the disorder of Topsy-like growth; to the monotony of mean housing; to the jungle of signs; to all the evidence of ignorance and greed and not-caring that make the surroundings in which we live.

So we have spent our efforts in trying to open eyes to what our environment is; what it might be; what it should be.

Sometimes it seems an impossible task, but always one of value.

So in retiring as editor I feel a bit lost in knowing I'll no longer have a hand in this worthwhile venture.

DON EDWARD LEGGE, AIA

Charles M. Nes, Jr., President of the American Institute of Architects, presented this Keynote Address to the 27th annual meeting of the Texas Society of Architects.

A CALL TO GREATNESS AND TO COMMON SENSE

Fortune magazine pointed out last winter that in the America of today, in which the majority of the citizens enjoy an affluence beyond the wildest dreams of the socialists and liberals of 30 years ago, the country has found a public passion for improving the physical environment, particularly in our cities. And, to use their expression, "the tweedy old profession of architecture is being summoned from the wings to stand as an oracle."

Thus, the challenge thrown to us is: Can we, a profession, very small in numbers, really intervene or contribute in any significant way to bring order and beauty once again to the deplorable physical state of much of our country and to nearly all of our urban areas?

It will take more than the single-handed efforts of the architect to remake old cities, design cities, and reconcentrate the scattered population in the urban fringe into livable new towns. But neither can these tasks be accomplished by realtors who are preoccupied by land prices; builders whose sole concern is sales; traffic engineers whose social considerations are limited to first-cost estimates; municipal planners who are lost in the third dimension; mayors who are trying to raise the tax base; and county commissioners who defend the county boundary as if it were the Alamo.

Many talents are required to cope with today's challenges. Teamwork is no longer a matter of option. Yet the fact remains that the architect, despite all his flaws and shortcomings, is still the only professional who is trained in the three dimensional planning of the environment for human use. He is a vital part of the team. Further, because of this special training and experience, the architect has a special responsibility to play a leading role in the remaking of the environment.

What is that role? What should it be? It is self-evident, first, that he must learn his job to the best of his abilities. We are trying to help him through refresher courses and seminars and through articles and research papers. Our technicians' training program will, we hope, relieve the present desperate personnel shortage and permit the architect to spend more time in thought, design, and management. Improvement in his office practice by the use of the emerging techniques will assist his competitive position. More important, perhaps, improvement in his basic education will enable the future architect to satisfy the client's needs 20 years hence. To help us in this, we have planned a series of conferences with business leaders and social scientists to determine what will be required of us. Part of the architect's responsibility lies in the vital matter of creating a public consensus. This has never been done before. We have information to impart to others not about ourselves but about design, its form, patterns, and effects and the factors that shape it. A community which is given the responsibility for making qualitative decisions will make them according to the amount and kind of information it possesses. We have made an important start at educational programs aimed at the press, the business community, and now at the public schools. Perhaps we can ultimately help a large segment of our population enable itself to distinguish between the good and the bad, or at least between something and nothing. At the very least we can lead people to react to their environment on a conscious level—to see it, feel it, and *question it*.

Nor can this task, however ambitious, be the end of our mission. We must persuade every articulate member of our profession to immerse himself in the political and social life of his community. If we are serious about being of genuine value to society, everyone of us must place himself in the most advantageous position possible to influence community sentiment, establish genuine planning goals, demand a transportation system which is compatible with community design, reform zoning and building laws, find solutions to the gnawing problem of the ghetto, and to do the many, many things that will make his community more livable, beautiful and prosperous.

If we do these things, perhaps a kindly historian one day will say something about us that in some small way approaches what Thucydides said about the Athenians. I am sure you remember it. He said: "They give their bodies to Athens as if they were public property; they use their minds for Athens in the most individual way possible . . . They make a plan; if it fails, they all feel

the sense of loss; if it succeeds, this success is nothing in comparison with what they are going to do next."

If we do *not* do these things, the architect will more likely receive and deserve the kind of comment that Macauley made about an acquaintance: "His imagination resembled the wings of an ostrich. It enabled him to run, though not to soar."

As we all know, 70 per cent of our population is living on 1 per cent of our land these days and doing a pretty poor job of it. Our urban centers are congested, rundown, strangled by vehicular traffic and/or carved up by freeways. People move out of the center city as soon as they can afford it or are allowed to; and because they can move out farther than ever before, the poor and uneducated will soon become the dominant population group in our great cities. The sprawling areas beyond the city boundaries, which now contain more than half of our urban population, consist mainly of unrelated housing enclaves surrounded by junk, signs, gas stations, and quick lunch drive-ins.

As a New York regional planning report made clear back in 1962, the growth around today's large city doesn't really fit into our traditional semantics. It isn't a city, because it lacks identifiable centers. It isn't really suburbs, because it isn't a satellite of a city. It isn't rural; the land is loosely covered with houses and sprinkling of urban facilities. It offers neither the benefits of the city nor the pleasures of the countryside. If anything, it is a kind of urban fallout.

Yet this great non-community of any kind has become the place where most Americans live. It is expensive, wasteful, usually ugly, and devoid of the fine-grained pattern of diverse human activities that made urban life stimulating in the past. The newest and most interesting vehicle for its reformation is the *new town*, conspicuous and rare examples of which are Columbia, Maryland and Reston, Virginia.

I suggest we play a quick game of true and false. Which of these four statements is true? *First*: All we need to do to restore our major cities to their former eminence is to apply our skills in design. *Second*: Our design skills are not adequate to the task of restoring physical order to our urban areas. *Third*: What we lack most to rebuild our cities is a new building technology. And *Fourth*: If we could just clean up the signs and tame the automobile, we could bring some environmental order and beauty to our suburban areas.

All four of these statements, of course, are false. We cannot very well walk away from our urban centers because they are rundown. But we must recognize why they are declining.

People have always moved out of the center city. They have done it in Boston and Los Angeles, in Hong Kong and London and Berlin. It seems to be a human characteristic to want a patch of land and a little elbow room.

A CALL TO GREATNESS AND TO COMMON SENSE

The only difference is that, instead of moving farther out the street car line to a better row-house neighborhood, the center city dwellers who get up in the world today get in the car and drive to another political jurisdiction.

It's important, I believe, to recognize that cities grew up originally because of their adjacency to natural resources, convenient transportation, and the need for intimate personal communication. Now these same three forces that brought the city together—resources, transportation, and communication—are all combining to pull the city apart, to make it increasingly irrelevant to contemporary urban life. This is a worrisome trend, because our civic progress, our social advancement, and our wealth as a nation, not to mention our intellectual and artistic stimuli, have resulted in large measure from the interaction of ideas and civic arrangements that men have been obliged to make as they lived closer together. The alternative, however, has not been a satisfying one, and a few leading entrepreneurs have given promising new life to the very good old idea of a new town.

I personally believe that, very soon, we will see two interesting developments: The creation, in open areas unafflicted with jumbled political jurisdictions and conflicting codes, of whole new cities; and the building of new small *towns*, a development which might well lead to an intriguing and very pleasant renaissance of small-town America.

Emulating the pace-setting efforts of the big town builders, a few small-town developers are already beginning to crop up. The government will, of course, be in a key position—through tax incentives, planning subsidies, writeoffs, depreciation allowances, and the like—to bring about new cities *if it becomes public policy* to do so. It has already demonstrated its interest in more direct ways. Not long ago, Reston was firmly anchored in place financially when Secretary Udall announced that a \$30 million Federal geological facility will be located in that new community.

Concerning the second statement—the adequacy of our design skills—there has never been a time when they did not need improving. As the foremost of the professional schizophrenics—firmly astraddled a hybrid animal that is part art, part science, part business, and part McGinty's bricklayer—we have always needed a firmer seat. Today the job we must do is bigger in scope, larger in scale and more complex in character. But we need to improve ourselves in much the same sense that lawyers, doctors and magazine editors need to improve their competence. The design of neighborhoods, towns, and cities by architects is not unprecedented in the history of architecture.

Do we need a new technology? It is tempting to say yes. Heaven knows that our building industry is burdened with inefficient, restrictive, and expensive practices. Yet we have more domes, frames, methods, and Mickey-Mouse materials for the implementation of design than

anyone has ever had before. I submit that technology or the lack of it is neither our problem nor our solution.

As a former official of the White House Panel on Civil Technology stated recently: ". . . . Modern technology leaves strangely untouched most of the ordinary problems of living. Pointing to the marvels of space, technology, supersonic flight, molecular biology and other recent advances, popular myth-makers draw the inference that what is lacking to solve the ordinary problem is advanced scientific and technical knowledge. Big, new research programs addressed to 'unmet social needs' are accordingly proposed as 'the solution' Remedies for many urban problems are already quite possible technically but remain politically and administratively impractical. The political system of our cities, the institutional relationships of its components, the opportunities and restraints for decision makers in those institutions—all these are key elements that can stimulate or hold back technological change and social progress—The transition from knowledge to meeting a social need is primarily a political process, not a technological one"

The last of the four statements—that most of our suburban disorder could be corrected if we cleaned up signs and tamed automobiles—has at least some superficial plausibility. It would certainly help a great deal to pull down the jungle of ugly, garish and confusing signs that project over our streets, create handsome and effective new graphics, and move billboards from areas which they blight to urban areas where they could contribute color and vitality. Trees and ivy in cities have never hurt good architecture and have always improved pedestrian architecture. It would also certainly help to tame the use of automobiles within our central cities, but it is silly to say let's ban the automobile and return to trains, street cars, husses, or bicycles. The automobile will be our major means of transportation for the foreseeable future, and Americans are not about to give them up.

Outdoor advertising and the automobile and its byproducts are alike in one important respect: They are logical extensions of economic and technical activity conducted in the absence of restraining laws or community ethics. They are not and should not be treated as if they were inherently anti-social. It may be, as philosopher Marshall McLuhan says, that the story of the motor car "has not much longer to run." But the fact remains that the pages of our magazines are drenched with four-color car advertisements, that 75 million cars are on the road, and that an army of men whose science is limited to the movement of automobiles is busy running highways across and through our urban areas. Common sense dictates that we do something, not about the automobile, but the fragmented activities of our various urban specialists who work, ant-like and single-mindedly, to scatter and destroy the urban fabric. The process of reform must be political. The result, if it is favorable, can be coherent community design.

Closely related to this subject is our attitude toward the use of privately-held land. We greatly admire the beauty of the early New England towns, and we speak admiringly of the charm of Williamsburg, Annapolis and Savannah. We should realize that it was not only design skills which made these communities so handsome but an authoritarian policy governing the use of land. In our early history, it was the American way to tell a landowner that his desires were subordinate to the best interests of the community. Today it has become the American way to treat land as a commodity for quick profit, in careless disregard of community values. We must have public understanding and a new consensus on this issue. If we are willing to accept restraints on our private actions to permit the protection of public morals and health, we must be willing to accept regulations that provide more community protection than our riddled zoning ordinances can now afford.

This is not a matter of partisan politics but a matter of common sense.

We will not and cannot have efficient and livable towns and cities without a plan, a design that takes into account the most sensible use of land and the greatest economic, social, and aesthetic good of the community. Neither General Motors nor a successful retail merchant could operate without a sensible long-range plan, and we can no longer expect the urban community to do it. But no plan we can formulate will be worth having unless the best use of land and the nature and routes of transportation become integral tools of community design. No plan will be effective unless its sponsor is able to extend its political influence over the physical area that must be covered.

A recent study by a committee of blue-chip corporation executives blames much of our failure to solve problems of urban growth on the administrative backwardness of our local governments. The report of the business-oriented Committee for Economic Development urges that the number of local governments be reduced from 80,000 to 60,000, that local government boundaries be redrawn, and that the country be revitalized as the basic unit for local government.

It would be easy to stop here and say that these major urban design forces—our lack of transportation policy, our lack of land policy, and our antiquated political framework—are responsible for the mess. These anti-urban designers can get there before we do and they carve up the community until there's little we can do but patch it and paint it. But, if we happen to be the only sizable group that recognizes these relationships, isn't it our duty to tell people about it? If design can be employed to restore physical order to the urban center and create it in the suburbs, who has a bigger stake in transmitting this knowledge to the community than we do? Who, in fact, has a greater public responsibility than we do? ■

AN
ANNUAL MEETING
OBVIOUSLY
WELL
MET



TEXAS ARCHITECT



**HOUSTON
NEXT**

STUDENT AWARDS



Neil Laughlin of Monarch Tile congratulates scholarship winners Roland Cortez and Doyle Douglas Peel.

Investment in the future of the architectural profession was underscored with the annual awarding of two scholarships to fifth-year students.

Doyle Douglas Peel, Rice University, and Roland L. Cortez, Texas A & M, winners of the Monarch Tile Manufacturing, Inc. annual grants, were presented in a ceremony at the Texas Society of Architects' annual meeting. The scholarships totaling \$1,200 were provided by the San Angelo tile company to encourage post graduate architectural research by young architects needing financial assistance to continue their promising studies.

The selection of the two winners was made by the Texas Architectural Foundation scholarship committee on the basis of work already performed in architecture, real financial need to continue studies, and future professional potential.

Peel intends to explore and expand the use of photograph in the study of environmental design and analysis of human perceptions, related to giving the designer an early opportunity for comparing his creation with the theoretical criteria of design research.

Cortez is engaged in hospital design research directed toward the advancement of human resources for the mentally retarded and physically handicapped, especially in the area of correct environmental conditions.

In addition to the scholarship funds, Monarch contributed a \$300 grant to the general fund of the Texas Architectural Foundation in offering a continuing support of professional activities and standards.



H. V. Moss, vice-president of the Featherlite Corporation, is pictured with some of the student winners of the Featherlite Competition.

In annual competition sponsored by the Featherlite Corporation in cooperation with the schools of architecture, 17 winners were named:

- Rice University — Robert Doss Mabe, George Bruce Levine, David W. Colby
- Texas A & M — Robert L. Billington, Robert B. Hunter, Andrew C. Cronk
- Texas Tech — John Cross, Gary Burk, Donald Lee, Sam Wofford, Alfred Burt-hold
- Univ. of Houston — Tom Burke, William Kendall, Lee Maxwell
- Univ. of Texas — Michael Borne, Lance Tatum, John Dechard

In making the presentation, Mr. H. V. Moss, vice-president of Featherlite said, "One of the rewarding things in life is sharing. Over the past 17 years, starting in 1949, it has given the people of Featherlite great satisfaction to make annual awards to deserving architectural students.

Through the means of this annual competition, Featherlite now awards \$3,000.00 divided among fourth year design students of the five architectural schools in Texas. The total help given these promising young architects now aggregates \$44,000.00.

It is an added bonus to Featherlite to see many of the early recipients now enjoying leadership in their profession.

It is a continuing pleasure for Featherlite to make the annual awards to young men starting their careers, and to offer quality products for the choice of established architects."

GOALS FOR DALLAS

The dynamic Mayor of Dallas, Erik Jonsson, outlined for the architects' annual meeting the unique program of study and planning which that city has undertaken under his leadership.

Called GOALS FOR DALLAS, this pioneer effort by a United States city to determine what its basic aims, objectives, and goals should be, began with a proposal by Mayor Jonsson saying "As I have worked to fulfill my responsibilities as Mayor of Dallas, I have become increasingly aware of the lack of goals and plans for our city. I consider this a grave condition for I believe it results in expedient and injudicious decisions. I have reasoned that surely if goal-setting and planning is vital to individuals and to institutions, as I personally know them to be, they are just as valuable for and important to a city, which is simply an assemblage of individuals and institutions."

"In my experience, three fundamental kinds of planning are needed, both by individuals and by institutions. First, there is planning of goals for the whole, or perhaps a better phrase, the overall needs. In my mind *these are the philosophic delineations which contemplate our society today and as far into the future as we can reasonably estimate it, and basically defined the social, economic, cultural, religious, educational and political goals for Dallas, Texas.*"

"Second and following immediately we need to define specific and detailed objectives that are in harmony with our philosophic goals."

"We need to price those objectives to see which ones are the most critical or desirable, assuming we cannot afford them . . . all at once."

"Third, we must have a mechanism to check our accomplishments against our plan—and to alter either our goals, our specific objectives, or our plans, as circumstances suggest changes."

"The Goals proposal seems to me to provide the framework within which we can understand more about what has led us to our present level of accomplishment and quality and what can make it possible for us to understand it and thus to enhance it further."

In December of 1965 the *Goals Program* was set in motion when the Mayor invited 25 men and women of Dallas to join with him in planning this unique civic undertaking. Their aim was:

To develop a suitable and workable operating plan to bring together the talents of residents of our city and nearby communities in order for Dallas and its people to identify their overall needs and to set down ideals, visions, aims and long-term objectives.

To serve as a starting point for determination by the people of Dallas of the goals for their city, 87 citizens of Dallas and neighboring communities were invited to express their views, especially keeping in mind the long-range future. The group first undertook a study program, recognizing that no one person can draw from his own experience all the relevant facts about a major city. Thirteen Dallas writers were asked to dig deep into the facts about Dallas as it is and to write reports. Their essays set out strong points and weak ones; raised major questions and considered the views of many Dallas citizens and a number of nationally recognized authorities.

The 87 representative citizens in the initial group were asked to study the essays and formulate answers to major problems posed in these papers.

There was still more homework for the goal-setters. They were asked to read *GOALS FOR AMERICANS*, the 1960 Report of the President's Commission on National Goals; *SELF-RENEWAL* by John W. Gardner; and other reports and articles on the problems and prospects for the major cities of our country. And on April 30, national experts in the fields of education, cultural activities and recreation presented their ideas about Dallas and other cities to the group.

With their homework completed, the 87 men and women met at the Stagecoach Inn at Salado, Texas, for three days. They formed a diverse group, representing many backgrounds, creeds, races, viewpoints, interests and occupations. The Conferees came from all sections of the city and included lawyers, doctors, pastors, businessmen, educators, college students, labor leaders, architects, scientists, engineers, government leaders, homemakers, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers—men and wo-

men—young, old, middle-aged. The Salado discussions of the 13 essay topics were frank, intensive and analytical, and a real spirit of understanding and interchange of ideas was developed. The conclusions of this Conference were recorded as a draft of *GOALS FOR DALLAS*, for review and revision by the people of the city.

The recommended goals and essays have been published in book form *GOALS FOR DALLAS* and are available for \$1.00 per copy.

The 25-member *GOALS FOR DALLAS* Planning Committee will continue to provide overall guidance for the program. A smaller Action Committee will coordinate the planning for the Neighborhood Meetings. The members of this group are Mayor Erik Jonsson, N. Alex Bickley, Donald A. Cowan, M. K. Curry, Jr., William H. Dickinson, Jr., Allan L. Maley, Jr., Stanley Marcus, Lee A. McShan, Jr., Les T. Potter, Elgin B. Robertson, Sr., Mrs. Morton H. Sanger, John M. Stemmons and Pat Y. Spillman.

In each neighborhood, a committee will be formed to plan a meeting for the people who reside in the vicinity. It is hoped that churches, PTAs, clubs, chambers of commerce and other service organizations will give their help to achieve the broadest possible participation of Dallas citizens in the Neighborhood Meetings.

The contribution of ideas by citizens of Dallas and nearby communities will be used to revise the recommended goals. The revised *GOALS FOR DALLAS* will be published about January 1, 1967.

In early 1967, after the revised *GOALS FOR DALLAS* have been published, work will begin on the next phase . . . to translate the goals into specific objectives and outline plans with timetables, estimated costs and priorities. Involvement of the people of Dallas in this process will be essential for success.

Some of the proposed *GOALS FOR DALLAS* are general, while others are quite specific; some are long-term and will require much time and planning before implementation can begin, while others can be achieved in short order. Progress toward some of the goals has begun already.

Excerpted from the preface to the book, *GOALS FOR DALLAS*, is a philosophy that will determine the future for a great city. "Shall we deal adequately with the future, or be run over by it? Dealing with today's problems, do we keep the long-term in perspective and strive not to do things future generations must undo at great cost? Do we have in mind the need for the closest possible relationship between the city's aims and those of the individuals who comprise it?"

"We must dream no small dreams. We must envision great, ambitious, difficult goals. Yet our objectives must be within our reach—if we are diligent, durable, faithful and willing to make sacrifices demanded by a worthwhile achievement." ■



JAMES H. CLARK RESIDENCE

DALLAS

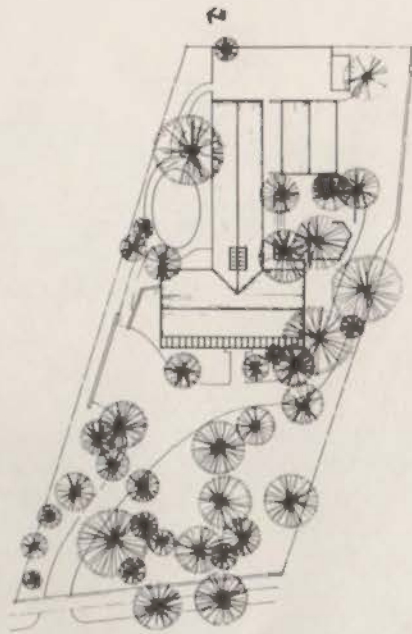
ENSLIE OGLESBY ARCHITECT

CLARK RESIDENCE



The idea of the house as a main level set upon a stone stylobate against the hillside is clearly seen. Gentle modulation of the upper floor with sliding panels and exposed rafters becomes a quiet ornament. Landscaping, untailored, unobtrusive, continues the slope of the site.





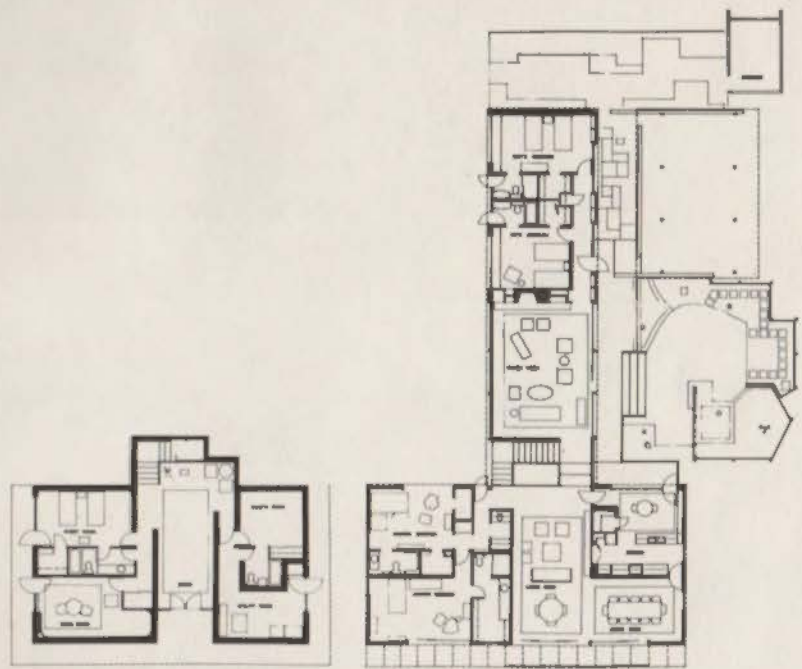
SITE PLAN



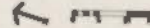
The problem of designing a residence has been attacked in as many different ways as there are architects; inherent is the inclination to over-design, to try to make a virtue of complexity, beauty of uniqueness.

The Clark residence is conceived clearly and crisply as a stone base dug back into a sloping site, atop which sits the main floor of the house—a simple T plan working its way back to natural grade. A clean recess in the base becomes the main entry; above, glass doors look out through tree tops down the slope to a park across the way. Sliding louvered panels at the balcony's edge can control sun and provide privacy.

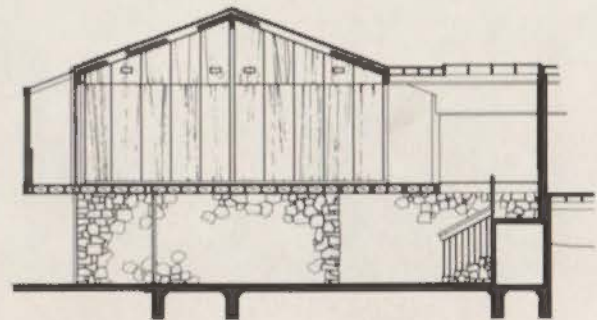
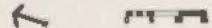
Never over-worked, never pretentious, the house sits quietly and easily on the gentle hillside.



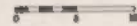
GR. FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECTION



CLARK RESIDENCE



The handsomely furnished family room opens to the deck and looks beyond through the trees toward the park. A quiet charm pervades the room.

A small court outside the bedrooms, its walls repeating the stone of the base, reflects the studied restraint that makes the house.



CLARK RESIDENCE

The main entry foyer in the lower level illustrates the difference between "plainness" and "simplicity". With an integral character of its own, the foyer nevertheless serves well as a gallery for the owners' art collection.



Looking from the living room, sun from skylights streams in to brighten the stairwell and the entry below. Beyond, the brightly-lit family room can be seen. The house, its site, its furnishings bespeak a certain grace; the sophistication of the sensitive.



THE URBAN COUNTY

The Texas Research League was asked by the State to undertake an in-depth study of local government in Texas. Their research in the past year has resulted in the first of several interim reports of the "Texas Metropolitan Study". Dealing with the "Urban County" concept, this explanation appeared in the League's December Newsletter. It is reproduced here because the editors feel the entire study will be of signal importance to the State.

Simply stated, the basic problem of Texas' metropolitan areas is a need for certain services to be administered and financed on an area-wide basis with the least possible disturbance of existing local governmental structure. The local officials who sparked the Governor's request for this study were aware of this problem, although they might phrase it a little differently. Houston Mayor Louie Welch, for example, makes the point that there is a great need to determine which level of government has responsibility for rendering certain services. He uses, as a colorful example, the confusion that exists between the city and county over such a simple proposition as dog-catching. Obviously, dog-catching is not one of the major problems of the City of Houston, but the unwillingness of the dogs to respect the sanctity of political boundary lines is symptomatic of the basic problem: the services required are inter-related and area-wide, but we attempt to deal with them through a governmental structure and policy framework which is fragmented, diffused and poorly coordinated.

In attempting to determine which local government services are best adaptable to an area-wide approach, the League staff has relied upon field studies in the metropolitan areas of Texas and the statements of responsible public officials of those areas. The staff took particular note of those services which appear to involve substantial benefits to a large proportion of the persons residing throughout the area even though many of those benefited live and pay taxes outside the corporate limits of the major cities.

AREA-WIDE SERVICE SUGGESTIONS

The service functions enumerated in the League's suggested "Urban County Amendment" are: public health, hospitals, welfare, parks, libraries, airports, planning, public transit, refuse disposal and flood control. These were selected because:

1. They all involve "spill-over" benefits to the entire area.
2. They are the services which are frequently the subject of city-county cooperative arrangements and, in some instances, the entire function has been transferred to county jurisdiction.
3. They include services which have been the subject of special legislative attention.

The enumeration of these services does not constitute a proposal for vastly broadening the basic powers of county governments. In most instances, the counties already have or could be given by statute the power to render these services. The need for a Constitutional Amendment arises out of the fact that the counties are under a special financial restriction that does not apply to other local governments. The state ad valorem tax rests upon county values, and the resulting pressure to hold down county values makes the constitutional tax rate limits particularly confining. Essentially, the proposal is to permit the 24

urban counties to provide the services deemed of substantial area-wide importance by financing them outside the 80¢ tax rate limit. The county would be required to render the service inside incorporated cities as well as in the rural areas in order to exercise this financial freedom.

VARIETY OF APPROACHES POSSIBLE

The problem of refuse disposal will illustrate the variety of ways in which an area-wide service might be rendered. This is a function which traditionally has been handled by cities and which could, under the suggested Urban County Amendment, continue to be so handled. It is, however, a cause for some future concern. The smaller cities have been using the sanitary landfill method of disposal, but the combined pressure of population increases, rising land costs and the disappearance of open space are making the future acquisition of sites doubtful in many areas. The substitution of incineration or composting, on the other hand, poses some problems in economics which the small cities may not be able to solve.

The League proposal offers several alternatives for solving the problem. The easiest to visualize is the case of the county simply taking over the function. It would acquire existing disposal facilities and build up the administrative organization to handle the refuse collected from all of the cities. It would levy such taxes as might be necessary to pay for the cost.

Some may feel that this is one of those beautifully simple solutions that is easier to talk about than it is to accomplish. For example, the central city probably already has a large and efficient disposal operation which it may be reluctant to transfer to the county. Even if the city fathers are willing to give up control of the service, they may be concerned about the future of city employees who may be reluctant for many reasons, including the loss of pension rights, to transfer to a county agency. Here the problem could be solved under the proposed amendment by having the county agree to be responsible for financing the service on a county-wide basis, but leaving actual operation to the existing city agency which would provide that service county-wide on a contractual basis. The contractees would be the city and the county and, outside of its own boundaries, the city department would act by and for and in the name of the county.

If this were unacceptable, then still another arrangement would be possible. The county could establish a refuse disposal agency which would contract to provide the service to the smaller communities only. The amendment would authorize long-term contracts so that the county could purchase equipment and facilities and employ personnel on more than a year-to-year basis. This would keep the tax financing on a local basis and permit the use of a separate administrative organization for the central city and for the smaller cities working as a group through the county. If financing were the only objection to the single, area-wide approach, the county could still sub-contract with the central city agency to provide the service.

THE URBAN COUNTY

These may sound complicated but that is because arriving at workable solutions to transfer services from a local to an area-wide basis is a complicated process. Further, the League staff found considerable variety in the state's 22 metropolitan areas, and that variety includes different definitions of what is and is not an acceptable political solution to various problems. Therefore, it is impossible to develop just one answer and say "take it or leave it." Rather there must be a variety of approaches, any one of which can be the best solution for a specific area.

BUDGET AND TAX IMPLICATIONS

One objective, of course, is to make it possible to shift the provision of services which have area-wide importance to a service base and a tax base which is also area-wide. The tax implications of such shifts would be significant when viewed in terms of city and county budgets but to the public the changes would not be so significant since there is a large overlap of city and county taxpayers.

Estimates based on Jefferson County, and assuming that the county would take over full responsibility for public health, hospitals, libraries and parks indicate that the Beaumont city budget would be reduced by about 10% while the Port Arthur city budget would be decreased by about 7%. The county tax rate, on the other hand, would apparently increase by about 18%. In terms of individual taxpayers, the results on a person owning property having an actual market value of \$10,000 would be as follows: In the City of Beaumont, this taxpayer would see his city tax bill go down by \$9.56, while his county tax bill would go up by \$3.27 for a net reduction of \$6.29. In Port Arthur the net reduction would be only \$4.89. For the county taxpayer in unincorporated areas, the result would be a net increase in taxes of \$3.27 per \$10,000 of market value.

Austin and Travis County offer an interesting case, for property located within the City of Austin comprises just about 85% of the total taxable values of Travis County. It would be possible to transfer to the county services now costing the city over \$2.7 million per year. In actual fact, however, property within the city would still be paying for \$2.3 million of these costs even though the service were made a county responsibility. The \$400,000 difference, however, is sufficient to be of interest to Austin taxpayers.

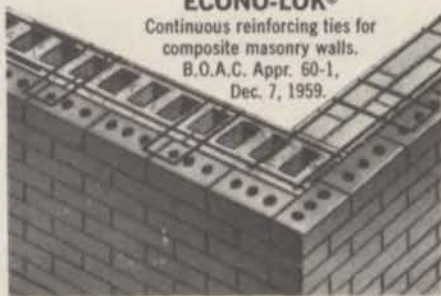
¹Under the definition suggested by the League Staff, an "Urban County" would be a county with a population density of 100 per square mile or containing a city of 50,000 or more population. There are 24 such counties in Texas.

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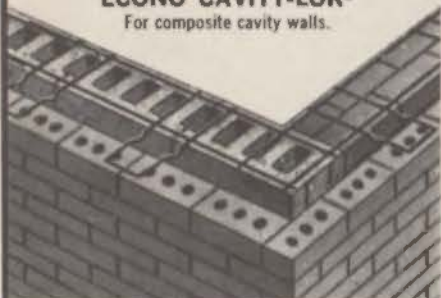
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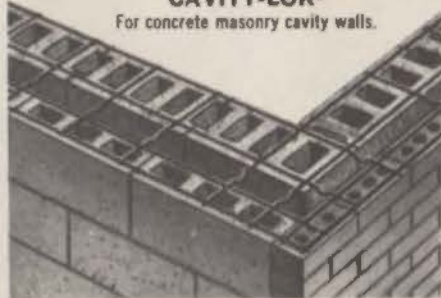
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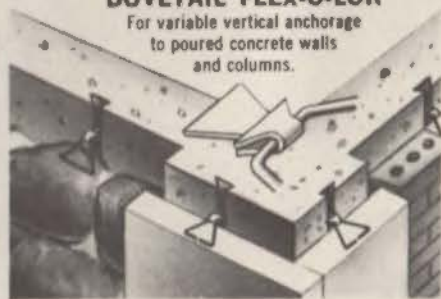
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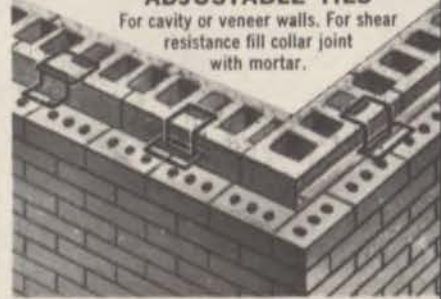
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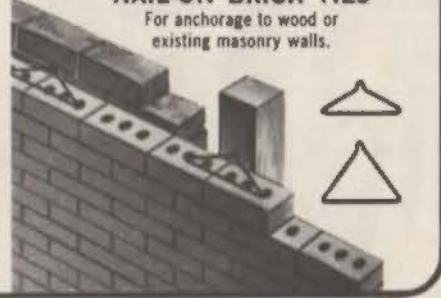
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