

Summary

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Summary

Plan for a residential district in the harbor area of Sydney (pages 69–73)

The same problems of unplanned suburban settlements, with their disproportionate development costs and the unendurably long commuting distances from home to work and back, characterize Australian, as well as American and European cities. The areas near the center of the city, most of them built in the last century, are here as well as elsewhere in need of complete modernization. Added to this are the problems of ever-growing industry. A recent rezoning, backed by the building officials and with legal sanction, declared as an industrial zone a rugged area next to the harbor. This step called the architects and planners into militant action. Under the initial direction of our long-standing patron, Architect Harry Seidler, a group of nine planners and architects raised a storm of protest against this rezoning. The group chose to hold a public exhibition to call the public's attention to the illogical nature of this official decision.

The MacMahon's Point project

MacMahon's Point is a rugged peninsula in the actual harbor area of the Australian metropolis. The natural setting is exceptionally beautiful and above all completely unsuitable for industry because of its topographic structure.

The building proposal provides for strongly differentiated construction of skyscraper towers, of 22-story, 12-story and 6-story "Maisonette" types and some one-family houses with patios.

Eight sky-scrapers are proposed for the highest plateau on the northern edge of the area. They are surrounded by a green zone in which important public and cultural buildings are planned, such as schools, an athletic stadium, the shopping center and a movie theater, as well as a central auditorium, which is somewhat farther removed. On the slopes leading down to the water, below the skyscrapers, are to be the 12-story "Maisonette" type; below these, at the water's edge, the 6-story residences.

On the southern tip of the peninsula a skyscraper hotel with large swimming pool is planned as a special attraction for tourists. The entire area is a part of the subway system. A great number of the inhabitants will later on, as well as at present, make use of the ferry connections to travel downtown.

The entire MacMahon's Point area is inhabited at present by about 3500 people; if built up according to the proposals at hand there would be room for 15,000. This means a population density of approximately 375 inhabitants per hectare.

The arrangement of the buildings on the ridge of the peninsula at MacMahon's Point gives a convincing impression of effective town-planning. Since in Australia the sun shines from the north but the chief exposures on the developed peninsula would be east, south and west, complications arise concerning the best placement of the houses.

Before the project was begun, a group created expressly for the proposed project circulated a questionnaire amongst the population of the area. The main points of the questionnaire concerned the family structure, the occupations, the place of work within the city, the distance travelled to work and the transportation used. The results of this inquiry were so encouraging that the decision was made to draw up the plans and make the attack against the proposed rezoning.

Slum clearance in Buenos Aires (pages 74–78)

From the heart of the Argentine capital a broad highway leads westward. North of this axis a large district is being developed and built up at great speed. South of the highway, however, is an old quarter which has remained practically unchanged in the past fifty years and which consists chiefly of low, one-family houses, crowded together and apparently constructed with no thought of a general plan for the area. Today this district is completely run down. The Argentine National Mortgage Bank plans to rebuild this entire area and has worked out a building plan which, when fully carried through, will provide housing for 400,000 people.

On a relatively rolling topographic foundation—an old river bed runs through the area—there exists at present a thickly populated quarter, slowly falling into general ruin. It covers a roughly rectangular area which is broken up by a network of streets, which intersect at right angles and are about 130 meters apart.

Proceeding from the old checkerboard street pattern, the architect proposes to divide the 200 hectare surface into six individual sectors. Instead of the eleven existing lateral streets, only two would be necessary and instead of the seven longitudinal streets a single central main thoroughfare would suffice. About 70,000 people would live in each of the six districts and this would set the standard for a self-sufficient individual city unit. In the middle of each of these six districts would be set aside an area for parks and cultural establishments where buildings for sports and intellectual activities could be erected. The business centers would be located along the two lateral and the one longitudinal streets and especially at their intersections, though on another street elevation.

Residential buildings

Buildings of only three heights are being considered: of six, thirty and one hundred meters. The thirty meter residences, developed on a rambling ground plan and located about 100 meters distant from the skyscraper apartments, will provide the urban accent.

The streets are classified into three groups; first, streets carrying through traffic and second, those carrying express traffic. The third network of streets will branch out from the express streets, handling the local traffic of the six districts and leading to the parking areas and the proper pedestrian zones. The streets surrounding each district which handle the express traffic are super highways and lie on a higher elevation. Pedestrian viaducts will cross over these highways and connect the individual districts.

The motorized traffic is kept separate and is elevated; thus it flows unhindered by pedestrian crossings. In the green centers of the six districts are spacious grounds reserved only for pedestrians. Facing these grounds are the administrative offices and the department stores, the cultural buildings—libraries, concert halls and schools—and the sport halls.

It is estimated that a period of ten years will be necessary to complete the entire project. Of the total of 200 hectares available for these six districts 7,500,000 square meters are to be utilized for living and service areas. Of these 7.5 million square meters approximately one million are to be used for central services, cultural establishments, athletic fields, etc.

House for several families, Malagnou Settlement, Geneva (pages 79–82)

The four multiple-family houses which are comprised in one single structure, are situated in Malagnou, a housing complex on the outskirts of Geneva. A zoning plan left spacious green belts so that even with large-scale cubic structures the park-like character of the district could be preserved. The two houses located on the ends of the block contain privately owned flats meeting all conceivable requirements with respect to fittings as well as dimensions and number of rooms. The two houses in the middle of the block contain rented flats and meet the urgent need in Geneva for large living quarters. There are playrooms for children on the ground floor. There are also playing fields with apparatus directly in front of these covered playrooms. Owners and tenants both enjoy the greatest comfort imaginable: heat and sound insulation problems have been tackled resourcefully by the architects. The entire roof was fitted as a roof garden: Two swimming pools, one for adults and the other, which is shallower, for children, are at the disposal of all the residents.

TEAM Furnishings (pages 83–85)

TEAM creations comprise standardized furniture, lighting fixtures and fabrics. TEAM furniture is based in its design on a scale which is in a harmonious proportion to the plan and, vertically, to the human figure. Individual chests can be combined to form a solid cupboard along one wall or hung in metal racks. Also the units can stand alone as independent pieces of furniture, as required, on bases, legs or brackets. Leg elements have been created for the single units which can be adjusted to two different heights by tilting. The standard scale taken for TEAM creations reduces the length and width of separate structural elements to a few dimensions, which greatly facilitates the assembly process. A small table element is hung in a bookcase, while the large table element can be hung across it or set up independently. The program also includes a simple couch, a folding bed and a bed. The TEAM program also comprises lighting fixtures such as ceiling, pivoting, floor and table lamps. The whole is being supplemented in stages by modern carpets, curtains and couch covers.

Gagarin House in Connecticut U.S.A. (pages 87–89)

The owner wished a house for a family of six with two maids' rooms. Especially spacious rooms for receptions had to be provided owing to the owner's exceptionally far-flung social commitments. As approached from the entrance, the house was not to give the visitor any unpleasant impression of inordinate size and pretentiousness. It is situated on a westward slope falling away to the left, the view also lying in this direction. The architect met the requirements by designing a two-storey house. There is a garden level where the children have an undisturbed area all to themselves. There are various garden terraces on different levels, providing space for tennis courts, flower beds, covered lounging and dining areas, a dance floor and the swimming pool. The entrance level consists of three sections, the living-dining area, the utility area and the parents' bedroom wing. The center of the living area is constituted by a large free-standing fireplace. The house consists of a steel skeleton and reinforced concrete ceilings. A great deal of quarry stone was used on the walls and on the terraces.

Holiday house with gardener's lodging at Stresa on lake Maggiore (pages 90–91)

This is a holiday house situated in a park of a large, already existing villa between the lake road and Lago Maggiore. It had to be designed to serve the owner himself as a week-end house between longer holidays, and during the latter to be at the disposal of guests. Moreover, space had to be provided for a small gardener's lodge. The supporting structure of the little house consists of reinforced concrete and the supporting walls of unreinforced native stone. The ceilings are of reinforced concrete. The gable walls are covered with pitch pine boarding. The roof insulation consists of lava concrete waterproofed with natural asphalt.

Growing House in Australia (pages 92–93)

This house, in its first stage of completion, provides space for two people to live. The rooms, or groups thereof, are all equally wide. The house is entirely glazed on the north side, but on the south, in the first stage, has solid walls. The house consists of a concrete slab resting directly on the ground or poured into a stone fill. On top of this 3'3" steel pillars were set up. Lattice girders were bolted to these pillars, the girders for their part support steel purlins measuring 12'3", laid close together and supporting the roof insulation. The same steel sections which constitute the purlins appear again in the outside of the gable ends.

The studio of two architects in Duisburg (pages 94–95)

The new house has a very quiet situation in the immediate neighbourhood of the Kaiserberg, a forested parkland east of Duisburg. The site slopes sharply to the

west. A two-storey structure resting on supports with continuous stairway hall projects in front of a timber section one storey higher, and which abuts on the east boundary of the site. A narrow glazed bridge connects the two sections. The offices are housed in the front building whereas the living quarters and the studio are located in the recessed part. The building has a steel skeleton structure. The ceilings consist of steel-reinforced concrete, the walls of Ytong. The outside walls are covered with black and white stoneware tiles, the gable ends of the recessed building with yellow glazed bricks. The steel skeleton visible outside is painted blue.

A gardner's house in Gachnang near Frauenfeld (pages 96–97)

The floor plan of this house grew out of the activity and living requirements of the house owners. Emphasis was placed on a large living-room which could be artistically decorated with a plant trough located partly inside and partly outside the room. The owners wanted to be able to have their meals, enjoy a fire in the open fireplace and have a small reference library in the same room.

The architect had no difficulty in obtaining the agreement of the future occupants regarding the floor plan and the exterior design; even the flat roof was immediately accepted. Just this roof plan promised best to hide and enclose the house in the surrounding fruit trees.

Greater difficulties were encountered when the plan was presented to the Thurgau Building and Loan Associations; none would agree to finance the necessary loan because of the flat roof, the unusual lay-out and the rural isolation of the house.

The choice of building materials was restricted to a minimum; brick, concrete, glass and wood. The inside living-room walls are of solid brick. All the other walls were constructed of limba wood, while the floors and ceilings are of concrete. With the built-in wardrobes, radio cabinet and bookshelves the cost of the house was around 50,000 francs.

House R. in Beverly Hills, California (pages 98–101)

The site is a relatively narrow one tapering at the back end and sloping steeply to the north-west, with a marvelous view on the valley side on to a wooded canyon. The house is a small single-family house for a couple with a growing son. The main problem to be tackled in the plan was the discrepancy between direction of view and direction of prevailing sunlight. Neutra solved the problem by working out a plan based on an angle. One leg of the angle is taken up by the big living-room which has bilateral lighting from the south-east and the north-west. On the north-east, where the dining area is situated, the kitchen is attached, and on the south-west is the parents' wing with dressing room, bath and toilet. The son's room with shower and toilet adjoins the kitchen on the valley side, and is provided with a separate entrance. The house is entered from the valley side. On the south-east the living-room has wide sliding glass walls, reaching from floor to ceiling, which open into a cosy patio filled with specially selected plants and flowering shrubs. The interior design betrays the hand of Neutra the master. A great deal of natural wood is used on ceilings, cupboards and walls.

House in Krefeld (pages 102–104)

This is a house of generous proportions for a single professional woman. The site available was completely flat. The architect worked out a plan which gives the visitor on entering the house an unimpeded view from the vestibule straight through a hallway into the courtyard. This small hall at the same time separates the living area with guest room from the utility and dining area with kitchen and maid's room as well as the owner's secluded bedroom. Three construction materials are clearly visible on the elevations: Washed untreated brick, which also on the street side is used effectively as covering for the window and door lintels, untreated concrete for the roof slab above the living-room and guest room wing, the slab above the seating area and above the first floor as well as wood used as parapet covering on the first floor.