

BALTIMORE CHAPTER A. I. A.

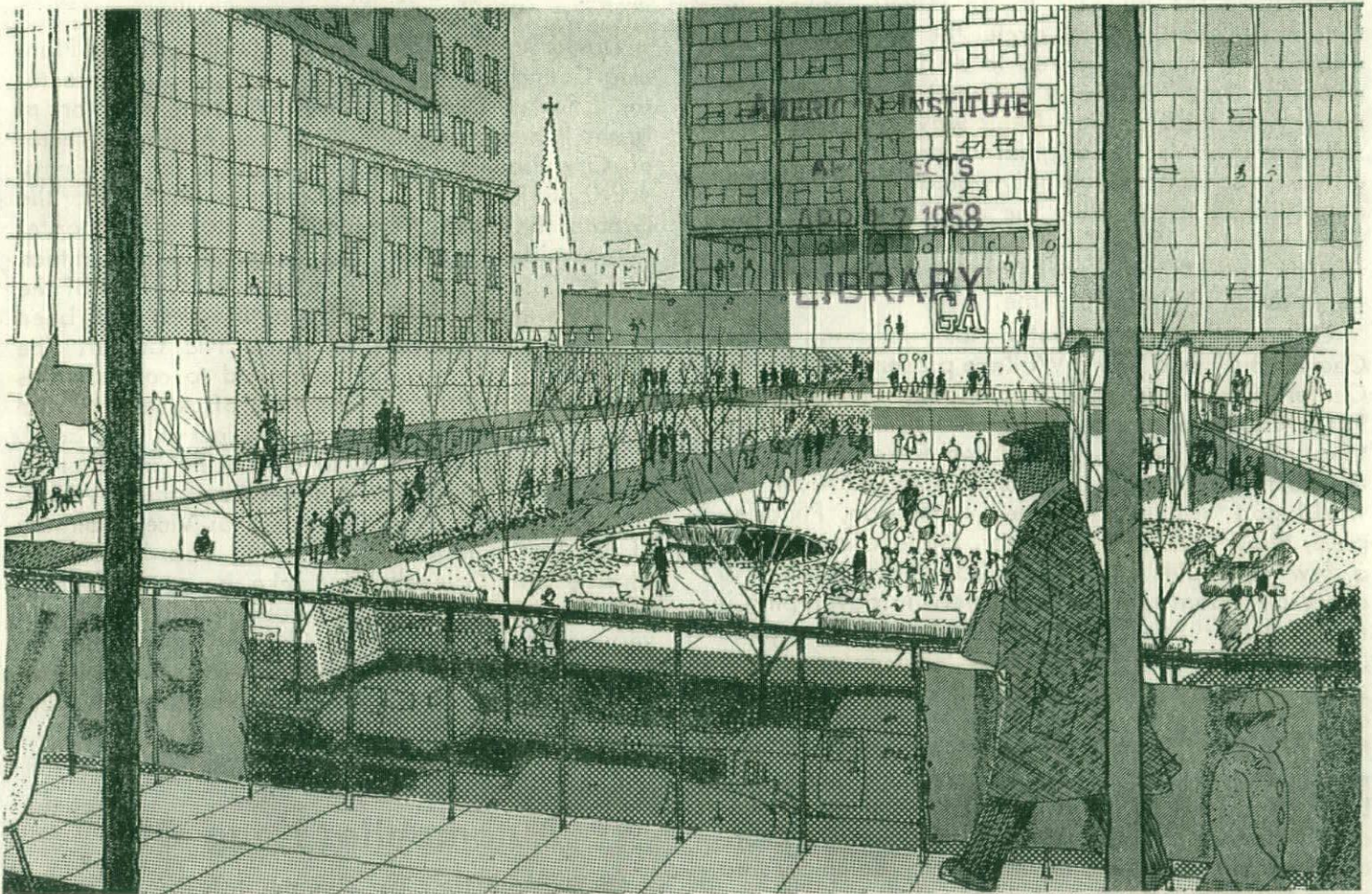
ARCHITECTS' REPORT

"Towered cities please us then, and the busy hum of men."—MILTON

WELCOME . . . It is both a privilege and a pleasure for the Baltimore Chapter to be host this month to our fellow architects from Virginia, West Virginia, The District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey. The program arranged for your benefit is pertinent to all architects practicing in and around large cities and the panelists are indeed distinguished.

The welcome is warm. We trust that you will find the meetings stimulating and our city and its surrounding countryside enjoyable.

The quality of the program and arrangements is due to the unselfish efforts of the Conference Committee. Our thanks go to Messrs. Archibald C. Rogers, Paul L. Gaudreau, L. McLane Fisher, Allen C. Hopkins, Alexander S. Cochran, Kelsey Y. Saint, Van Fossen Schwab and Robert Fryer for a job extremely well done.



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BALTIMORE'S NEW WORLD

About 1474 Christopher Columbus had an idea that he felt would revolutionize the trade of the period with the Far East, then conducted by overland routes across Asia, sea routes around Africa or a

combination of both. The great Italian navigator from Genoa believed so strongly in the theory that there was a shorter route to the West that it became his life's ambition to prove his point. For the next

eighteen years he did his best to persuade the wealthy courts and families of Europe, including his friends in Genoa, to back him, yet it wasn't until 1492 that Queen Isabella of Spain agreed to outfit three ships for him.

The progressive Queen had inherited a country riddled with strife and dissension and rapidly falling into Europe's backwash. Columbus was a respected sailor and navigator so it was both a typical and logical move for this bold Queen to back his venture to prove that, by sailing west, Spain could benefit by a decided cut in the freight rate to China. As we all know Isabella got a lot more than this for her money and as a result Spain, not Genoa, Venice, France or England, dominated the world for the next one hundred and fifty years.

The scientists of his day were beginning to realize the world was round and it was assumed that unknown lands lay over every horizon, much as today we assume the universe to be infinite. Therefore, Columbus' ambition to circle the world was not original. He merely wanted to do it instead of talk about it. Once he set out he was bound to run into the various land barriers in his way. Had Columbus failed to organize his original voyages some equally gifted navigator undoubtedly would have succeeded at a slightly later date. The discovery of America was inevitable. What Christopher Columbus supplied was the imagination, persistence and leadership to get it done within his lifetime.

Last month Messrs. Hunter Moss, Jefferson Miller, Charles Buck and David Wallace presented *Charles Center as their scheme for restoring economic life to the City of Baltimore. Their theory, like Columbus' theory, is not new—it has been talked about for the last thirty years in major cities all over the world and applied to some—Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York and Coventry, England being only a few examples. It will inevitably be applied to every decadent metropolitan area. In developing it for local conditions they have carefully analyzed the land economics, vacancy rate, transportation and shopping habits, street and public utility patterns, and come up with an imaginative yet realistic scheme that Baltimore cannot afford to do without. These men have provided not only the technical know-how but, more important for Baltimore, the leadership and initiative to rehabilitate Downtown Baltimore during their lifetime and ours. They have enlisted the wholehearted interest and enthusiasm of the public officials and private groups. However, Charles Center is unlike the discovery of America. It is not inevitable. It will only come about if we want it and create it ourselves, and then, if we do, it will change

*Charles Center is the Greater Baltimore Committee's proposal to completely rebuild nine downtown blocks in the heart of Baltimore's business district where the vacancy rate reached as high as 25% and property assessments have declined 10% during the post-war boom. We will make no attempt here to comment on it in detail as this has already been done very thoroughly in the local press. "Everybody has a stake in Downtown" and we recommend to everybody for careful study the handsome brochure on Charles Center prepared by the Planning Council and available at your book store or public library.

the face and economic health of Baltimore very much as Columbus changed the economic face of the world.

Therefore, as their fellow citizens we must do everything within our assorted abilities to see that each step that Mr. Moss and the Committee for Downtown take toward implementation will be as successful as their start and that the obvious benefits of Charles Center will accrue to Baltimore and not to "foreign princes."

Architects In Planning

The type, size and, to great extent, the quality of a project depend on the client. Mr. Moss' leadership on Charles Center reinforces this thesis.

However, we cannot help but point with pride to the part Architects have played in the planning of this and other local projects.

David Wallace, director of planning for the Planning Council, George E. Kostritsky, project director for Charles Center, Oliver Winston, director of Urban Renewal and the late Arthur MacVoy, director of City Planning, were all trained as architects. Archibald Rogers, the first executive secretary of the Greater Baltimore Committee, is not only Chapter vice-president but very much a practising architect, and A. Gould Odell of Charlotte, N. C., one of the country's most successful practitioners, has been awarded the contract for the Civic Center. The sponsors of Charles Center intend to continue this relationship with a "Committee of Architects and business statesmen to keep the project on the track".

Others in the area who are active in planning are: Alexander Cochran as member of the City Planning Commission, Paul Gaudreau as Vice-Chairman of the Baltimore County Planning Board, Peter C. Christie and Grinnell W. Locke as consultants to Baltimore County and Van Fossen Schwab as the very active chairman of the Chapter's Committee on Civic affairs. It is apparent that both laymen and architects are beginning to realize that planning and architecture are synonymous.

Automobiles Keep Out

We are all familiar with the fates of cities like Rotterdam, Berlin and Coventry, that have rebuilt their downtown sections only as an aftermath of war. We read recently in the paper that two years ago Waco, Texas had to close its downtown section to automobile traffic for several days to allow for the tornado debris to be cleaned up. Last year, in memory of those who were killed in the tornado, this vital part of the town was turned into a pedestrian shopping Mall for two days. It was so successful financially that this year it will function as a Mall for one week!

Miscellany

Our President, Paul Gaudreau, along with ten other distinguished American Architects, has been invited by the Government of **West Germany** to participate in an intensive four week tour of new architectural projects in that country and Berlin. Leaving on April 20 he hopes not only to exchange ideas with his American and German fellow professionals but to take a good look at the Brussels Fair.

At the April Meeting of the Executive Committee the following Architects were admitted to corporate membership in the Institute: Wendell D. Little and John Bucinkas. John R. Andrews, Alfred Calcagni and Richard C. Gay were admitted to the Chapter as Associates.

Prizes awarded at the Maryland Artists Exhibition of the Baltimore Museum of Art include one given by the Baltimore Chapter of the AIA "for a work embodying the best design. This year it was won by **Keith Martin** for his collage "White Signals".

The Peale Museum held a buffet supper on April 10th to present Mr. George E. Kidder Smith, distinguished architectural critic, author and photographer to an S. R. O. audience. His review of church architecture, running commentary, and magnificent slides of modern churches in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany should be heard and seen by every parish with a building project and by all concerned with creating truly religious buildings. Mr. Smith made it quite clear that neither imitation Gothic, Georgian nor Colonial architecture could bring us close to God and commended the Church of The Redeemer for having successfully faced up to this problem.

The Maryland Section of the Illuminating Engineering Society announces that the feature speaker at their May Meeting will be **Mr. Kurt Versen** whose topic will be "Lighting—the Third Dimension in Architecture." Mr. Versen's name is well known to many members of the Chapter as one of the originators of contemporary lighting design and he is known for his work on such projects as Radio City Music Hall and the Republic National Bank in Dallas. The Meeting will be held at noon, Monday, May 5th at the Emerson Hotel and those wishing to attend should notify Mr. Paul Puckett at PLaza 2-0300 as soon as possible.

On March 26th, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers sponsored a panel discussion on electrical systems in schools. Among the items presented of interest to architects were: The use of 277 volt lighting fixtures and their amazing effect on the cost of wiring and amount of electricity used; the fact that lighting constitutes about 60% of the electrical load in a school; that the electrical contract on a school job varies from 4.5% of the general contract in an elementary school to 13% in a vocational school; that closed circuit TV systems are now in use at Johns Hopkins University, the Naval Academy and 49 schools in Washington County; and, hear

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ARCHITECTS' REPORT

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this! while the building cost index has gone up 35% since 1947 the unit cost of schools in Baltimore City has gone down 23%!

How About This?

We have received a communication from a brother architect in a nearby community and he enclosed a newspaper clipping containing some information regarding our practice.

As we glanced through the report of a State-financed housing project in that community, we were struck by this particular disclosure made public through this news release.

"The project entailed an appropriation of over \$325,000," and, the news release went on to say; "The architect—(name deleted) is still working on the plans for the project. He was engaged by the Authority at a fee of \$10,500."

Our correspondent poses this question, "How does this fit with the Blue Book? . . . Some competition!"

Without going into lengthy details on a situation of this kind, we would surmise quickly that it does not fit with the Blue Book. It would seem that here is a brother architect, a member of our State Association, who has apparently accepted a commission of approximately 3%, or slightly over. The circumstances surrounding this, we cannot know, since we are being guided by a news release. Ordinarily, what a member of our profession wishes to work for might be his own affair, except for these few facts: Proper architectural documents together with honest supervision cannot be done for such a fee. Then, of course, it places all other architects on a spot in work of the same kind. At a time when building craftsmen are commanding fantastic pay, anywhere from \$100 a week for a building laborer up to \$200 a week for a bricklayer or a plasterer or an electrician, it seems a pity that any member of our profession should be willing to work for a meager week's earnings and enough more to pay Uncle Sam's taxes.

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