

The richness of real community—in both its support and its demand—is largely voided. Variety and choice are reduced to a sort of prepackaged brandname selection of recreation, culture, and education. The individual is immersed in the mass.

What nonsense this is. What reckless, irresponsible dissipation of nature's endowment and man's hopes for dignity, beauty, and growth.

This subcommittee can plan better than we are building the American city. It requires no vast program of research, no technological breakthrough, no huge subsidy, no army of technicians or crusading volunteers to build better American cities.

We know the rough measurements of our future growth—how many people we must provide for; what they will require in houses and apartments, schools and colleges, churches, hospitals, offices and factories, retail stores, lumberyards and service stations. Our task is simply to provide now for what we can calculate will be required to accommodate our future growth; to provide rationally now for what we know is going to occur; to arrange the pieces in a constructive way with a decent respect for man and nature instead of improvising frantically and impulsively with each new thrust of growth as if it were a gigantic surprise beyond our capacity to predict or to manage.

Why, in a nation with such enormous capacity for organization and production, is there such bewilderment about producing the environment in which we grow our people? The answer is easy but frightening. We simply have no machinery, no process, no organized capacity in the United States to put to work the knowledge that exists among us about planning for the future growth of our cities. Is there any other aspect of American life in which the gap is so wide between our knowledge and our performance as in the growth of the American city?

The building of the city is nobody's business—neither government nor industry. We have assigned a vague responsibility to local government to provide for orderly growth but have given it neither the power, the processes, nor the financial capacity with which it can fulfill that responsibility. The most advanced planning and zoning concepts in America today are inadequate to preserve our forests and stream valleys and maintain open spaces. They cannot produce well-formed communities with a rich variety of institutions and activities and a wide range of choice in housing density, type, price and rent. As a matter of fact, zoning has become almost a guarantee of sprawl rather than protection against it. Frightened communities, with no alternative process available, leap to the illusion that low-density zoning will preserve a way of life and protect against rising taxes. The 1- to 3-acre zoning that results simply extends a thin coat of suburban sprawl over an ever-widening area.

Nor have we developed the capacity in the homebuilding industry for producing well planned large scale urban development. Although the business of city building is the largest single industry in America, there is no large corporation engaged in it. City building has no General Motors or General Electric—no IBM, no Xerox; no big capital resources to invest in the purchase of large land areas; no big research and development program unfolding new techniques to produce a better environment. There are no large corporations engaged in the end-product production of the American city. City building—the development of houses and apartments, stores and offices—is the business of thousands of very small corporations, no one of which has within its own resources the financial capacity to invest millions of dollars in land holdings to be planned and developed over, say, 10 to 15 years.

Thus, except for the occasional accident of a large land holding remaining in single ownership on the threshold of urban growth, there is no vehicle, public or private, by which planning and development occurs on a scale sufficiently large to provide sensitively for nature or for man.

We face the addition of 70 million people to our cities over the next 20 years—a new Toledo each month or a Denver, a Dallas and an Atlanta each year. Yet, not one single metropolitan area in the United States has plans to match the growth it knows it must face; and, if it had the plans, it would lack the powers and processes to execute them. This is the state of our Nation and the prospect of our civilization as we convert over 1 million acres of land each year from agricultural to urban use; as we move forward to produce, over the next 40 years, in our urban centers, the equivalent of everything we have built in our cities and suburbs since Plymouth Rock.