

New Urban Housing Pattern

America's cities, beset by a multitude of problems, are due for a renaissance. And the tool to bring about this rebirth is a new concept of urban housing, the "city town," according to a Washington real estate executive.

Harold A. Lewis, speaking yesterday to the Downtown Kiwanis Club, said most of the problems cities now have can be traced to their loss of economically productive citizens to the suburbs, and that adequate and attractive housing is the key to getting them back.

The "city town," Mr. Lewis said, will wean people from the suburbs by offering them the "vitality and variety" of the city, together with many of the advantages of suburban or small town living. This concept involves the creation of "urban communities" within which people can live, work, raise and educate their children, develop friendships, and own real property—and at the same time be part of the whole city.

Mr. Lewis is president of Riverview Realty Corp., sales and management agents for the \$66 million Watergate project now under construction in Foggy Bottom, adjacent to the new Cultural Center and alongside the Potomac.

Urban Design

Acknowledging that Watergate, because of its site and location, is a special case, Mr. Lewis said the project nevertheless "embodies, and illustrates, the principles which I believe should control contemporary urban design."

One of these principles, he

developed, will still have seven acres of open space. This was made economically feasible by high-rise buildings.

He pointed out that to utilize at Watergate these first two principles of good urban design — multiple-purpose buildings and healthy land use — zoning changes were necessary.

Mr. Lewis said Watergate embodies a third principle which should be present in urban housing—it provides for occupant ownership. Co-operative apartment ownership gives urban communities the stability and permanence they need to attract people who seek "an ordered life," he commented.

Utilization of the principles of good urban design can provide "city town" housing within the reach of most people, Mr. Lewis said. Although urban land prices are high, high-rise techniques "used judiciously" can cut unit costs, and good design can do the same thing.

Cities should make certain they provide housing to appeal to both middle and upper income groups, Mr. Lewis said, adding: "The fatal flaw of the suburbs is the single-income, single-focus character of its residents. Cities should

offer variety, and they should attract variety."

New Concept?

Mr. Lewis said that the "urban community" concept of housing had been suggested years ago, but that it had been slow to develop because "most Americans have grown up with a fixed concept of housing: To them it is single-family dwellings set on individual plots of ground."

He said people left the cities to pursue this "American dream," and to find things which the city should and could have offered—"a little fresh air, a little space, a little privacy, a little greenery, and a chance for an ordered human existence."

Cities suffered through the loss of their best people, he said. The tax base dwindled, downtown businessmen lost many of their best customers, and city schools lost many good students and teachers.