

The First Urban Design Conference: Extracts

Originally published in and selected from *Progressive Architecture* (August 1956). Participants include Charles Abrams, Edmund N. Bacon, Jane Jacobs, Gyorgy Kepes, David L. Lawrence, Lewis Mumford, Lloyd Rodwin, Ladislav Segoe, José Luis Sert, and Francis Violich.

JOSÉ LUIS SERT (Dean, Harvard University Graduate School of Design): Our American cities, after a period of rapid growth and suburban sprawl, have come of age and acquired responsibilities that the boom towns of the past never knew. Meanwhile, city planning has developed as a new science; city planners today are concerned with the structure of the city, its process of growth and decay, and the study of all the factors—geographic, social, political, and economic—which have shaped the city. We know more about the problems of our cities than we ever did before the methods of research and analysis were adopted in this field. In fact, in late years, the scientific phase has been more emphasized than the artistic one. This may be due to a natural reaction against past practice, when city planning was based on the superficial “city beautiful” approach, which ignored the roots of the problems and attempted only window-dressing effects. Urban design is that part of city planning which deals with the physical form of the city. This is the most creative phase of city planning and that in which imagination