

LESSON FOR → **builders:** to sell houses, get a fine site plan, fresh design
 ↓
architects: one design job for builders can lead to others

LOCATION:

Fairfax County, Va.
 9 miles from downtown Washington

BUILDERS:

Eli and Gerald Luria,
 Arlington, Va.

ARCHITECTS:

Keyes, Smith & Satterlee;
 Francis D. Lethbridge, associate

Price range of houses with land:

\$15,250 to \$20,500

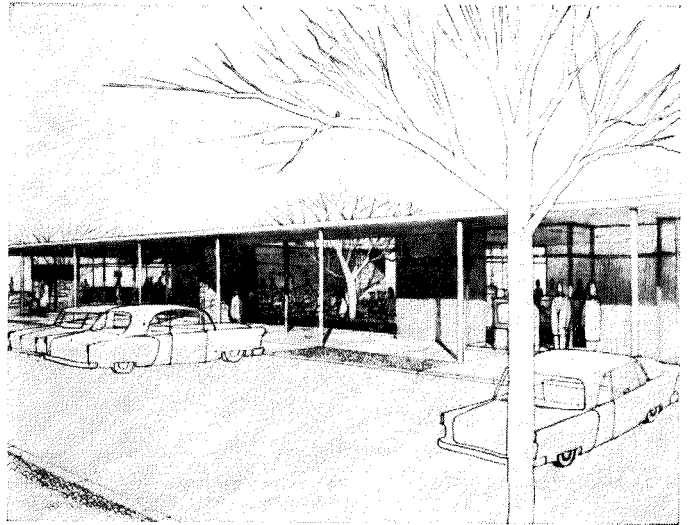
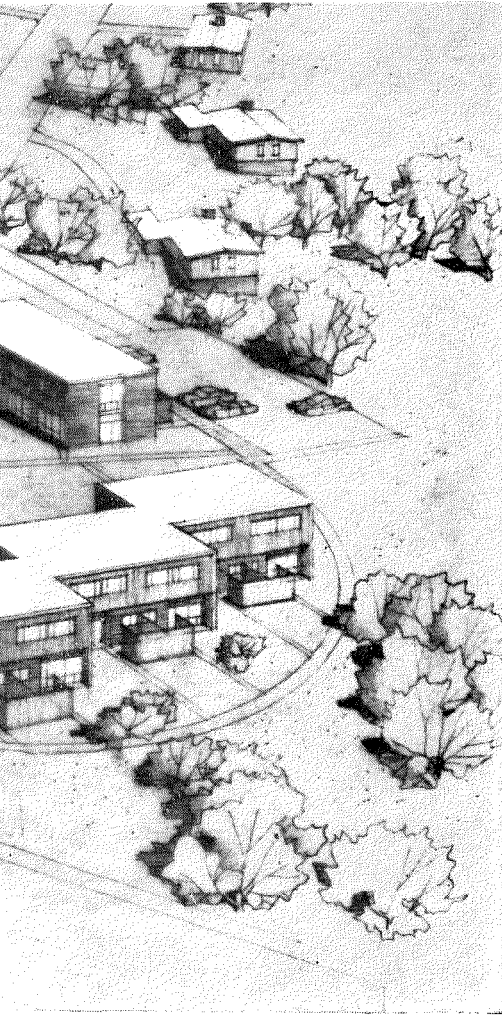
If houses are harder to sell next year, as many builders believe they will be, builder-designer teams should know about the newest success in Washington, D. C. Consisting of only 125 houses, a few apartments and a row of stores, this development has so many admirable features it deserves wide recognition.

For architects this development demonstrates that:

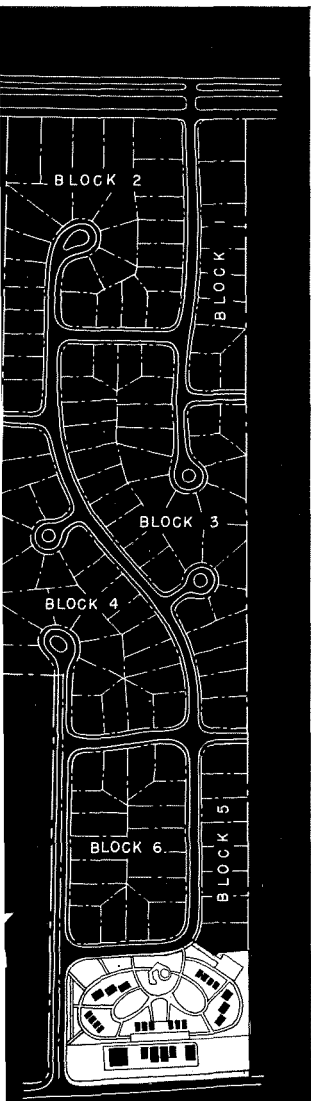
1. They can well afford to spend time with merchant builders.
2. Builder clients who begin with a few houses may go on buying architectural service: apartments, shops, office buildings, large houses.
3. Architects can sell many related services builders are happy to pay for.
4. By helping to create an entire community where people live well, architects can achieve a deep and permanent satisfaction.

For builders it proves that:

1. In a competitive market, up-to-date design pays off in houses just as it does in the sale of every other product that people buy.
2. Experienced architects have a special talent for design that makes one group of houses, stores or apartments stand out above others.
3. Architects brought in early can contribute many ideas that go far beyond the design of the building.
4. It is better to pay a skilled architect than to overpay a salesman. A well-designed house practically sells itself.
5. Once a builder gets a taste of the many satisfactions that come from a fine community he will never do another ordinary project.



Large drawing, left, shows how the five-acre apartment and shopping area will look when completed. Row of six stores has two open-air patios where people may sit and relax or perhaps have refreshments in good weather. Stores have far more charm than usual row of shops, will be a community asset. Below is the street and lot layout for entire project.



Apartments and stores in an attractive park. Homebuilders who look with envy at large shopping centers but haven't enough people in their project to support a number of stores can learn a lot from this modest commercial area.

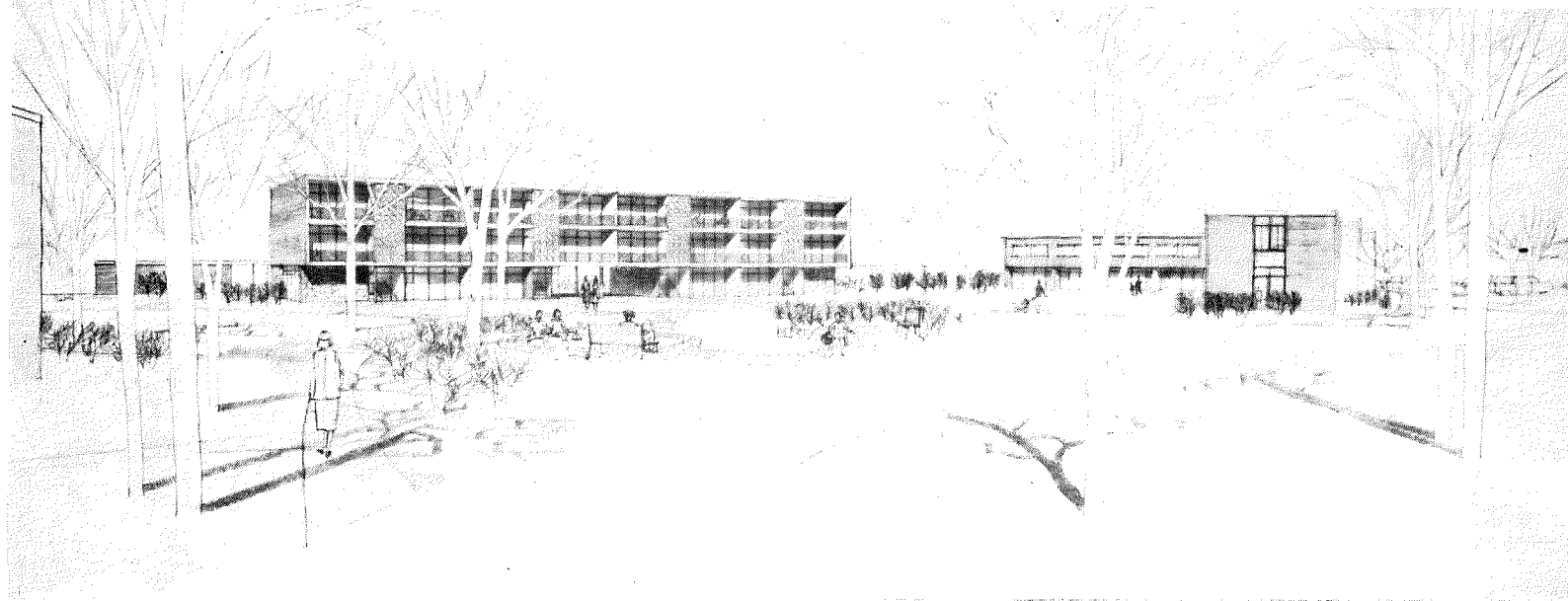
In most projects individual house owners do not want to live close to apartments or stores. Yet so skillfully have the architects laid out these five acres that they will be a community asset rather than a liability.

The Lurias saved every possible tree, turned this end of the property into an attractive park. The apartments and stores will not tower above the nearby house but form a buffer between the one-family area and the busy traffic on the main highway beyond the stores. The architects have used the park to add value and charm to both the shops and the apartments.

The design of the stores has much to commend it. For this small, intimate neighborhood, the stores are intimate in their design. Proportions of the group and relation of height to width are good. An outstanding feature is the open-air gallery which cuts through from front to back in two places. The drugstore, at the right end, may use its gallery as a patio to serve drinks outdoors in summer. The store on the left will be a food shop and the stores in the center will be rented by small neighborhood merchants.

The architects laid out the pleasantly meandering street plan shown at the left. Roads follow the natural contours so the builders had less earth to move than if a gridiron pattern had been used. This creation of curving streets and small neighborhoods increases the value of the land and brought many buyers.

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Sketch above shows apartment group as seen from the one-family house area. These are truly "garden apartments," as the five buildings are well separated and surrounded by trees. The large building has only one-bedroom units. Four smaller buildings are duplexes with two bedrooms upstairs. Total group has 55 apartments, or 15 families per acre.

Proper orientation adds livability and value. In their apartment house area (and in their houses the Lurias have added thousands of dollars in permanent value and an inestimable amount of better living for future families through the careful way that every building was put on its site. In a speculative development houses are usually lined up in rows and the builder shrugs off responsibility in regard to orientation. Picture windows face any direction regardless of view or exposure. Garages may be on the south, blocking the sunshine.

But architects Keyes, Smith & Satterlee and Lethbridge know that the value of a house or apartment for family living can be nearly doubled if houses and land are related to each other. Because of the excellent job they did on their previous Luria project where the builders have had the most satisfying experience of their building careers ("they're the happiest, least complaining of buyers we've ever seen") the builders were willing to pay \$40 per house to give the architects time to study every location. Then the particular orientation which best fitted each site was chosen, and it was twisted or turned on the lot until it made the most sense. Admittedly the big lots of 1/2 acre or more on wooded, rolling land gave them an opportunity that not every builder has.

This careful site planning calls for a specialist, not a construction superintendent. The \$40 bought the time and judgment of specialists who know as much in their field as lawyers or accountants (without whom no builder could do along) do in theirs. But ultimately the builder doesn't pay the \$40 himself; he is paid for by the buyer who, if he knew what he was getting, would call it one of the best buys he could make.

Actually, the Lurias got a big return on this \$40 investment. For the location of the houses means a great deal less earth moving, shorter drives—but of greatest financial importance, it often meant turning a one-story house into a two-story which brings a larger profit than the smaller house.

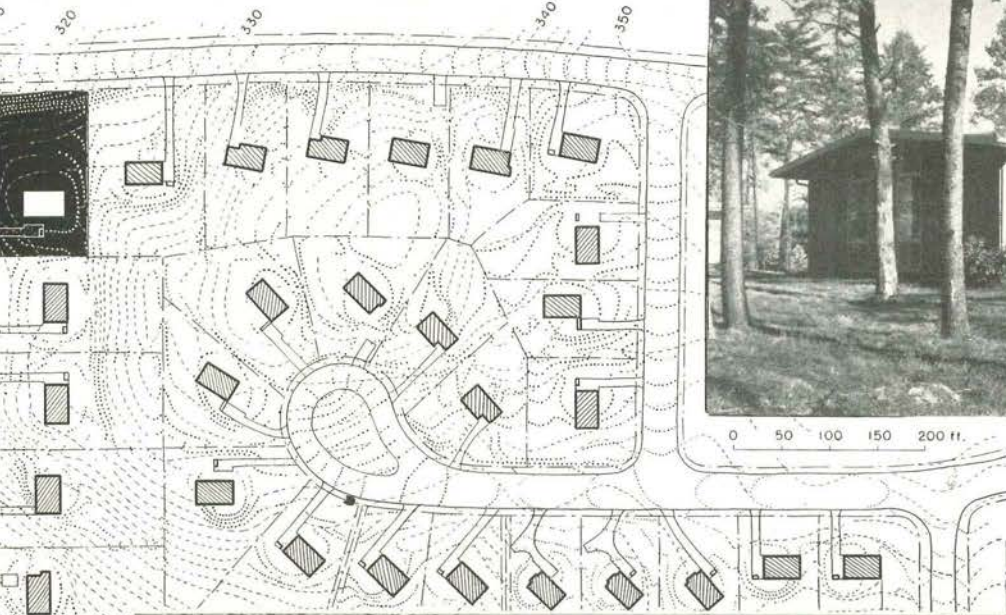
The drawing opposite shows one small section and how houses vary in orientation to contours of the land, trees, view, summer and winter sun and breeze. Most houses have their window walls where they get a pleasant view, a view of one of their neighbor's service yard.

Builders put best foot forward with model house. The Luria Brothers put full responsibility for the model house on their architects who sited the house on its lot, chose the particular model to go there, did the color schemes outside and inside, and also took over the entire job of decorating. The 55-acre project will have 125 houses when completed, with a total of 20 variations that sell from \$15,250 to \$20,500. Houses are improved versions of builders' last project.

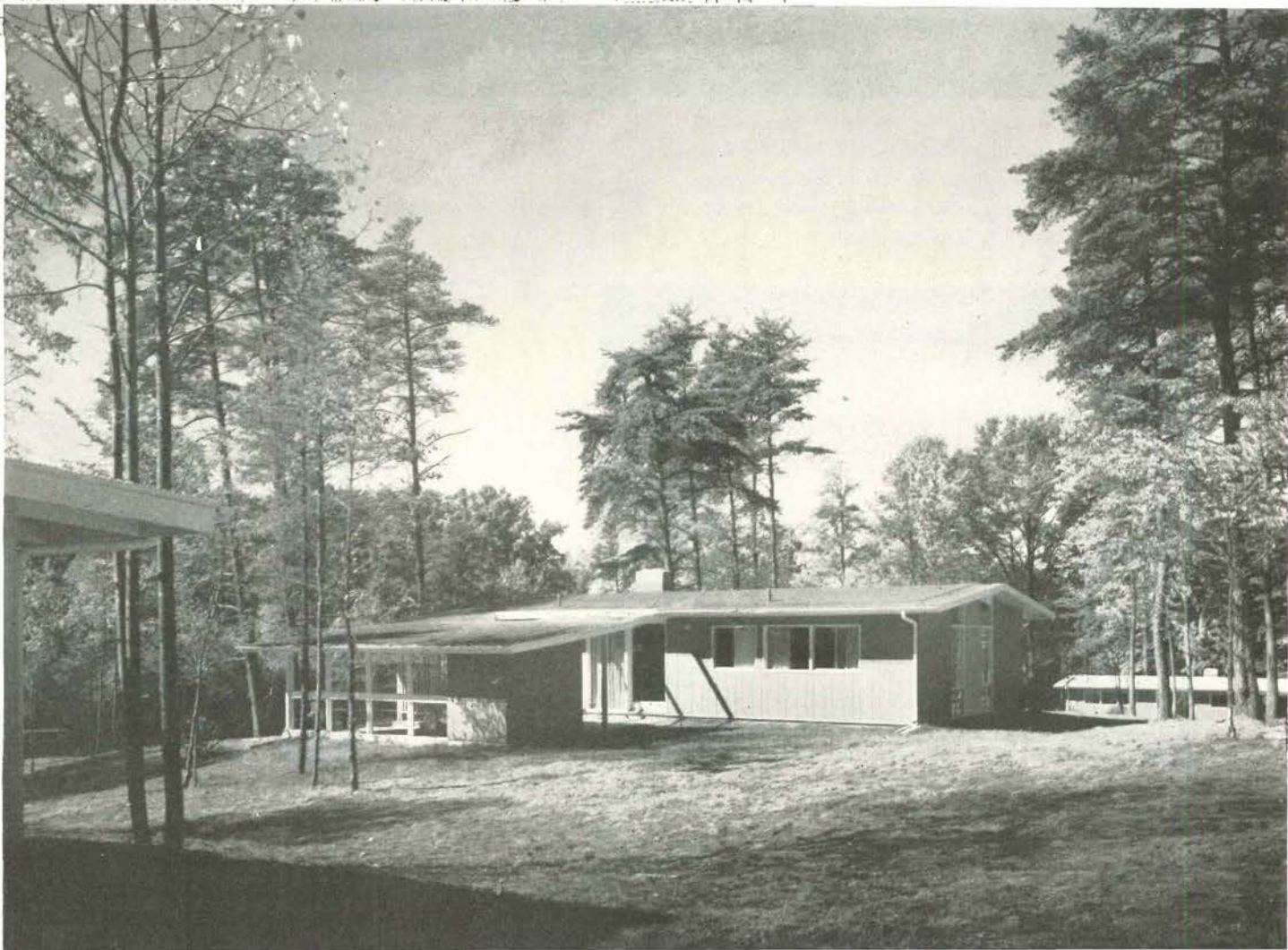
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Photos: Robert C. Lautman

plan (model house upper left) shows small section of project

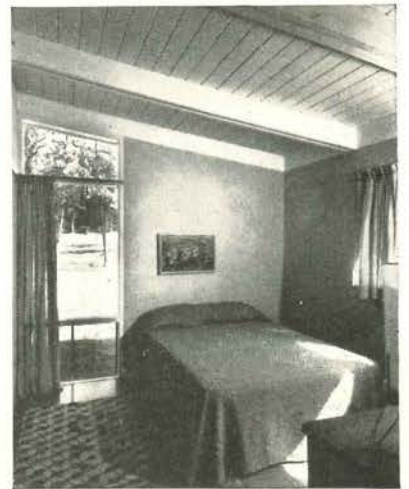


Photos above and below are opposite sides of model house. (Front view with car in carport is lower right, page 146).





Photos on these two pages are of the model house, which has 1,066 sq. ft., is built on a slab, sells for \$16,750. View above shows portion of living room from the dining area. View from large windows of all houses is usually like this. Below: the fireplace faces the window wall.



This is smallest of the three bedrooms. It has floor to ceiling windows which in this room are only at bottom. Room seems larger than it is because of sloping ceiling and white planking, which is more popular with buyers than dark ceiling.



Opposite view from upper left photo. This shows how vertical louvers on the carport create a baffle from light, shutting out sight of automobile and creating a more screened entrance. Open roof framing beyond door ties dining and garage together yet lets in light.

Steady market for contemporary design. The Lurias know from experience that modern designs will sell in Washington, D. C. Two years ago they began building some 205 similar houses at Holmes Run, not far from this new development. With Regulation X forcing big down payments, sales set no national records but were steady, and enough to keep well ahead of construction. In fact, the fresh new designs sold so much better than conventional houses in the same price class that at least four other builders decided to follow the leader. Buyers constantly sent friends to the sales office—a new experience for the Lurias.

When the Lurias began looking for new land they decided to get the best they could find, for the success at Holmes Run convinced them that people will gladly pay extra for good land.

They could have repeated last year's models without any changes. But they wanted to do better. So, with the architects' constant encouragement, they decided to make their basic house 160 sq. ft. larger, with larger living room, bath and bedrooms. They added several new models, improved the variations, restudied the entire carport planning, put in more cabinets and better millwork and decided to do a better color-styling job.

It is one thing to want to do a better job and another thing to be willing to pay for it. The Lurias deserve special credit for being willing to back up their good intentions. "Most builders try to cut down on every item," said Eli, "but we have found when you spend more you get more."

What the Lurias did that is unusual in builder circles is to trust the architects with numerous details that designers do not usually do. Satterlee and Lethbridge, representing the architectural firm, spent dozens of hours studying the 55-acre strip and the contour maps. Then they suggested where the roads should go, how the lots should be divided, where to put the apartments and the row of stores. FHA at first did not want to go along with the street plan but then approved it because of the success of the Holmes Run layout and house orientation. County requirements are that lots be at least 10,000 sq. ft. but most of these are 14,000.

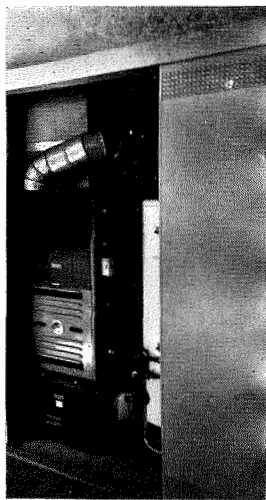
The architects delivered three times as many drawings per model as they did for Holmes Run. This makes for better detailing, better houses. It was this kind of careful designing that impressed FHA and brought its co-operation.

Satterlee and Lethbridge supervised the construction of the first houses, chose the color schemes for the entire project, and took full responsibility for furnishing the model house, whose photographs are shown on these pages. They also worked out the sales literature.

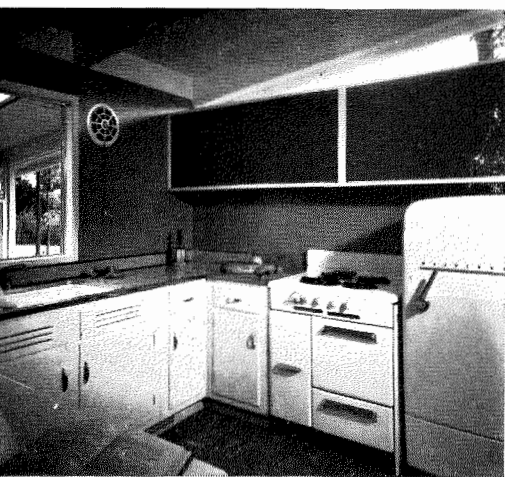
The architectural firm received \$5,600 for the drawings, \$3,600 for site planning, and got a fee of \$50 per house for continuing supervision, preparation of color schedules, advice on landscaping and general help in setting up the operation. This is \$124 per house for the 125 houses and not excessive for the vast amount of work done. If the Lurias should use these same designs on a subsequent project, as is probable, their design cost would drop considerably. The builders would rather pay skilled architects who make a long-term contribution than salesmen. The Lurias are now selling four or five houses a week at an exceedingly low sales cost. They say they are doing well compared with other Washington builders.

One design job leads to another. Pine Spring is the second group of houses that the architects have done for Luria Brothers. In addition they have also done a small group of houses for a third Luria brother who has his own firm. For Gerald and Eli they have designed the five apartment buildings and the stores as part of Pine Spring, and are now doing a medical office building and another apartment. Both the brothers have also had new houses designed for themselves. There is little doubt that as the architects help the builders to prosper, there will be a continuous program of design work. The moral to architects who doubt the wisdom of working with merchant builders would seem to be: get 'em when they're young and on the way up and they'll give you business as they prosper.

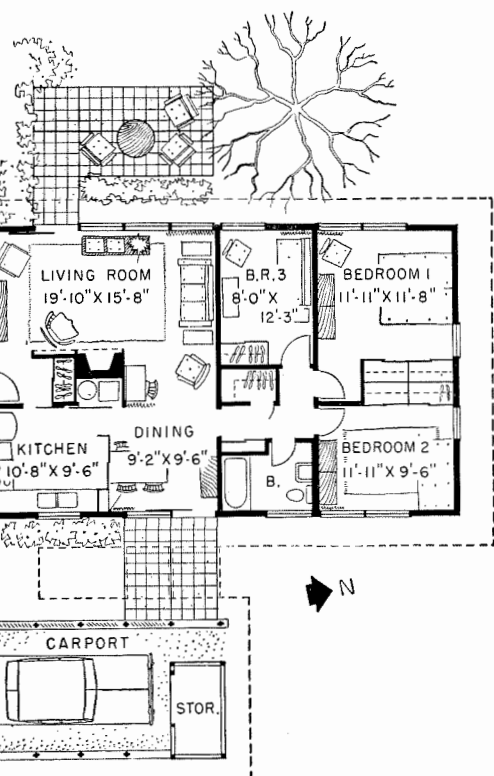
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Architects designed an excellent treatment for furnace room, which is opposite kitchen. An inconspicuous sliding metal door, with perforations top and bottom, uses the same overhead track as curtain that shuts living room off from kitchen.



Kitchen is well arranged, is equipped with range, refrigerator, double sink, garbage grinder and exhaust fan. As in all other rooms, storage here has been carefully planned by the architects.



What architects can do with one basic plan. Although Pine Springs has five plans, numerous variations, one- and two-level houses and a variety of carports, there is one basic style. This makes work go faster for the mechanics, simplifies the assembly of framing panels made in the cutting yard and gives the Lurias the benefit of larger purchasing.

The two-level houses are specially successful. Where many builders would have scooped the top off the gentle slopes, knocked down trees and put in one-story houses, the architects designed houses to take advantage of the slope. They took what is essentially a one-story house with a basement and turned part of the lower floor into a large room. This downstairs room can be a study, a playroom, a place for entertainment or it can be partitioned off to include a fourth bedroom.

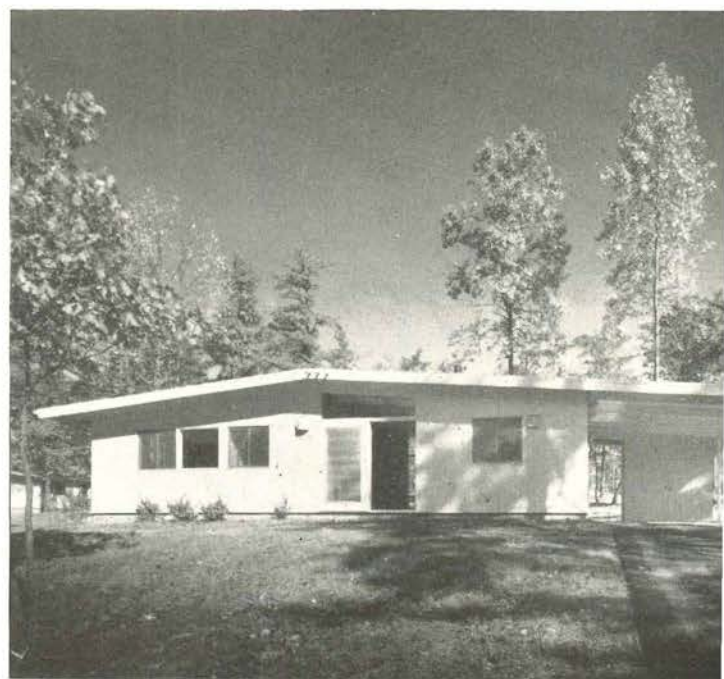
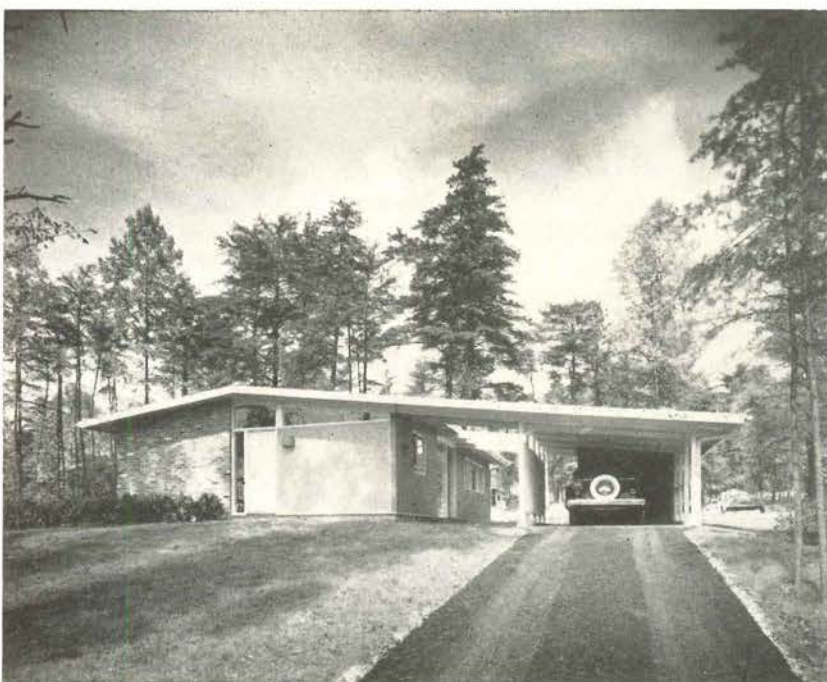
In the sketch at the lower left on the opposite page is a view of one type which uses the lower level for both a large study and for an additional bedroom. The bedroom is at the lower right, using the space which the garage has in the house shown in large photo above. A carport is added to replace the garage.

This excellent use of basement space should be copied by many builders who have similar sloping ground but who let their houses stick out of the ground and put in small, high basement windows and in general use no imagination to develop a daylight basement. The Lurias finish their lower room in pleasant paneling and with asphalt tile and add a fireplace. Many people are glad to pay from \$3,000 to \$4,000 more for the extra rooms.

Truss roof with post construction. Construction is essentially the same as in the Lurias' previous development: a truss roof used with 3" x 6" posts which are bought by the carload already milled and rabbeted to size. The rabbeting speeds up the installation of the large glass walls. Trusses and wall panels are pre-cut and assembled at the site in a temporary cutting yard, where considerable millwork is also done. Five men put up the walls for one house, apply sheathing and erect trusses in eight hours. Three men and one helper sheathe the roof in one day. Walls are insulated, have cypress or redwood siding. Heating in the basement houses is gas-fired forced warm air, and in the slab houses is counter-flow, with concrete ducts under the slab leading to registers in the outside walls.

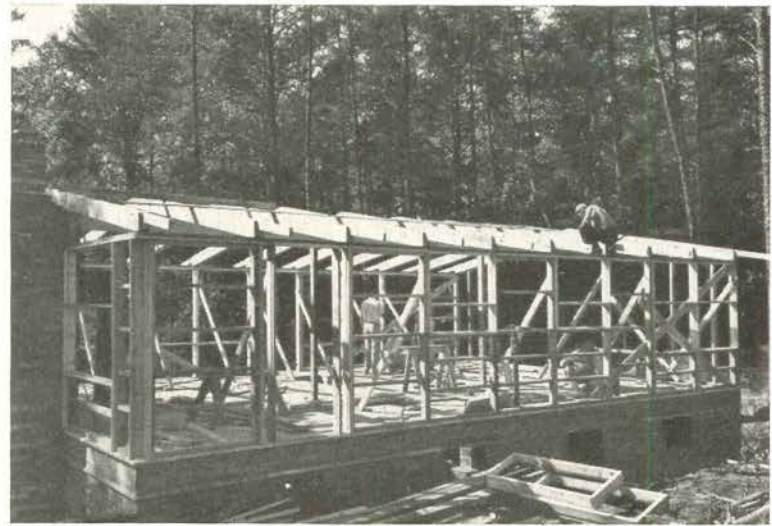
View below at left is front of model house, which is turned with narrow end toward street. Widely extended roof over carport creates illusion of much wider house. On right is same plan turned with wide side to street, same size carport but no breezeway. All have outdoor storage.

Photos: Robert C. Laut





y builders who "throw away" good basement space can
 t by study of the house above. Basement has been
 ed into attractive, paneled all-purpose room with fire-
 e. Another version of the same house is below, showing
 el with garage space converted to bedroom, carport added.



Construction is of framing panels preassembled in builders' yard of 3" x 6" posts rabbeted at sawmill. Trusses are two 2" x 8" spaced 4'-1/2". Ceiling is of 2" x 6" planks with roofing felt plus built-up roof. Overhangs are 2' or 3' on all sides. Roof pitch is 1 1/2 to 12.