IDEAS

American New Town Development During the 1930s Mayer made the case against suburban sprawl. Mayer’s hypothesis was tested and by 1930 his belief that unregulated suburban sprawl would ultimately put too much pressure on transportation and degrade the rural countryside.

Public Participation Mayer believed that citizens should be involved in the planning process. In 1946 Mayer insisted direct participation in the planning process, much earlier than others in the profession.

The Urgent Future Mayer published his book, The Urgent Future, in 1967. The Urgent Future aimed to reveal the misuse of statistics in the planning profession in order to justify the past actions’ continuation into the future. Mayer believed in the power of the planner to fundamentally alter and bring order to the city. In The Urgent Future, Mayer noted, “Trend is not destiny” while defining a “megalopolis” as “the oozing together of already amorphous cities into a sort of lava flow hundreds of miles in dimensions.”


Kitimat is based on planning concepts which include the Garden city idea of England, the Radburn idea of the separation of different types of traffic, the Greenbelt City idea of preplanning to a maximum growth and surrounded by a permanent forest and farming greenbelt, and the neighbourhood idea of a human scale of community relationships and activities.

Albert Mayer working on Pilot Development Project in Etawah, India

He devoted a considerable proportion of his time to several government agencies who consulted him on questions of public housing and urban renewal. With Lewis Mumford and Henry Wright he founded the Housing Study Guild. This organization, which lasted about five years supported by public funds, was devoted to developing personnel with the range of special expertise required for the nascent limited dividend and public housing programs. Among its other undertakings the Guild did a detailed comparative study of costs and other characteristics of buildings of different heights, from two to twelve stories.

THESIS ON “MINETTE BAY PARK DEVELOPMENT FOR KITIMAT” (1957)
in Massachusetts Institute of Technology Library
by H. Kinoshita

ALBERT MAYER

Albert Mayer (b. 1897) began his career as a civil engineer in New York City upon completion of an engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1919. His early engineering work on commercial and apartment buildings fostered an interest in architectural design and layout which later led Mayer to become a registered architect. In the early 1930’s Mayer became closely associated with several eminent architects and planners who brought to their profession a keen sense of the social inadequacies of modern housing. Together they saw the need for more creative planning—planning oriented not just to physical design of buildings, but to creation of environments conducive to community life. In 1933 this group of planners joined forces with Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal to draft a new federal housing policy. These recommendations, which contained the early outlines of “limited-dividend” housing and large scale public housing policy, led to the creation of the U.S. Housing Authority in 1937.
The first ever unofficial Master Plan and Outline to develop Bombay’s mainland was developed by Albert Mayer and N.V. Modak in 1947 to cope up with the limitations of the geographical space.

DELHI-NEW DELHI REGIONAL PLAN (Job No. 535)
Albert Mayer assembled and acted as general consultant to the Ford Foundation’s Regional Planning Team which assisted the Government of India’s Town Planning Organization in the preparation of the regional plan for Delhi. The plan, intended for 1962, intended to decongest Old Delhi, increase density in the formerly British areas of New Delhi and Civil Lines, redistribute industrial development to peripheral areas, and designate space for new public and not-for-profit institutions.

Product of four years’ labour and costing Rs 3 crores, the master plan was criticised by the corporators as over-ambitious and idealist.

DELHI’S MASTER PLAN, THE ECONOMIC WEEKLY, NOVEMBER 5, 1960

ALBERT MAYER
At his first meeting with Nehru, Mayer outlined his thoughts for improving living conditions in Indian villages. He proposed to organize an integrated rural development program. Mayer saw the benefits of increased agricultural production not as ends in themselves, but as means of raising the level of village expectation and stimulating a self-sustaining participation in local development.

The organization of the Etawah Project was based on the principle of what Mayer called "inner democratization." Mayer consciously tried to change the hierarchical structure of government and of village life. To encourage both local involvement and governmental sensitivity to local needs, officers of the Etawah Project were encouraged to make over-night visits to villages.