

A HOUSE PLANNING KIT

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Many people would agree that the happiness and well-being of a family can be influenced to a great extent by the type of housing selected. A house that is optimally located and arranged can offer the family increased contentment, convenience, and livability.

The expenditure for a house will perhaps be the largest single expenditure made by the family. A house may be purchased because the location seems convenient. On the surface the house may be attractive, may have eye appeal, and perhaps most important at the time, the monthly payments fit the budget. Some concern is shown for the floor plan but little interest is expressed for building materials, mechanics, and construction. Livability and durability of the house will be revealed only by daily living in the house. It is somewhat disturbing to observe the lack of knowledge or concern that many home buyers display when it

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comes to consideration of the long term and quality components of housing.

For some time I had been interested in providing the students in my housing course with actual samples and current costs of building materials to give a realistic rather than an abstract feeling for materials, construction, and cost associated with building a house. As recipient of a released time grant during Winter Quarter 1973, I was able to develop and produce twenty "Materials Learning Kits" together with books of readings which contain basic information from housing texts, as well as current newspaper and magazine articles.

The kit contains actual samples of a variety of materials, cards for different room sizes, a work board for floor plans, and cost sheets to aid the student in choosing the best or most house for a fixed budget. Here the student can look at the total living space and visualize the functional relationship between the indoor and outdoor zones. The student will be able to apply basic principles and recommendations learned while expressing individuality, originality, and creativity. By looking at the total living space the student can relate space and quality to cost. Some of the alternatives suggested in using the kit to plan a house with a fixed amount of money are:

1. a small house with quality materials
2. a house of medium size with moderate cost materials
3. a large house with economy materials
4. an expandable house completed in phases.

In addition to the applicability to classroom use, Extension Service felt the kit had great potential for their use. Thus, fifteen kits and readings books have been produced for state leaders to use with rural home planners.

The kits and readings books were field tested by housing classes. After each test and evaluation some revisions were made. Updating and additions to the kit and readings are expensive and time consuming but necessary to keep the material current.

Student evaluations at the end of each quarter have shown the House Planning Kit to be a valuable resource. The samples of materials and floor planning aids are useful in planning a house suitable to a particular family's needs and income. The samples create both an awareness of and the ability to identify the types and qualities of building materials available. This knowledge should serve the future consumer of housing in discriminating between good and poor quality housing as related to cost, as well as in predicting the long term durability of the house.