

Soviet, American architects agree on low-rises

(AP) — With the growth of contact between the United States and Russia comes a new field of inquiry: the home.

After generations of differing attitudes on housing — the Russians built high rise apartment complexes while Americans created suburbs — ideas seem to be melding.

In both countries, the latest architectural thinking is that low-rise, moderate-density buildings are better. To the Russians they mean a more humane scale than high rises, and to Americans they offer a more affordable alternative to single-fam-

ily housing.

The Russians also are beginning to pay more attention to ecological concerns and to quality of life issues, which have been animating American debate for years.

An exhibition of photos and drawings of recent building projects in both countries discloses a startling similarity, despite the vastly different systems of building — public construction in the Soviet Union and private development in the United States.

"The exhibit has two goals: to see what each country is doing and to

consider the social role of architecture," Tician Papachristou said at the opening. "It was not a beauty contest or a competition."

Papachristou is exhibit chairman and a member of the Architects, Designers and Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) headquartered in New York. The show is also supported by the Union of Architects in the U.S.S.R.

EACH COUNTRY selected 41 projects from an original pool of 100 entries for the exhibit at Knoll Design Center in New York City's SoHo

area through the end of May.

The exhibition shows housing, workplaces and public spaces built in the last 10 years. If the labels — in both English and Russian — had been left off, it's a good bet that a casual visitor would find it difficult to identify the country of origin for the bulk of the projects.

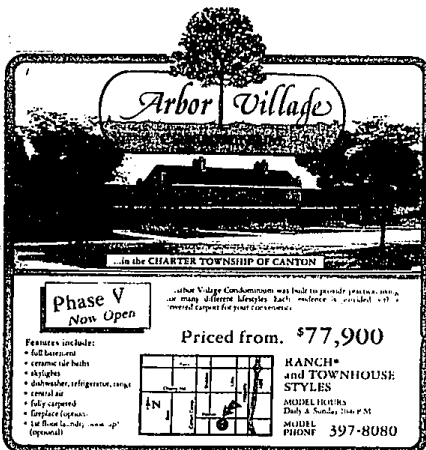
In both countries, triangular forms are used to vary the boredom of tall rectangles. Both are restoring old areas by renovating picturesque buildings. Luxury materials such as marble and granite and decorative touches such as fountains are used in

both countries. The difference is that in the United States they are likely to be in homes and office buildings; in the Soviet Union they're used in public spaces, including the new Lenin Square subway station in Yerevan, Armenia.

Although both countries seem destined to low-rise buildings in the long-run, we should not imagine that the Soviet Union skyline will soon be a carbon copy of the United States. The Russians continue to approve of monumental architecture and have a liking for massive, high-rise towers that have fallen out of favor as resi-

dences in the United States.

THIS IS ONE of the major differences between the two countries, according to Kenneth Frampton and Mildred Schmeitz, American architects who helped select entries for the exhibition. Americans also devote considerably more attention to quality of life issues. But the Chernobyl nuclear accident seems to have precipitated a rise of environmental concerns in the U.S.S.R., according to Frampton, a professor at Columbia University's school of architecture.



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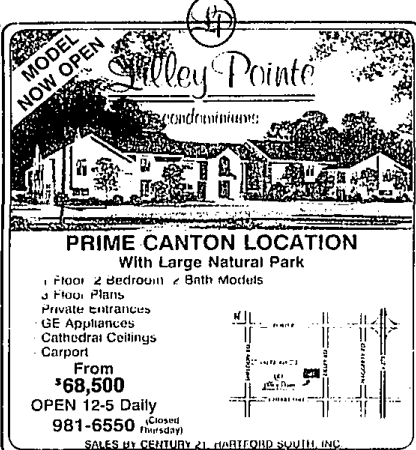
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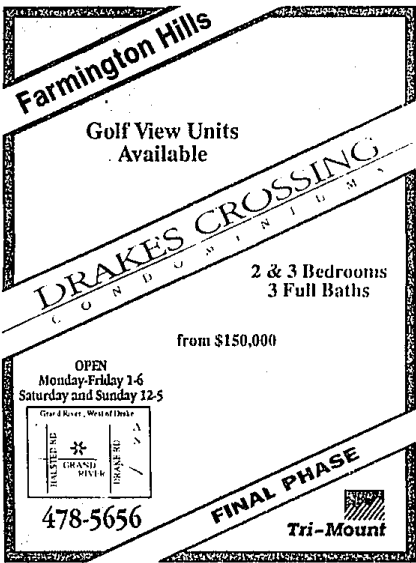
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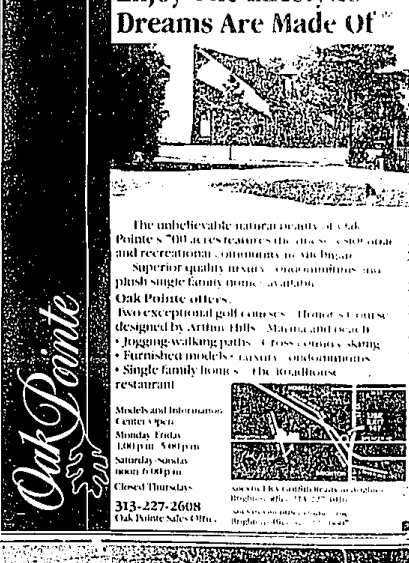
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