

STUDY WILL WEIGH LAW USE IN DESIGN

Seattle Architect Awarded \$5,000 Brunner Grant

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Whether or not governments can legislate good architecture and urban design will be the subject of a study sponsored this year by the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The chapter's \$5,000 Brunner Scholarship has been awarded to Sidney Cohn, an architect and planner of Seattle, for a comprehensive investigation of laws in use in Europe and their effect on the quality of urban building.

Many European cities have extensive architectural controls, such as the restriction on building heights in Paris and the preservation of classical antiquities in Rome. In Stockholm, government regulation of urban architectural design extends even to the selection of the color of buildings from an officially approved range. Postwar reconstruction in the Netherlands has been subject to legal requirements since 1945, and London has had redevelopment laws for central city areas since 1947.

The objective of the study will be to compile a history of such laws and to evaluate their success in terms of the orderly development and attractive appearance of the European cities where they are in force.

Geoffrey Lawford, president of the New York chapter, believes that the project is particularly pertinent because of the large-scale renewal programs that are transforming entire areas of American cities and creating mushrooming suburban centers. The question of the quality and standards in rebuilding and new building programs is a matter of considerable professional controversy.

Many architects and planners believe that quality could be improved by legal controls of the European type. Others feel that good design cannot be produced by law. Mr. Cohn's study, already begun in Germany under a Fulbright grant, is

meant to determine whether existing legislation works. Ultimately, it should offer guidance to American cities, where laws are far less sweeping.

American laws usually deal with details of zoning, to limit density and congestion and regulate land usage, or with historic preservation, to protect certain limited areas of special value or interest. They are rarely directed specifically toward esthetic ends.

The Brunner Scholarship is an annual grant established by a bequest to the New York chapter by the late Arnold W. Brunner, a local architect. Its purpose is to encourage advanced study that will contribute to the practice, teaching or knowledge of the art and science of architecture in the United States.

In addition to the scholarship award, the Brunner Committee made a grant-in-aid of \$1,500 to Anne Griswold Tyng, an architect of Philadelphia, for the development of educational materials for the study of three-dimensional forms.