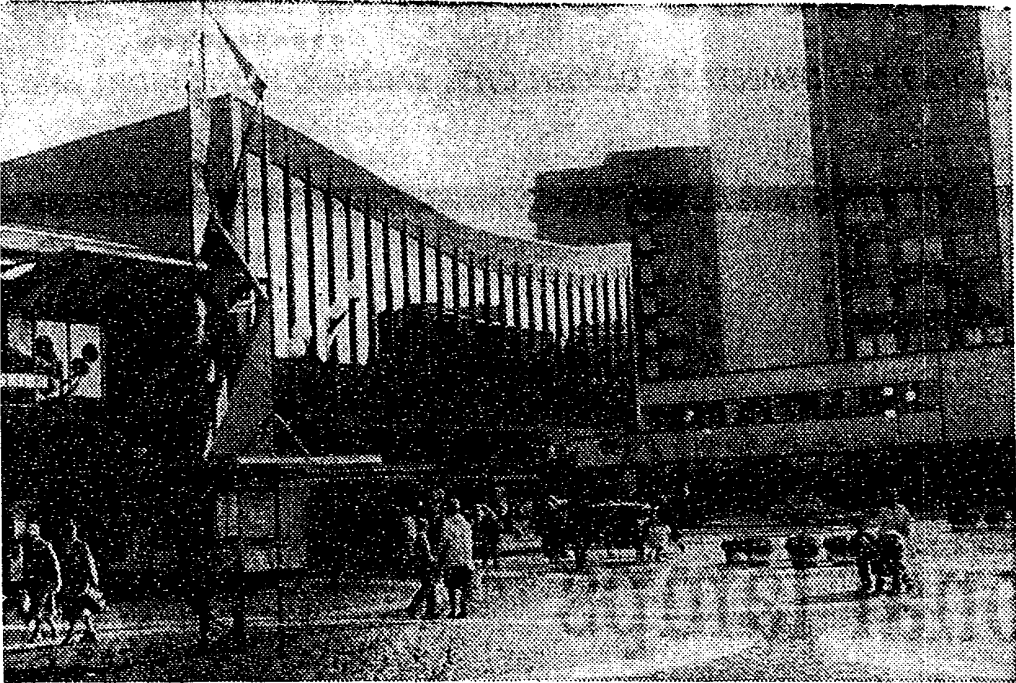


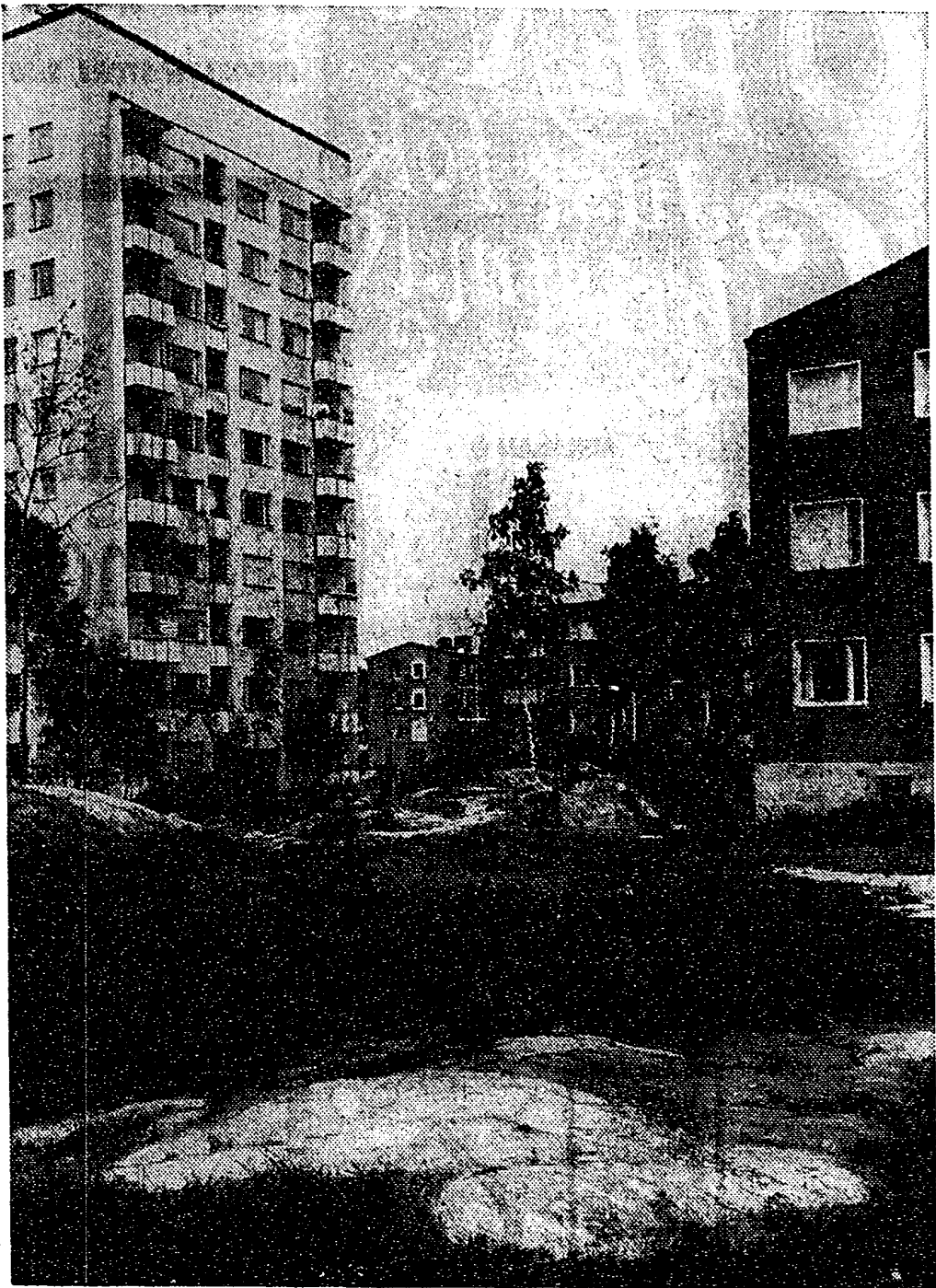
# Sweden Avoids U.S. Suburban Sprawl by Close Control of Housing



Vallingby Center, a pedestrian shopping mall surrounded by stores, offices and services, is the heart of Stockholm's satellite town of Vallingby, which was completed in 1958.



Single-family houses like these are usually privately built in Sweden and unimaginative in design. Apartment houses in Stockholm's satellite suburbs are Government-sponsored.



High-rise apartment building and four-story apartment houses in Bandhagen. Swedish housing uses mixture of high and low buildings, relating them to natural features of site.

## Result Is High Rate of Building — And New Way of Life

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

A 9-mile, 24-minute subway ride from downtown Stockholm takes a Swedish commuter to studio flats along a lake, a fountain and flower-filled shopping center complete with everything from groceries to kangaroo fur suits—and a new way of life.

The lakeside flats are at Hasselby Strand, the shopping center is Vallingby and the careful combination of planned housing, stores, services and recreation is the Scandinavian answer to American suburban sprawl.

En route the commuter can enjoy the bright new subway's abstract art and excellent graphics. If he drives, he will pass through one of the world's most orderly landscapes: apartment blocks disposed neatly among pines and silver birches, surrounded by open spaces widening to full countryside, the country giving way again to planned, tasteful towns.

### Controlled Transition

There is none of the urban refuse of dreary housing, strip commerce and roadside junk that stretches out from the American city's borders. There is no equivalent of the formless limbo of the Bronx or Queens.

Traveling American builders who have just toured Western Europe to see the best in planning and housing design took the commuter's trip. What they saw was the most rigidly



The New York Times Nov. 28, 1965  
Stockholm has solved many commuter problems at Hasselby and Vallingby (cross).

controlled transition from city to suburb of any major metropolis, and a remarkable group of satellite towns systematically built by Stockholm in the last 13 years to take care of postwar growth.

A city of 1.2 million, Greater Stockholm's population is increasing at the rate of 2 per cent a year. But there is no haphazard expansion and no speculative building, for Stockholm is probably the most "planned" city in the world.

It has been buying land for anticipated municipal expansion since the turn of the century, under both non-Socialist and Socialist regimes. As land is acquired, it stays in public ownership; it is leased, not resold. The municipality, as planner, credit agency and frequently

builder and developer, controls its destiny.

The Stockholm master plan of 1952 and the regional plan of 1958 have pushed that destiny beyond the city's borders, providing for four completely new outlying town districts. Unlike British "new towns," which are meant to decentralize large cities by emphasizing the economic self-sufficiency of the new communities, Stockholm's satellites are tied to the mother metropolis. They are strung like beads along the new subway, in a finger plan separated by wooded land.

### Art-Enriched Plazas

The art-enriched pedestrian plazas, the handsome outdoor furnishings and the patterned paving of the town centers are now copied by every American chamber of commerce hoping to rescue a dying downtown by dropping in a fountain shopping mall.

But the main point has been missed by the imitators. Vallingby Center, completed in 1958 is not just a shopping mall; it is

the heart and nerve center of the new planned community of Vallingby and its 60,000 inhabitants. With pre-existing housing, it serves 100,000 people. Farsta Center has served 200,000 people in the same way for five years; Sartra and its center are almost completed.

Planning is accepted in Sweden as disorder is accepted in United States. A Government function, it leaves no room for alternatives. All land in Sweden is under some form of planning control.

The Swedish businessman and builder work within the framework of governmental regulations. Even so-called private construction is usually done by nonprofit or limited-profit Government-allied firms under financial restrictions. Building commissions are awarded to different concerns according to a delicate system of political checks and balances; first one party claims the right to hand out the prize, then another.

Under this system, Sweden is building at the highest rate of

dwellings per capita per year, surpassing both American and Soviet production; 11.2 dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants were constructed in 1964, compared with 8.3 per 1,000 in the United States.

Almost all are blocks of flats in semistandard walk-ups, row houses and towers. Many are constructed of prefabricated parts, representing an advanced building technology that also works to correct seasonal aspects of the industry.

Still, all is not perfect in the planned Swedish state. Housing continues to be critically short. The quality of the planning frequently surpasses the quality of the architecture, and there is a lack of experimental variety under Government controls.

The role of the auto is woefully underestimated in all city and suburban plans. There are few single-family houses, and they are privately sponsored, consummately ordinary and the least effective part of the landscape.

But it is an extraordinarily beautiful landscape, for all that. Its felicity and order are not due just to planning but to something that can be summed up in the Swedish word "kvalitet." This means not just quality, but a level of taste. That level is exceptionally high through all strata of society in Sweden, as it is exceptionally low in the United States. Kvalitet is the basis of the justifiably celebrated Scandinavian style.