

HOMES FOR WAGE EARNERS

ARCHITECTS ASKED TO ENTER A POPULAR COMPETITION.

Proposal of Improved Housing Council Is for a Group of Tenements Designed for an Entire City Block—They Must Be Model Apartment Houses—Six-Story Buildings Where Light, Privacy, Safety, and Comfort May Be Had.

The first step was taken, by the Improved Housing Council in its efforts to provide suitable dwellings for the wage earners of New-York, when the circulars containing the conditions for the competition for plans for model apartment houses were sent out yesterday by W. H. Tolman, Secretary to the council, to many of the leading architects of the city. The committee of the council which has charge of the subject of model tenement houses says in the circular that it is not in a position to offer prizes to competitors, but the architect whose plans may be accepted will probably be named as architect to the committee.

Architects are invited to submit plans for a group of tenements designed for an entire city block. The plot is supposed to measure 200 by 400 feet, or the equivalent of thirty-two city lots. It is bounded by streets on the long sides and by avenues on the short sides. The object of the competition is to obtain a satisfactory type of plan adapted to the conditions which prevail in New-York. To be successful, such a plan should be at least as economical as the plans in common use, but without their objectionable features. Perhaps the best and most popular of these plans are those based upon the prize plan of 1879. There are many defects in this plan, however, and they are fully pointed out in the circular, so that all architects desiring to enter the competition may be fully warned as to what to avoid. Among these defects are lack of light and air, great danger from fire, lack of privacy for families, improper arrangements of the bedrooms, improper construction of light wells, &c. The committee believes, however, that all these difficulties and objections can be obviated by a more scientific arrangement, and has formulated the following as the minimum requirements, and no plans will be seriously considered which do not closely approximate the following conditions:

1. The plans must comply with all the requirements of the New-York building law.
2. Except in the case of those portions of the building occupying the corner lots not more than 70 per cent. of the total area of the land is to be occupied, the rest being left vacant for light and air. This does not apply to the ground floor or to the basement.
3. The space occupied on floors above the ground floor by walls, partitions, corridors, staircases, and other parts used in common, must not exceed 15 per cent. of the total area of the land.
4. The clear rentable space in apartments free of walls, partitions, corridors, stairs, and other parts used in common must on every floor above the ground floor be equal to at least 55 per cent. of the total area of the land. In those portions of the buildings occupying the corner lots it is expected a greater percentage of rentable space may be obtained.
5. No courts inclosed on all sides shall contain less than 900 square feet, and should be as nearly square as possible; and no court inclosed on three sides shall be less than one-quarter as wide as it is deep from the open end.
6. No wells or light shafts shall be used.
7. All rooms must be lighted by windows opening directly upon the outer air.
8. All apartments must have cross ventilation.
9. All staircases and corridors must be well lighted at every floor by windows opening directly upon the outer air.
10. The building must be divided into compartments by unpierced fire walls extending from top to bottom, and there shall be an average of at least one such compartment for each city lot occupied, but such compartment need not conform to the size and shape of the 25 by 100' lot.
11. Each compartment must have its own independent fire-proof staircase inclosed by brick walls with a separate entrance from the street.
12. Each compartment must have a handlift from the basement, so placed as to be accessible to all the families of the compartment.
13. Each suite must have a separate water closet opening directly upon the outer air.
14. It must be possible to enter directly into the living room of each suite from the public corridor or staircase hall without passing through any other room.
15. It must be possible to reach every bedroom of a suite without passing through any other bedroom or the public corridor.
16. Every living room must contain not less than 144 square feet of floor space, and every bedroom must contain at least 70 square feet of floor space.
17. It is desirable that as many apartments as possible shall have at least one window opening toward the street, so that they may be classed as front apartments.
18. Buildings facing the avenues should be so contrived that they may be entered from the streets, in order that none of the frontage suitable for stores need be lost.

The buildings are to be six stories high. The ground floors on the avenues are to be arranged for stores, which shall have ceilings 11 feet high in the clear. Ceilings of apartments are to be 8 feet 6 inches high in the clear. Each suite shall have a sink and a place for a range. The apartments are to be in suites of two, three, and four rooms, and the following ratio is suggested: 30 per cent. each of two and four room apartments, and 40 per cent. of three-room apartments.

Plans must be submitted on or before May 11, at such place as the committee may hereafter direct. While the requirements of the circular as quoted above should be rigidly adhered to by competing architects, the announcement is made that the committee will gladly consider any other features or recommendations embodied in any submitted plans, provided such plans contain also these essential requirements.