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*A REVIEW OF CITY PLANNING IN THE
UNITED STATES, 1920-1921*

It is gratifying to the writer, as to all those actively interested in city planning, that there is far too much news of progress to be reported even briefly in the space of this article. We are glad to be reminded that it is only a dozen years since the first national city planning conference was held in Washington, and only a score of years since the Park Commission's revival of the plan of Washington, when the term "city planning" was little known and less understood. Last November the *American Review of Reviews* stated, in a digest called "Statistics of City Planning," that no less than thirty-eight articles on the subject had appeared in 1920 in leading periodicals. This count included those on zoning, which has shown itself in 1921, more strongly than ever, an entering wedge for city planning in the public consciousness.

Widespread Public Interest

No more tangible proof of public interest can be adduced than the state laws relating to city planning and zoning secured within the last year or so in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, Tennessee, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, following the score of states already having acts governing some phase of city planning on their statute books. State-wide movements in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, Iowa, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts have given backing to secure the needed legislation or to carry out laws already secured. The Massachusetts Legislature will shortly be asked for a field secretary for the Division of Housing and Town Planning in the State Department of Public Welfare. The Ohio State Conference on City Planning has an aggressive legislative programme adopted last October, to secure a comprehensive series of laws for Ohio.

Not only have the National Conference on City Planning, the National Municipal League, the American Civic Association, and the technical organisations engaged in planning work been promoting the cause of city

planning, but the subject also held an important place in the annual programmes of the City Managers' Association and the National Association of Real Estate Boards, two bodies whose members have tremendous opportunities for civic betterment. The Realtors of California have been leading an educational campaign.

To single out a few "high-spots" in individual municipalities: Philadelphia carried its \$33,000,000 loan ordinance for public improvements four to one, and can point with pride to a remarkable precedent in the Fairmount Parkway; Cleveland approved by an overwhelming vote the tax levy for the acquisition and improvement of park lands by the Cleveland Metropolitan Park Board, and has added another unit to its civic centre; and Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit, each with an exceptional number of projects, are marching steadily on their well-blazed ways. Portland, Ore., announces a successful gift campaign, initiated by the Mayor's proclamation, which secured 150 dedications for streets and parkways from public-spirited citizens in accordance with the City Plan Commission's major street plan. Los Angeles reports that city planning has been put into all the high schools, the University of California, and the University of Southern California. Universities in several other states are offering extension lectures on town planning topics.

Publicity Methods

A considerable number of cities have recently introduced or are about to begin the study of city planning in the public schools, among them Johnstown, Akron, Cleveland, Detroit, Decatur, and Omaha.

Two cities, besides the ever-active pioneer Chicago, are conducting educational campaigns among their adult citizens, which deserve special mention: Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Recognising that attention is necessary to understanding, understanding to interest, and interest to support, these cities have distributed leaflets and fliers well-calculated to attract, hold, and enlist their voters. Clever cartoon, succinct statement, and reasoned argument, "sell" the specific issues raised. The campaigns in these cities should be studied by all American municipalities, and also the paper by Dr. John Nolen before the National Conference on City Planning at Pittsburgh last May, entitled "Getting Action."

Two committees of the Conference which reported at the same time had reference to publicity methods: one on moving pictures, and the other on the aeroplane in city planning work. While this latter dealt especially with the use of aeroplane photography for technical studies, it emphasised the "selling" power of aeroplane views to a public whose comprehension of maps and reports is apt to be meagre.

Rural Development and the Garden City Idea

An opportunity for a great national demonstration of agricultural community development on sound lines is set forth in Mr. Thomas Adams' report on the proposed farm city near Wilmington, N.C. Under the leadership of Mr. Hugh MacRea, agricultural colonies have already been successfully started in this region, which is one especially adapted to a successful colonisation scheme. The first convention of the Tri-State Development Congress (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) included rural community planning in its programme. Señor C. Montoliu has prepared a unique report for the single tax colony at Fairhope, Ala.

A plan of great interest, adapting the garden city idea to an existing American town, is Mr. John Irwin Bright's for Coconut Grove, Fla. This proposes a "productive park strip" owned by the municipality surrounding the heart of the town. The plan, discussed by Mr. Thomas Adams, seems less feasible under present American conditions, than Mr. Adams' new proposal to substitute "agricultural wedges" for "zones." This last idea, following a discussion at the Baltimore meeting of the American City Planning Institute last winter in which many participated, and at which the impracticability of control of an agricultural belt by zoning under the police power was admitted, would appear to show that one of the most noted advocates of the garden city is convinced that adherence to its spirit rather than its letter will be the way out.

Regional Projects

Several noteworthy examples of regional planning are in progress. Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Comey have made a survey of the Main Line District of the Philadelphia region and prepared a comprehensive plan, including a metropolitan park system, in a report to the Main Line Citizens' Association.

The City of New York, in co-operation with surrounding municipal and county authorities, is planning a highway system for the whole metropolitan area, with the special advice of Mr. Nelson P. Lewis, retired a year ago from his long service as Chief Engineer of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. Most important of all to our national economy is the port treaty recently signed between the states of New York and New Jersey, and approved by the Federal Government, to encompass the comprehensive development of one of the great port areas of the world. The report relating to its physical planning will be referred to later.

The relation of a city to its region is becoming more definitely understood and valued in the general city plans now being prepared.

Comprehensive Plan Reports

General plan reports have been issued for six cities : Hamilton, O. ; Decatur and Joliet, Ill. ; Newton and Gardner, Mass. ; Bristol, Conn. ; and Jersey City. Most of these reports show keen appreciation on the part of city planners of the importance of " selling " the plan through an attractive form of publication. The folio size and handsome illustrations of the Newton plan distinguish it. The Jersey City report is also fully illustrated. The Joliet report contains some fine renderings in colour. Of special interest in the Hamilton plan is the section " Legal powers affecting the city plan of Hamilton," by Alfred Bettman, Esq., of Cincinnati.

The Wheeling, W.Va., Improvement Association has issued some abstracts of reports on several phases of a city plan for Greater Wheeling. Kansas City, Kan., has had valuable advice from Mr. Thomas Adams as to its future development. The combined annual reports for 1919 and 1920 of the City Parks Association of Philadelphia is a live publication, stimulating to read, and an object lesson of what energetic foresight can accomplish.

The single volume containing the annual reports for 1915-1920 of the Providence, R.I., City Plan Commission shows zoning undertaken and realisation by a wide-awake commission of the need for a comprehensive plan. The broad scheme in preparation for St. Paul is described in the *Engineering News-Record* for Nov. 3, 1921. Many other cities have plans in preparation. One regarded with especial interest is Springfield, Mass. (Technical Advisory Corporation and Olmsted Brothers) because of the possibility of holding there the next National Conference on City Planning.

The City Club of Portland, Oregon, has issued through its City Planning Bureau (E. T. Mische, Chairman) a *City Plan of the West Side Flat* for the information and consideration of the Club.

Major Street Plans

Portland's City Planning Commission issued in January, 1921, its *Major Traffic Street Plan, Boulevard, and Park System*, Charles H. Cheney, consultant, showing careful original study and also reference to previous city planning work in Portland. The *Cleveland Thoroughfare Plan* came out in the spring of 1921, excellent as publicity material as well as thoroughly studied. Its arcade proposals are very interesting.

The method of preparing the *Major Street Plan of Pittsburgh* is worthy of note. A sub-committee of the Citizens' Committee, with Messrs. F. S. Bigger and Harland Bartholomew as experts, thrashed it out patiently by a long succession of meetings so that it represents to an

extraordinary degree a consensus of opinion. The report is very clearly and attractively presented, matching the playground report, the previous unit in the Pittsburgh Plan.

Control of Street Systems

The enforcement of a major street plan, with the regulation of street location in residential sub-divisions, has continued a subject of live interest. The January, 1921, meeting of the American City Planning Institute was largely devoted to it, and the subject was again debated at Pittsburgh in May. Mr. Frank B. Williams' article, "Enforcing the City Plan," in the *Review* for July, 1921, is an important contribution. The City of New Bedford, Mass., has an unusual and very practical method of dealing with plats, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen constituting a Board of Survey. Rochester, N. Y., has issued revised platting regulations which should be instructive to other cities.

Special Studies

A report of considerable interest comes from the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association relating to street illumination. It contains a systematic analysis of street-lighting problems in Minneapolis, together with a statement of principles and their application, and good illustrations.

A special park system report for a small Iowan city is that for Ottumwa, prepared under the direction of the Park Board, 1920, by Mr. L. W. Ramsey, and published by the Board.

A study of the *Newtown Creek Industrial District of New York City* put forth by the Merchants' Association Industrial Bureau shows the marked port terminal advantages of a still undeveloped district close to Manhattan. This report treats a small part of a very great problem.

Port Terminal Development

Undoubtedly the most important city planning document of the year is the *Joint Report* of the New York, New Jersey Port and Harbour Development Commission. After an exhaustive study, the Commission, created in 1917 of eminent engineers, has presented a comprehensive plan and recommendations for the development of the whole waterfront area of Metropolitan New York. The Commission sees the port problem primarily as a railroad problem. It recommends an automatic-electric system of freight-handling, belt lines for the entire port, consolidation of railroad marine operations, establishment of food-receiving stations, and the reconstruction and better use of the waterfront, including zoning of steamship service by trade routes. The Commission believes that the

carrying out of its comprehensive plans would go far towards reducing the high cost of living, not only locally, but in all parts of the country.

Subsequent to the inter-state commission's report, there has been issued an independent report, with different plans, by New York City special committee, consisting of the Chief Engineer of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, the Commissioner of Docks, the Commissioner of Plant and Structures, and the Engineer of the Borough of Richmond. The difficulty of uniting conflicting views in so enormous a problem would seem to be very great.

An inland waterway report of importance in the development of the lake port of Chicago was made in 1920 by Mr. Arend Van Vlissingen to the City of Chicago Committee on Harbours, Wharves, and Bridges. It advises favourably as to the feasibility of developing Calumet Harbour as a public terminal on the Lakes to Gulf waterway system.

Railroads

Two cities making progress in solving the railroad problem are Dallas and Los Angeles. Dallas has already accomplished much in track removal from its streets and track elevation to avoid grade crossings, according to the plans made by Mr. George E. Kessler and the late Mr. John F. Wallace, and promoted by the Metropolitan Development Association. The Railroad Commission of California ordered on April 26, 1921, the Plaza Union Terminal Station for Los Angeles to be proceeded with. The report of the Chief Engineer of this State Commission, published in 1920, is the basis of procedure. The report dealt exhaustively with grade crossing elimination, union passenger terminals, industrial trackage, freight facilities, electric inter-urban, and street railways, automobile traffic, city streets, viaducts and bridges, and the relation of the transportation problem to the general subject of city planning. Reference is made to the previous improvement reports for Los Angeles by Mr. C. M. Robinson and Mr. Bion J. Arnold. It should be noted that the California Railroad Commission is an important city planning agency, and one with exceptional powers to produce results.

Rapid Transit

The St. Louis City Plan Commission has published another of its series of special studies, dealing with *The St. Louis Transit System, present and future*. The situation is carefully analysed by Mr. Bartholomew, the Commission's city plan engineer, and proposals made, with good illustrative matter.

The Transit Commission of New York City, appointed under the acts of 1921 to relieve the intolerable situation in New York, has issued a

statement and outline of plan of readjustment for the New York City street railroads, promising to publish shortly a general plan for building the new lines immediately required.

A recent report, prepared co-operatively by the City Engineer, Superintendent of Public Utilities, and General Superintendent of Railways of Seattle, proposed a rapid transit down-town subway loop for Seattle to provide for future growth. A rapid transit belt subway is under construction at Cincinnati at remarkably low cost owing to the exceptional topographic opportunities.

Housing

The United States Senate Committee on Reconstruction and Production included in its report a recommendation for the establishment in the Department of Commerce of a division "for the gathering and dissemination of information as to the best construction practices and methods, technical and cost data, and matters relating to city planning, etc., in order to encourage standardisation and improved building practices throughout the country." A Division of Building and Housing (under the Bureau of Standards) has been established with Mr. John M. Gries as chief, and Advisory Committees on Building Codes, Plumbing (Sub-Committee), and Zoning have been appointed by Secretary Hoover. The Division is succeeding in securing co-operation from the producing industries which looks towards a decided improvement in the housing situation.

Mr. Veiller's revised *Model Housing Law* of 1920, with its many material changes, and Mr. Leifur Magnusson's *Housing by Employers in the United States*, long delayed in appearance as a Bulletin of the U. S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, are both important to city planners.

Zoning

Zoning has taken the country by storm. Some of it is being done in advance of even preliminary comprehensive planning. It is expected that Secretary Hoover's Advisory Committee on Zoning, consisting of Messrs. N. P. Lewis, F. L. Olmsted, E. M. Bassett, Lawrence Veiller, L. A. Moses, Morris Knowles, John Ihlder, and J. Horace McFarland,—chosen from technical and civic organisations and the United States Chamber of Commerce,—will promote a sound knowledge of what zoning is and what steps should be taken to secure its advantages. It might be hoped also that the Committee may assist in harmonising the widely divergent methods by which the benefits of zoning are now sought.

A comparison of recent compiled lists of zoned cities shows that fifty have passed zoning ordinances (comprehensive or partial) and that about twenty states have enabling acts. Probably a hundred cities have zoning

plans started, under way, or almost completed. The very valuable pamphlet by Mr. Bassett, *The Board of Appeals in Zoning*, gives a list with dates of the state and city laws, as an appendix to its lucid statement of the workings of this important piece of mechanism in the administration of a zoning ordinance. This pamphlet brings up to date Mr. Bassett's supplement to the *National Municipal Review* for May, 1920. The October, 1921, Supplement to the *Review* gives compiled information on *The Law of Zoning* by Mr. Herbert S. Swan.

Any detailed analysis of zoning progress for 1920-21 would be impossible in the scope of this present article. A few of the printed reports which may be secured and examined may be mentioned,—for Pittsburgh and Evanston (Bartholomew), Cleveland and Dallas (Whitten), East and West Orange, N.J. (Technical Advisory Corporation, Ford), Cliffside Park, N.J. (Swan), and San Francisco (City Planning Commission). The second annual report of the Buffalo City Planning Committee of the Council (Harry J. March, Engineer) deals largely with zoning. The Omaha ordinance (Bartholomew) has not been published.

Zoning has been in operation in New York for five years. A striking effect of the zoning regulations is the far greater average of picturesqueness in the high buildings erected since 1916. More imagination must go into their design, and thus to the city, through the exercise of the police power for welfare and safety, has come a new source of beauty.

Civic Art

A publication that brings forcibly to mind the advance in civic art in the last generation is the new Catalogue of Works of Art belonging to the City of New York, published by the Art Commission and covering the works acquired since its appointment in 1908. The well-chosen illustrations stand proof of the great service which art commissions may render to our cities and the pleasure which well-designed outdoor statuary and monuments may bring.

That we should not be afraid to work consciously for organic beauty in city planning was the plea of Mr. George B. Ford at the Pittsburgh City Planning Conference. In a reaction from the aesthetic emphasis due to the real source of our American city planning movement,—the World's Fair at Chicago,—we seem to have swung too far. We have now a chance to refresh ourselves at the fountain source. In Charles Moore's *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities*, just published we have revived the work of American artists in producing a beautiful "white city" out of ugliness and seeming impossibility, and in adapting to the twentieth century the nobly conceived but neglected plan of our Capital city. The book is a great contribution to the cause of all civic art.

THEODORA KIMBALL.

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