

# PLAN OF CHICAGO

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*Se reproducen diversos fragmentos de la memoria del plan, que van de apuntes de una exposición de motivos tanto ideológicos como funcionales, al enunciado de algunas herramientas con capacidad estructurante.*

*Evidentemente los condicionantes demográficos y económicos hoy son otros, pero no determinadas preguntas sobre las que reflexionar para el planeamiento en general (en cuanto a su esencia o finalidad), y para la 'ocupación del territorio' en particular (ellos se atreven a decir que se ha producido un salto de enfoque entre el siglo XIX y el XX, de la expansión a la conservación como clave, hoy creo que no lo tendríamos tan claro, ni para el hoy ni para el ayer).*

*Están impregnados del City Beautiful Movement encuadrado en la primera década del siglo XX americano, que el profesor Ribas y Piera en su artículo de "Paisaje y Ciudad" anticipa ya en el 'florecer' de la Ciudad Ideal renacentista, pero que también sería rastreable hoy en distintos Planes. Creen en la ciudad como centro de atracción y de influencia, y en la validez del plan tanto para entenderla como una unidad, gestionable, como para hacerla atractiva, que es ¿bella, de calidad, competitiva?.*

*¿Hay contradicciones entre el planteamiento de una estructura de espacios libres – parques inmersa en la ciudad y el dar posibilidad al intercambio entre el consumo de ésta y el del campo?*

## Origin of the plan of Chicago

The tendency of mankind to congregate in cities is a marked characteristic of modern times. This movement is confined to no one country, but is world-wide. Each year Rome, and the cities of the Orient, as well as Berlin, New York, and Chicago, are adding to their population at an unprecedented rate. Coincident with this urban development there has been a widespread increase in wealth and also an enlarged participation on the part of the people in the work of government's a natural result of these causes has come the desire to better the conditions of living. Men are becoming convinced that the formless growth of the city is neither economical nor satisfactory; and that overcrowding and congestion

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of traffic paralyze the vital functions of the city. The complicated problems which the great city develops are now seen not to be beyond the control of aroused public sentiment; and practical men of affairs are turning their attention to working out the means whereby the city may be made an efficient instrument for providing all its people with the best possible conditions of living.

Chicago, in common with other great cities, realizes that the time has come to bring order out of the chaos incident to rapid growth, and especially to the influx of people of many nationalities without common traditions or habits of life. Among the various instrumentalities designed to accomplish this result, a plan for a well-ordered and convenient city is seen to be indispensable; and to the task of producing such a plan the Commercial Club has devoted its energies for the past three years.

It is not to be expected that any plan devised while as yet few civic problems have received a final solution will be perfect in all its details. It is claimed for the plan herein presented, that it is the result of extended and careful study of the needs of Chicago, made by disinterested men of wide experience, amid the very conditions which it is sought to remedy; and that during the years devoted to its preparation the plan has had the benefit of varied and competent criticism. The real test of this plan will be found in its application; for, such is the determination of the people to secure more perfect conditions, it is certain that if the plan is really good it will commend itself to the progressive spirit of the times, and sooner or later it will be carried out. (...)

To many who have given little consideration to the subject, a plan seems to call for large expenditures and a consequent increase in taxation. The reverse is the case. It is certain that civic improvement will go on at an accelerated rate; and if those improvements shall be marshaled according to a well-ordered plan great saving must result. Good order and convenience are not expensive; but haphazard and ill-considered projects invariably result in extravagance and wastefulness. A plan insures that whenever any public or semi-public work shall be undertaken, it will fall into its proper and predetermined place in the general scheme, and thus contribute to the unity and dignity of the city.

The plan frankly takes into consideration the fact that the American city, and Chicago pre-eminently, is a center of industry and traffic. Therefore attention is given to the betterment of commercial facilities; to methods of transportation for persons and for goods; to removing the obstacles which prevent or obstruct circulation; and to the increase of convenience. It is realized, also, that good workmanship requires a large degree of comfort on the part of the workers in their homes and their surroundings, and ample opportunity for that rest and recreation without which all work becomes drudgery. Then, too, the city has a dignity to be maintained; and good order is essential to material advancement. Consequently, the plan provides for impressive groupings of public buildings, and reciprocal relations among such groups. Moreover, consideration is given to the fact that in all probability Chicago, within the lifetime of persons now living, will become a greater city than any existing at the present time; and that therefore the most comprehensive plans of to-day will need to be supplemented in a not remote future. Opportunity for such expansion is provided for.

The origin of the plan of Chicago can be traced directly to the World's Columbian Exposition. The World's Fair of 1893 was the beginning, in our day and in this country, of the orderly arrangement of extensive public grounds and buildings. (...)

In creating the ideal arrangement, every one who lives here is better accommodated in his business and his social activities. In bringing about better freight and passenger facilities, every merchant and manufacturer is helped. In establishing a complete park and parkway system, the life of the wage-earner and of his family is made healthier and pleasanter; while the greater attractiveness thus produced keeps at home the people of means and taste, and acts as a magnet to draw those who seek to live amid pleasing surroundings. The very beauty that attracts him who has money makes pleasant the life of those among whom he lives, while anchoring him and his wealth to the city.

The prosperity aimed at is for all Chicago. (...)

### **Chicago, the metropolis of the Middle West**

The growth of the city has been so rapid that it has been impossible to plan for the economical disposition of the great influx of people, surging like a human tide to spread itself wherever opportunity for profitable labor offered place. Thoughtful people are appalled at the results of progress; at the waste in time, strength, and money which congestion in city streets begets; at the toll of lives taken by disease when sanitary precautions are neglected; and at the frequent outbreaks against law and order which result from narrow and pleasureless lives. So that while the keynote of the nineteenth century was expansion, we of the twentieth century find that our dominant idea is conservation.

The people of Chicago have ceased to be impressed by rapid growth or the great size of the city. What they insist asking now is. How are we living? Are we in reality prosperous? Is the city a convenient place for business? Is it a good labor market in the sense that labor is sufficiently comfortable to be efficient and content? Will the coming generation be able to stand the nervous strain of city life? When a competence has been accumulated, must we go elsewhere to enjoy the fruits of independence? If the city does not become better as it becomes bigger, shall not the defect be remedied? These are questions that will not be brushed aside. They are the most pressing questions of our day, and everywhere men are anxiously seeking the answers. (...)

City life has attractions that make a strong appeal to human nature. Opportunities for large success, for wealth and power and social consideration, for amusement and instruction, for the increase of knowledge and the cultivation of taste, are greater for the average person in the city than in the country. The city, therefore, is constantly drawing from the country the young men and women of ambition and self-reliance, who are lured thither by the great prizes which in a democracy are open to the competition of all.

When Chicago is adverted to as the metropolis of the Middle West, the meaning is that throughout this area Chicago newspapers circulate, and Chicago banks hold the banking reserves; (331 that in Chicago are the chief offices of the

large industrial enterprises, and the market for their products. New ideas in government, in civic improvement, in the creation and maintenance of parks, and pleasure grounds are apt to appear first in the metropolis, spreading thence to the surrounding country. On high-days and holidays the great city allures the people from the neighboring parts, and sends its own people on the water or into the country for rest and refreshment, so that there is a constant interchange of comers and goers. In the art schools of Chicago more than four thousand students are gathered; the theaters draw audiences from long distances, and in music Chicago is attaining a worthy position. In Chicago great political conventions are held, party policies are determined, and from the party headquarters here national campaigns are conducted.

It is not in the spirit of boasting that these facts are stated, but rather to show the responsibility which the very pre-eminence of the city imposes, and the necessity for establishing and maintaining those standards of commercial integrity, of taste, and of knowledge which are the prerequisites of lasting success, and the only real satisfaction of the human mind. The constant struggle of civilization is to know and to attain the highest good; and the city which brings about the best conditions of life becomes the most prosperous.

While the influence of Chicago extends throughout a domain larger than any European country except Russia, there exist between this city and outlying towns within a certain radius vital and almost organic relations. The steam and the trolley railways and the automobile have opened to the city workers all varieties of life, and have made possible to a large proportion of the people a habitation amid what might be healthful and attractive surroundings. Unfortunately, however, conditions near any rapidly growing city are apt to be both squalid and ugly.

Occasionally a suburb grows up at some slightly point on the Lake shore, or gathers about some educational institution; or a group of people engaged in a common enterprise select a picturesque spot on river banks and there build homes which, by their very relations one to another, indicate neighborliness. In each of these instances a community of feeling pervades the place and finds expression in well-shaded streets, broad lawns, and homelike architecture. Too often, however, the suburb is laid out by the speculative real estate agent who exerts himself to make every dollar invested turn into as many dollars as possible. Human ingenuity contrives to crowd the maximum number of building lots into the minimum space; if native trees exist on the land they are ruthlessly sacrificed. Then the speculative builder takes matters in hand and in a few months the narrow, grassless streets are lined with rows of cheaply constructed dwellings, and with ugly apartment houses occupying the more desirable sites. In ten years or less the dwellings are dropping to pieces; and the apartment houses, having lost their newness, become rookeries.

This manner of things is as true of London or of Rome as of Chicago; it is the rule wherever population increases rapidly, because human nature is alike the world over. England, however, is remedying this evil by means of town-planning laws executed by a central board; and is endeavoring to regulate the width and direction of streets, and to provide for sufficient open spaces for the health and convenience of the people. After the English manner, a commission

should be appointed to lay out all that territory adjacent to the city of Chicago which is likely to become incorporated in the city at least during the next decade. (...)

While good highways are of great value to the terminal cities, they are of even greater value to the outlying towns, and of greatest value to the farming communities through which they pass. Good roads add an element of better living to an agricultural community; they afford ready communication with the city and reduce materially the cost of handling farm products of all kinds; and also they promote communication between farms. These state highways should invariably include a work-road for heavy loads, and also a pleasure drive. The two should be separated by a grassway and there should be grass plots at the sides, and not less than three rows of trees should be planted. The country schools should be on these highways. (...)

A satisfactory method of running highways is to parallel the railroads. The work-road should be next to the right-of-way; then should come the carriage driveway. Where electric railways exist, or are projected on thoroughfares, the most agreeable treatment is found in setting apart for the tracks a space which may be grassed over and well shaded. Besides adding to the comfort of the passengers, the uninterrupted use of the tracks permits high speed and thereby saves time. The improvement of the three roadways as a unit, with the appropriate planting, would give a charm to suburban travel where now there is none, while at the same time expenses of maintenance would be lessened. As a rule, the creation of highways along railroads involves only the bare cost of inexpensive land and the building of the road. The railroads are in themselves great diagonals; and by following them the shortest lines between important points are secured. Then too, the right-of-way traversed by the tracks should be improved. The drainage should be perfect, so that pools of stagnant water shall not be an offense to the eye and a menace to health. The unsightly billboard should be replaced by shrubbery or by a wall; and the entire space should be free from the litter of papers or the accumulations of dirt and ashes.

The suburban resident is vitally interested in the means of communication between his home and his place of business. If his morning and his evening ride are made on the steam railway, he is interested not only in passing through pleasant scenes on his way to and from Chicago, but he is concerned also in having the railway station in his suburban town conveniently located, constructed simply but artistically, and placed amid surroundings which in themselves are harmonious and appropriate. A well-kept lawn, with shrubbery shutting out the necessarily unpleasant feature of a steam railway station; a sheltered platform well lighted at night, and a commodious station, architecturally in good taste—these accessories go a long way towards mitigating the nerve strain which every business man feels and from which too many suffer.

The electric railroads, with their frequent cars passing one's very door, have done a vast deal to bind the outlying towns firmly to the central city. More than this, they have promoted neighborliness among people of adjoining towns, and have broken up the isolation of farm life. These roads now strive to obtain private rights-of-way, excepting where for the convenience of passengers they pass through city streets; and the same observations as to good order along the

routes and at the terminals that appertain to steam roads apply equally to trolley lines.

The rapidly increasing use of the automobile promises to carry on the good work begun by the bicycle in the days of its popularity in promoting good roads and reviving the roadside inn as a place of rest and refreshment. With the perfection of this machine, and the extension of its use, out-of-door life is promoted, and the pleasures of suburban life are brought within the reach of multitudes of people who formerly were condemned to pass their entire time in the city. (...)

### **The Chicago Park System**

Chicago, on becoming a city, chose for its motto *Urbs in horto*- a city set in a garden. Such indeed it then was, with the opalescent waters of the Lake at its front, and on its three sides the boundless prairie carpeted with waving grass bedecked with brilliant wild flowers. The quick advance of commerce and manufactures the rapid building of railroads and factories, and the hastily constructed homes of operatives crowded out nature's parterres of flowers. Still the motto lingered in the minds of men, and in 1839 the struggle began to secure for the fast-growing population park spaces which should at least recall the gardens that of necessity had been sacrificed. (...)

Next in the importance to the development of the Lake shore possibilities is the acquisition and improvement of forest spaces. Both the water front and the near-by woodlands should be brought within easy reach of all the people, and especially of the wage-earners. Natural scenery furnishes the contrasting element to the artificiality of the city. All of us should often run away from the works of men's hands and back into the wilds, where mind and body are restored to a normal condition, and we are enabled to take up the burden of life in our crowded streets and endless stretches of buildings with renewed vigor and hopefulness. Those who have the means and are so placed in their daily employment that they can do so constantly seek the refreshment of the country. Should not the public see to it that every one may enjoy this change of scene, this restorer of bodily and mental vigor, and will not citizenship be better thereby? He who habitually comes in close contact with nature develops saner methods of thought than can be the case when one is habitually shut up within the walls of a city. If a census of the purposes and acts of all of the people of Chicago as they affect the general good could be made for this year of grace 1909, and again in 1933 after the creation of extensive forests in the suburbs the percentage of improvement affecting the whole community would probably be quite surprising. The existing public parks go far in this direction, but not far enough. The spaces to be acquired should be wild forests, filled with such trees, vines, flowers and shrubs as will grow in this climate, and all should be developed in a natural condition. Country roads and a few paths should run through these forests, but they should not be cut into small divisions. There should be open glades here and there and other natural features, and the people should be allowed to use them freely. (...)