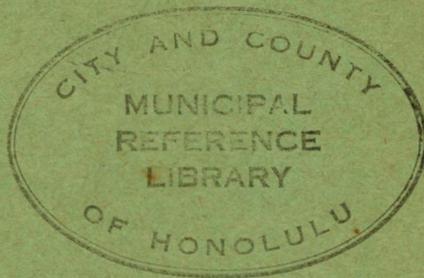


INCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CITY PLANNING

IN HONOLULU

1915 -- 1924



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Compiled by

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Secretary

Honolulu City Planning ^{Dept.} Commission

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INCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CITY PLANNING IN HONOLULU

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by

Mrs. Grace M. Bartlett, Secretary

CITY PLANNING MOVEMENT IN AMERICA:

The city planning movement in its broad sense is a very recent development in America, dating according to Nelson Lewis, from 1893 "When the 'White City' erected by the genius of the late Daniel H. Burnham and an able group of associates for the International Exposition held that year in Chicago made a profound impression upon all who saw it. The effective grouping of a series of monumental buildings of harmonious design was a new departure, and while the buildings themselves were temporary, the effect was permanent, and its influence is evident in most of the ambitious plans for civic centers".

Earlier definitions emphasized the architectural and artistic side, others have stressed the social aspects, and more lately emphasis has been laid upon the engineering phase of city planning. City planning was at first confused with the idea of the CITY BEAUTIFUL, and plans dealt mostly with parks, civic centers, and other specialized features, each one excellent in its way, but fulfilling only a narrow purpose, too often unrelated to the city as a whole.

Mr. Thomas Adams, an authority on city planning, has said- "Cities do not grow- all of them are planned. Most of them are planned in piecemeal fashion by surveyors acting for real estate owners, by railway engineers acting for their shareholders and traffic superintendents, and by individual architects or builders acting for their separate clients. The ultimate result is a haphazard collection of plans of land, means of transportation and buildings. But the city

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interests are not entirely ignored, because every city has more or less power to control these separate plans in the interests of safety, health and convenience. Such control, however, is within restricted limits and the evils that arise from dealing with related parts and problems of the city as though they were unrelated and disconnected, must remain in the absence of any planning of the city as a comprehensive whole".

Perhaps the definition of Nelson Lewis is as simple and suggestive as any-- "City Planning is simply the exercise of such foresight as will promote the orderly and sightly development of a city and its environs along rational lines with due regard for health, amenity and convenience and for its commercial and industrial advancement".

As in medicine, so in City Planning, there are two distinct methods in vogue- the remedial and the preventive. And although the one is far preferable, both are necessary in order to meet existing conditions. The first method would attempt to remedy some of the most outstanding faults of a city that, like Topsy, "just gro" "just grew". Following this plan the cost of reconstruction has run far into the millions in nearly every large city except Washington, which was so planned as to provide for future growth. New York's corrective work has cost in some instances as high as \$1,000,000 an acre, and the total figures of all the cities in the United States would be staggering. The second method would anticipate from the beginning the city's development, and provide for it legislatively, socially and financially. It would work out a major street plan, coincidentally with a zoning system,- which is public regulation governing the use of private real estate- and a park system for the entire city, with due consideration being given to transportation and housing problems and location of industries.

The following statistics quoted from "Survey of City and Regional Planning in the United States for 1923" by Theodora Kimball, Librarian of American City Planning Institute, Harvard University, are enlightening and indicative of the importance being given to City Planning in the United States. "Of the 68 cities in this country having a population of 100,000 or over, news has been received in 1923 from almost all. In every one of the forty largest cities there is or has been at work an official city planning or zoning commission, and construction of public improvements is now proceeding in the great majority according to well-considered plans. The United States Department of Commerce issued a statement that on September 1923 40% of the urban population of the United States lived in the 183 zoned cities, towns and villages,- more than 22,000,000 people. When there shall be added to these the residents of the municipalities now engaged in drafting zoning ordinances,

County of Honolulu, in its public and private buildings, streets, parks, grounds and vacant lots, and to provide plans consistent

over one fourth of the total population of the country will be enjoying the protection. The competitive instinct for securing municipal advantages seems to be thoroughly aroused in many quarters and before long it will be easier to make a list of the principal cities which are laggards in city planning than to review the accomplishments of those which are active.

"The most striking event of the year was the voting of bond issues in St. Louis totalling \$87,000,000 for public improvements, of which \$25,000,000 was for projects directly emanating from the city planning commission. Philadelphia has just voted a bond issue totalling over \$70,000,000 covering many features of Philadelphia's plan. Los Angeles deserves particular mention for the \$25,000,000 bond issue recently voted covering several important features of its planning program. Boston reports the largest annual official appropriation, \$32,000 for city planning studies, in proportion to its population of any metropolitan city, being second only to Chicago, \$40,000 in actual amount".

In this report Miss Kimball makes mention of the work of the Honolulu Planning Commission, commending the work accomplished especially in street planning of the undeveloped surrounding areas, referring to the Waikiki Reclamation District.

CITY PLANNING MOVEMENT IN HONOLULU

With this information as a background, how is Honolulu measuring up? City Planning here dates back to 1906 when Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson, a well known Civic Adviser of Rochester, and New York, was brought here through the efforts of the Civic Federation of Honolulu, the Board of Supervisors making the necessary appropriation to cover expenses. A report was made by him under the title "The Beautifying of Honolulu", and published in pamphlet form. This report was devoted chiefly to the artistic side of city planning.

It was not until nearly ten years later, that a City Planning Commission took definite form through the passage of Ordinance No. 90, introduced by Supervisor Charles N. Arnold, and signed by Mayor John C. Lane, on July 17, 1915.

This ordinance provided for seven members, to serve without pay, five of whom were to be appointive, and two, the mayor and city engineer, ex-officio. The purpose of establishing the Commission according to the ordinance is "to provide for and regulate the future growth, development and beautification of the City and County of Honolulu, in its public and private buildings, streets, parks, grounds and vacant lots, and to provide plans consistent

with the future growth and development of the City and County, for securing to the City and County of Honolulu and its inhabitants, sanitation, service of all public utilities, and harbors, shipping and transportation facilities. All powers exercised by this Commission shall be used to further these purposes and purposes incidental thereto".

The first meeting of the Commission under this ordinance was held on October 18, 1915. The appointive members were Mrs. J. M. Dowsett, Chairman; Mrs. F. L. Lowrey; W. F. Dillingham; A. F. Wall; and J. K. Kalaniana'ole. Ex-officio members were L. M. Whitehouse, City Engineer, and John C. Lane, Mayor.

During the following two years, attention centered on minor improvements and the beautification of the city, no funds being available for any constructive city plan work.

From August 21, 1917 until August 25, 1919, the records indicate that no meetings were held, due to lack of funds to secure the services of an engineer and a paid secretary to care for the minutes and correspondence, etc.

In August of 1919, the Commission was reorganized but still handicapped by the same needs.

Once again, in August 1920, the Commission was reorganized, with the following personnel, appointed by Mayor John H. Wilson:- J. D. McInerney, (Chairman; (President; P. E. Spalding; G. P. Denison; A. R. Keller; and Mrs. A. G. M. Robertson; and ex-officio members were City Engineer, Frederick Ohrt, and Mayor John H. Wilson.

At this time an appropriation of \$3,000 per year was secured to cover the expenses of a secretary and other incidental expenses. The first appointee for secretary was Mrs. M. D. Henderson, followed by Miss Margaret Donoghue, Mrs. Desmond Ohrt, all short terms, and the present incumbent, Mrs. Grace M. Bartlett.

One change in personnel of the Commission proper was made during this period, when Mr. H. R. Macfarlane was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mrs. Robertson.

With the predominance of engineers on the reorganized commission, improvement projects of a larger and more constructive nature have been undertaken, the beautification of the city being rightfully left more fully in the hands of the Outdoor Circle. It is only logical that the establishing of street layouts and grades should precede the planting of shade trees, etc., if that work is to be permanent and the work of today is not to be undone tomorrow.

In 1909 Los Angeles began regulating first one feature and then another until by 1915 these separate ordinances had come to cover the entire city. The first city in the United States, however, to adopt a systematic and complete plan of zoning covering practically the entire city was New York in 1916. Frank Williams, an authority on the law of zoning, says- "The zoning of New York is one of the great events in the history of city planning in this country, for to it in large measure is due the recent increase in zoning regulation in the United States and a stimulation of interest in it so considerable as to make it reasonably certain that zoning here will become general."

A comprehensive street plan for Honolulu is the next goal toward which the Commission is directing its energies. This plan will be a skeleton plan based on a survey, with no time limit set for its realization. It may be twenty five or even fifty years before all plans will be executed, and even then, if the city is alive and growing, the plans will be expanding and changing in detail to keep pace with the demands of an expanding city. But by having a carefully worked out skeleton plan before them the city authorities, who may change from time to time, will always have a chart by which to be governed in continuing these improvements, and the final plan, no matter how much changed in detail, will always be in harmony with the original skeleton plan.

It is interesting to note that the city of Washington, D. C. which stands out as a beacon light in city planning and zoning, finds itself today handicapped by the fact that the territory covered by the original plan is nearly all laid out and there is no controlling plan for Washington beyond the old limits, and the outskirts of the city are building up without any plan control. Provision in original plan for expansion with official body to supervise same, would have prevented this situation. Authorization now must come from the U. S. Legislature involving delay and politics.

Looking toward a comprehensive street plan for Honolulu, the undeveloped area of the Waikiki Reclamation District received first attention, and following the approval of plans by the Waikiki Improvement Commission, same were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in December of 1922, and these plans are now being followed in laying the sewer system for the district.

This plan includes the development of Ala Moana as a boulevard with a 500 foot fill on the makai side of the present Ala Moana to be used for park purposes, and connecting the down town section with the Waikiki district by a scenic water front drive. Kapiolani Boulevard is planned to connect with King Street at South Street and to extend out through the Reclamation District and on to Kaimuki, offering a direct and scenic route to Kaimuki from town. Connecting with both Ala Moana

and Kapiolani at the canal will be developed two boulevards to run parallel with the canal on either side. Manoa Valley will also, according to this plan, be connected up directly with the beach district by a new street.

A street plan of Kapalama section has also been laid out and presented to the Board. Kapalama district, however, has presented more serious problems than the Waikiki district, where plans may be carried out without any great expense to the city, and also without any serious losses to the property owners, while Kapalama is an already established section where changes will be expensive to both city and property owners. Here many new streets will have to be cut through to relieve the congestion which is every day more threatening. In these two sections we have an example of the two kinds of city planning, - the Waikiki the preventive, and in Kapalama the remedial. Both are necessary, but of course the most effective and economical city planning is that done in anticipation of the building program, the preventive.

The street layouts as already prepared include many street widenings and extensions, some of which will be executed in the immediate future, while others will have to wait their turn in the program of road development of the city. In many instances it is impracticable to demand the immediate widening of an already built up business district, for the cost would be prohibitive, but through the establishment of set-back building lines, this widening can be accomplished gradually without undue burden of expense upon either the city or the property owners. Under this plan no changes are required until the present building is ready for reconstruction, when the new building automatically uses the new line. Thus the improvement and widening continues over a period of years, but is eventually accomplished with the least friction and expense. King Street widening is an example of this method. Set-back lines have already been established from the junction of North King Street and Beretania Avenue to Moanalua Kahauiki boundary at Fort Shafter, giving a new width of 86 feet to the road when the widening is completed, except near the railroad station where 100 feet is planned. Many new buildings are already constructed on the new line, and most of the old structures are so old and fragile that reconstruction will follow along fairly rapidly, and King Street widening will be an accomplished fact. Other widenings will follow as the program of work goes on.

Coincident with King Street widening, both School Street and West Queen Street are scheduled for immediate extension, thus giving to the city three thoroughfares to take care of traffic between the city and Schofield, in place of the one congested neck of traffic on King Street where all through traffic is concentrated. The street plans call for many other extensions which will be undertaken as the need arises and the finances of the city will permit.

work to be later incorporated into our proposed city plan, which the city may grow. Work on this project was delayed

The Commission is pledged to wider streets for Honolulu, not only in the business districts, where the congestion is perhaps the most keenly felt, but in the residential districts as well. Theoretically no doubt everyone believes in wide streets, and yet the natural tendency in subdividing large holdings into individual lots is for the owner or trustee to set aside as narrow a strip as is possible for road purposes, so as to conserve the maximum amount of land for house lots. He is interested, and naturally so, in the immediate returns which are proportionately greater with the larger lots. In years to come, however, that property which has the wider streets, and is able to take care of the growing traffic, will be the more attractive and valuable property, other things being equal. If all street widths were set by those personally interested in the property in question, without the urge of an outside authority, it would be very difficult to secure streets adequate in width to meet the traffic demands of even ten years. In other words, the commission is attempting to educate the public to think and plan for the Honolulu which is to be, realizing that what Honolulu is twenty-five years from now will depend upon what we make of it today, - ours will be blame or credit, ours the shame or pride.

It might be pertinent to remind the lay reader that what is called a sixty-foot road, for instance, is in fact a sixty-foot right-of-way, and includes the sidewalk area and any parking space in between. Only a portion of the sixty feet is actual traffic space. Usually but a portion of the right-of-way is developed in the beginning, but the wide right-of-way provision forestalls the costly acquisition of land in the future at a time when values have increased enormously, and also prevents delay in providing the wider street at the moment it may be necessary. The paving of a very wide street in the beginning would make most of our improvements prohibitive on account of the enormous expense involved. For instance, in the Manoa district, while the rights-of-way between property lines are very wide, the actual paved space at present is very narrow, and the sidewalk area is abnormally wide, which with set-back building restrictions give the appearance of a very wide street. At a later date the sidewalk area will become more normal with the increased width of the paved section.

CITY PLAN

Although we are progressing toward a City Plan, we are still far from our goal. Our street plans for Waikiki and Kapalama are good so far as they go, but they are little more than paper plans, subject to many changes after actual surveys of the land have been made. A City Plan is primarily a map, the basis of which is a survey. Through the efforts of the Honolulu Chapter of the American Association of Engineers an appropriation was secured from the Board of Supervisors beginning with January 1924, of \$2,000 a month to cover cost of survey required to fix street lines and grades under the supervision of the City Planning Commission for the City of Honolulu, the results of this work to be later incorporated into our proposed comprehensive City Plan, toward which the city may grow. Work on this survey was delayed

in the early part of the year pending the court decision on the legality of the appointment of our city engineer, but should be under way in the immediate future.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Honolulu is still a young city with untold possibilities along city planning lines. It is up to the Planning Commission to construct the framework or skeleton of the city that is to be, but the important part of filling in this skeleton is left to the people. There is no logical reason why Honolulu should fall down on this job. To be sure we have some very congested districts and some very narrow streets and crooked lanes to start with, but to offset these handicaps we have large undeveloped areas that if properly developed would of themselves go far toward making of Honolulu a city to be envied. Its topographical features and natural beauties are outstanding and with the foundation of a well balanced city plan Honolulu need be second to none. The city is already zoned, and the street layouts are already well under way, with the engineering survey for City Plan pending; there is the nucleus of a civic center, the beauty of which should be guarded to the limit; the parks and playgrounds of Honolulu, although far from sufficient for the Honolulu of the future, are being given a place in the City Plan, and a survey of future park sites is pending. Cooperation is the key-note of the success of City Plannin,g however, as well as in every other big undertaking, and in the final analysis it is up to the public to decide what kind of a city Honolulu is to be twenty-five years from now,- a congested seaport town with no distinctive features, and developed with the paramount idea of obtaining the largest immediate returns on the almight dollar, the future generation being left to take care of our failures; or a city carefully planned, developed, and beautified, with due consideration given to "Health, amenity, and and convenience to its commercial and industrial advancement"

Back of successful city planning in any community lies a highly developed civic consciousness seeking expression.

