

Jan 1930

Report of the
Activities of the City Planning Commission
for the Year 1929

By Grace M. Bartlett, Secretary

The personnel of the Planning Commission, appointed by Mayor John H. Wilson on his return to office in January, 1929, were as follows:-

J. D. McInerny, President
G. P. Denison
A. R. Keller
J. M. Young
R. H. Trent

M. Magoon
L. P. Thurston
Hugh Howell
G. R. Miller

Ex-Officio Mayor John H. Wilson
Chief Engineer, L. M. Whitehouse, Department of Public Works.

Executive officers without vote:- C. R. Welsh, Engineer
Grace M. Bartlett, Sec'y

During the year 1929 the City Planning Commission has held 31 regular meetings in the assembly hall of the Kapiolani Building.

One change was made in the above personnel in July of this year when Mr. G. P. Denison was appointed by Mayor Wilson to fill the vacancy on the Board of Supervisors caused by the promotion of L. M. Judd to the Governorship of the Territory, resulting in Mr. Denison's resignation from the Planning Commission. Mr. Denison has been an active member of the Planning Commission since August 10, 1920, and it was with regret that his resignation was accepted. Vacancy on Commission was filled by the appointment of Mr. M. B. Carson of the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Co.

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In addition to the usual routine duties incident to city planning, the major activities of the Commission for the past year have been grouped as follows:

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1. Ala Moana Park Development.
2. Bridle Paths in park areas of city.
3. Sidewalk Construction Program.
4. Street and House Numbering System Authorized by Ordinance and Maps showing detail system under Preparation.
5. Street Names Revision to Eliminate Duplicates.
6. Street Signs Projecting over Public Highways.
7. Street Widening and Set Back Lines.
8. Street Plans for the Kewalo District.
9. Subdivision Plans Submitted
10. Subdivision Law Violations.
11. Traffic Survey and Traffic Code.
12. Waste Collection and Disposal by Incineration.
13. Business District Petitions.
14. Business District descriptions rewritten and Noxious Industrial Districts No. 1 and 2 set aside and boundaries defined.

ALA MOANA PARK DEVELOPMENT

Following up the plan authorized by the last legislature for the dredging and filling of 16¹/₂ acres of mud flats in the Kewalo Basin, immediately bordering Ala Moana Road, and waikiki of the city dump, the Commission discussed ways and means of developing this area into a planned park with definite provision for varied recreational activities.

Impetus was given to the idea by suggestions and plan submitted by Mr. Simpson, a visitor to the islands, whose hobby

was city beautification, and who felt that Honolulu was not making the most of its possibilities along that line. In order to give the Commission something constructive to work on, a special committee was appointed by the Chairman to prepare and submit to them several plans of possible development. Suggestive plans were submitted by the Outdoor Circle as well as by the Committee of the Commission, and plans finally approved by the Commission for publicity purposes were also endorsed by the Outdoor Circle.

In outline, the plan as submitted calls for two artificial lagoons, one at the waikiki end and the other at the ewa end of the area with an island in the center of each. The one lagoon would be of shallow water and devoted to the use of the smaller children who cannot swim, while the other lagoon would be made deep enough to provide swimming and water sports for the older children, including provisions for boating. The island in the center of this deeper lagoon would be connected with the shore by foot bridge. It was suggested that this island might be devoted to the development of an Hawaiian Village or some similar attraction. Between these two lagoons the plan provides for large open spaces sufficient in size to take care of the various sports, such as tennis, baseball, hand ball, small golf, etc. Winding thru the entire area is shown a 40-foot driveway bordered on one side by a bridle path which it is anticipated will eventually connect with a similar path thru the Ala Wai area to the Fair Grounds. Plans provide also for a very definite landscaping program for the entire area.

The final approval of the plan was held up to allow discussion of the feasibility of including some provision for a land locked harbor in order to encourage the visit of mainland yachts

as well as to take care of the many privately owned yachts on this island.

The main problem involved seemed to be the necessity for dredging an area larger than that authorized by the last legislature. It is anticipated that final action will be taken on this project early in the new year.

BRIDLE PATHS

The suggested plan of providing bridle paths wherever possible or feasible for the encouragement of horseback riding as a recreation, was discussed on several occasions during the year, and the idea was given the hearty endorsement of the Commission.

SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION

Sidewalk construction throughout the city was again agitated, although a decided opposition was evidenced because of the lack of some uniform plan. Engineer Whitehouse finally presented a plan to the Board of Supervisors which was approved and endorsed by the Commission, namely- that sidewalk construction be begun at the civic center, working out from there progressively until the entire city is covered. Plan would have this work start within a mile radius from the junction of Mililani and King streets as the adopted civic center and then periodically to be increased by quarter or half mile distances according to the amount of construction involved. This plan it was pointed out, would be fair and impartial to owners of property in all parts of the city and would automatically require sidewalks in the most travelled areas first, with due warning to other districts.

HOUSE NUMBERING

Early in the year the attention of the Commission was called to the fact that while the matter of street and house numbering was covered by Territorial Statutes, there was no municipal ordinance authorizing this work. Municipal Ordinance was therefore prepared by the Commission and passed by the Board on July 3, 1929, authorizing the Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works to regulate the numbering of all houses in the District of Honolulu.

Engineer Welsh reported that a detail map book of the city is being prepared in his office from maps of the Territorial Tax Office, which when completed will show not only the location of every house in the city, but also the official number of such house. With this as a basis it is anticipated that a fairly accurate record can be maintained when once thoroughly established.

STREET NAMES

A program of street name revision was undertaken during the year in order to eliminate the confusion caused by the many duplicate names, and faulty classification of same.

On March 7 Engineer Welsh submitted a report to the Commission recommending that the entire list of street names be gone over and all duplications eliminated, and a map prepared showing the definite beginning and termination of every highway in the city, and following the system of street designations as outlined below:-

1. "Place" = all highways dead ended at one end.
2. "Way" = all highways not exceeding two (2) blocks in length.
3. "Drive" = all winding highways.
4. "Street" = all secondary highways over two (2) blocks in length.

5. "Avenue" = all main thoroughfares.
6. "Boulevard" = all highways 100 feet or over in width.

Following the above classification attention was given to street names in various sections of the city, the most important changes being made in the Wilhelmina Rise District. In Manoa there was made an adjustment in the boundary definitions of University Avenue and Vancouver Highway. Further study and report on this problem is under preparation for the new year.

STREET PLANS

The most important street plan worked upon during the year has been for the Kewalo Basin section. In view of the fact that this district will in all probability develop along business and industrial lines, it was deemed wise to anticipate this development by setting 60 feet as the minimum width for all main streets in this area.

STREET SIGNS

At the close of this year there has come to the Commission a petition from the Electrical Sign contractors asking an increase in the size of signs allowed to project over the public ways, - this to provide for the larger area needed to effectively prepare an electric sign. This petition has opened the way for a discussion of street sign regulation, and promises to develop into a definite study of the value and aesthetics of large signs over the public ways, especially on streets as narrow as Fort Street. The Outdoor Circle has protested the enlargement of our present limits and recommends the eventual elimination of all street signs, as a step toward the beautification of our city. This matter is still under discussion as the year closes.

STREET WIDENING AND SET BACK LINES

The practice of anticipating and planning in advance for future street widenings by the establishment of set back lines, has been carried out in several instances, although the too frequent employment of this method is being discouraged by the Board of Supervisors who question the financial ability of the city and county to purchase any large number of these set back strips should they be demanded at any one time, especially in the absence of a special fund for this purpose.

SUBDIVISIONS AND SUBDIVISION VIOLATION.

Only three (3) subdivision plans have been submitted to the City Planning Commission during the past year, as against 14 during 1928 and 20 during the year 1927. These figures, however, do not in any way represent the true condition of subdivision activity. On the other hand it does indicate that land is being subdivided and sold without the approval of the Commission or the Board of Supervisors, and therefore in violation of the provisions of the Subdivision Ordinance.

There has been initiated by Janes and James, newcomers to the city, the practice of re-subdivision of already approved subdivisions and crowding into one or more lots many houses, and constructing so-called private streets or lanes, sometimes as narrow as ten feet, to serve these homes. While these lanes are technically owned jointly by all the abutting property owners, and are considered private roads, they lose the quality of a private road when once the houses have been sold and re-sold and public service is demanded from the city. The original owner is no longer interested after he has gotten out from under his obligation, thus leaving the innocent home buyers with property facing on an unapproved street, not recognized by the city as a part of its CITY PLAN.

The City Planning Commission believes that the time has come when something should be done to stop this pernicious practice of law evasion, which tends to penalize the honest subdivider who is trying to abide by the provisions of the Subdivision Ordinance both in letter and in spirit. If the Subdivision Ordinance is not legal, as is claimed by many of our lawyers, the Commission believes that it should be definitely proved illegal by the courts, or strictly enforced. To determine this a test case is now being prepared by the Attorney's Department, using data submitted by the Planning Commission covering several of the most clear cut cases of law evasion and violation.

If the city is to grow and develop in an orderly and systematic way, it must develop according to some definite plan, which is called our City Plan, and the Commission is convinced ~~that~~ of the necessity of guarding and protecting the integrity of this City Plan in every way against the invasion and violation of the unscrupulous subdivider and lawyer.

TRAFFIC

Early in the year Engineer Welsh exhibited a traffic accident map showing graphically the points where accidents had been reported to the police during the past year, and a study was made of these various traffic hazards, especially as these hazards are linked with deficiencies in our street system. Growing out of this study the Commission became convinced that our Traffic Ordinances should be revised and brought up to date, and put into form that would bring all traffic laws into one comprehensive ordinance. It was noted, that there is a general tendency all over the mainland to standardize all traffic laws, basing such standardization on the Model Traffic Ordinance as prepared by the Committee on Municipal Traffic Ordinances and Regulations of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety, of which the Honorable Herbert Hoover was at that time Chairman. Engineer Welsh was authorized to prepare a tentative outline of such an ordinance to serve as a basis for discussion. In December of 1929 this preliminary draft was presented to the Commission and referred to a special committee of the Commission with instructions to work in cooperation with the Sheriff, the Auto Club, the Chamber of Commerce and other interested civic organizations in

studying this preliminary draft. It is anticipated that the final draft of this comprehensive Traffic Code will be ready for presentation to the Board early in the year 1930.

WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

The observing bystander has probably taken note of the improved condition of rubbish stored on the sidewalk areas waiting for collection. Cooperating with the City Planning Commission Mr. Costa, Superintendent of the Garbage Department, has started the practice of collecting refuse from points within the property lines, and whenever possible from behind hedges or shelters near the property line; and, where there are no protecting hedges, he has been fairly successful in his campaign to have property owners transfer boxes of rubbish to sidewalk area only after dark on evening of collection, such boxes to be returned to a sheltered place early in the morning. Mr. Costa has been fairly successful in this work and the Commission feels that a decided improvement has been made in the appearance of our residential areas/

Site for the location of proposed City Incinerator has been the center of discussion and protest.

Recognizing the necessity for a central location in order to make it economically feasible to employ incineration for the disposal of our city rubbish, the Commission endorsed the site recommended by Engineer Whitehouse, same being the point of land in Kewalo Basin immediately makai of the present sampan wharf.

While theoretically agreeing with the opponents of this site, and wishing that it might be possible and practicalble to preserve the entire water front from Fort Street to the beach

at Waikiki for park purposes, the Commission have been convinced that, since the incinerator must be centrally located, and since this area is already an established industrial district and is bound under such zoning to develop as such, this location offered fewer objections than any suggested. It was recommended, however, that every effort be made to beautify the incinerator site, and that palm trees be transplanted to surround the objectionable smoke stack.

ZONING

During the year the descriptions of the Business areas in the city were re-written and brought up to date for inclusion in the Revised Building Code which was adopted by the Board in September of this year. In re-writing these descriptions, certain changes and additions were made in order to fill in certain gaps between districts, and round out the areas to an extent sufficient to take care of business needs of the city for some years to come. Also there was set aside and defined two Noxious Industrial Districts, the one in the vicinity of the Slaughter House in Kalihi-kai, and the other an area in Iwilei of some 150 acres lying immediately below the O. R. & L. Co. tracks.

There were received but 3 petitions for the creation of new business districts during the year 1929, only one of which was granted.

While there were several requests for business districts/ extensions, there were only two bona fide petitions with signed consent of 75% of property within the 750 radius as required under the provisions of present ordinance. One of these petitions was granted, that in Kalihi-kai at the corner of Elewene and Kalihi streets. The second petition for an increased depth of business area fronting on Kalakaua Avenue, was refused, the Commission believing that this area should be kept at a uniform depth as agreed upon in the original setting aside of this frontage for business purposes.. Kalakaua

Avenue Extension, from King to Beretania Street was created a business district by the City Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors initiation in order to make possible the extension of this street on the improvement basis, which it was explained is dependent upon an increased valuation of the property involved in order to meet the necessary assessments.

As a result of the increase in area of consent under the provisions of Ordinance 490, together with the filling in and rounding out of business areas as noted above, there has been less interest shown in petitioning new area except where the need has been sufficiently urgent to warrant such petition and the location logical for the future development of the city.

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