

City of Planners

HIGH SCHOOL students in Los Angeles and thereabouts are learning how life in their region can be improved through intelligent planning, by study of a generously-illustrated little book, "Cities Are for People." Simply written, the text and the supplementary pictures show the difference between good and bad housing, roads, conservation, parks and playgrounds, flood control and the like. Maps show how resources of the Los Angeles region can be changed and expanded to make living better for its people.

The book is solidly grounded in scientific truth. The author has borrowed from political science, geology, human geography, engineering and history. His purpose is in part "to fire the imaginations of the younger citizens with a conception of a magnificent future city which can be achieved if the people envisage it and want it."

To Chicagoans, too, the idea of stirring young people to want a better city is a familiar one. A generation ago every Chicago high school student began studying the "Wacker Manual," a book full of ideas for lakefront development. As those students and their successors grew up, there came to be a large group of adult Chicagoans who wanted a more attractive city and knew how to get it. Chicago has achieved step by step a magnificent plan of waterfront development, with big parks, wide high-speed streets, beautiful lake views, attractive buildings and educational and recreational facilities.

What Chicago and other cities have done and Los Angeles is beginning to do can be paralleled by Minneapolis. We have as much intelligence and imagination and as much to work with. In a city in many ways modern and beautiful, there is still room for great improvement—notably in transportation, housing and rebuilding of ugly, run-down sections.

There already has been some excellent planning here. The city planning commission has issued several useful and informative reports and has sponsored some good public meetings. The board of park commissioners has just released a study of air terminal facilities of Minneapolis, which shows vision.

The city engineer's office has mapped postwar public works projects.

But Minneapolis and its metropolitan region need still wider consciousness of planning, among everybody from junior high students to the most mature civic, labor and business leaders.

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Radio Address
Tuesday, June 1, 1943
WLWL - 10:15 PM

PLANNING FOR A GREATER MINNEAPOLIS

Friends and Fellow Citizens:

We, in Minneapolis, are a great distance from the nearest war front. The battlefields in the Far East, the Aleutians, North Africa, and Europe are separated from us by thousands of miles. Yet, though we are geographically removed from the actual fighting scenes, we have a battlefield of a sort in our own backyards. For we at home are not only contributing to the war effort in every possible way but we are individually, and as a community, experiencing the consequences of a far-reaching and total war.

We are experiencing, for example, great drifts in population. Thousands of our men and women have left the city for military service. Many more have left for war work in industries outside the city. At the same time, there has been a great influx of workers from the farms and the surrounding areas, seeking jobs in the industries of Minneapolis and seeking homes for their families. And so, despite the departure of our young people for service in the armed forces, Minneapolis has increased its population.

This sudden shift in population, along with other results of the war effort, tends to produce a number of dislocations and serious problems in the community. There is first of all the problem of providing decent housing for our war workers, both new and old. There are new traffic difficulties and an ever increasing need of a quick and efficient transportation for our factory workers and business people. ~~The restrictions on driving as a result of the gasoline and tire shortage are keeping more and more people from going outside the city in search of recreation. Thus, we can expect that the city's recreational facilities will be increasingly strained.~~ The full-time employment of mothers and fathers in war industries has, in many cases, prevented proper home supervision for our young people and has served, therefore, to aggravate an already growing problem of delinquency among our youth.

These are but a few of the many stresses and strains that result

from total war whenever adequate precautions are not taken beforehand. The difficulties produced by the war are serious enough in themselves. They are even more serious, however, when added to a long list of existing problems.

Long before the war began, many of us in Minneapolis came to realize that our city, like other American cities, has outgrown itself. We have seen, for example, a steady increase in population over the years until some areas have become heavily populated and overcrowded. The unsettled areas, once available for expansion, have now almost disappeared. ~~Our streets, originally designed to meet the slow-moving and sparse traffic of the horse and buggy, are inadequately prepared to meet the needs of today's heavy and fast-moving traffic.~~ Travel within much of the city has become for many a lengthy and exasperating affair. Too much time is consumed merely in going to and from the office and to and from the factory. Whether we go by streetcar or automobile, it takes too long to get to the shopping centers, too long to get to the parks and lakes, or to the railroad stations.

Our houses, once plentiful, are now too few to meet our needs and, very often, too poor in quality for a decent home. Many of our so-called residential sections are too closely intermingled with industrial and business sections. We all know that many Minneapolis families have railroads in their very backyards. Anyone who has driven about Minneapolis on the East Side between Franklin Avenue and the Loop, or on the North Side, in the area surrounding the Sumner Field project, or along Washington Avenue, or in the Market District - anyone who lives in or has seen these and other areas of our city knows that our city has gone through a period of

change and deterioration too serious to be ignored.

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Slums and blighted areas are not only destructive of good living for those who are forced to live within their confines, ~~but~~ ^{but also are} ~~scientific studies have shown that they are~~ a great expense to the city as a whole. They contribute, for example, to increased fire hazards and traffic hazards. Even more serious, as a recent Washington conference on delinquency and the family reported, slums and broken-down residential areas tend to increase the crime rate and the cost of law enforcement. Such areas, the report showed, are the cesspools of delinquency, of immorality, and of gangsterism. Such areas, too, while a result of poverty, tend to produce poverty and a breakdown in family life. They increase the cost of public relief. It is from these areas, also, that we get the highest rate of disease and poor health.

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In addition to the residential slum areas, a number of our business districts are now badly deteriorated. The once-proud Gateway of Minneapolis is a typical example of a blighted eyesore that cannot be ignored by a self-conscious and progressive community.

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It was apparent before the war, too, that there were not only growing problems of housing and slums and traffic, but also problems of providing hospitals, schools, parks, and playgrounds so that they should be sufficient in number and accessible to all. Our city, like all industrial cities, has grown without plan. As a result, some areas have many parks, other have none at all. Some sections have schools and hospitals close at hand; other sections are without hospitals at all and are too far away from schools. Both our hospitals and schools have become overcrowded and many of our school buildings are old and in various stages of deterioration. There are too few hospitals and too few schools to take care of our expanding

population. Some parts of the city have more than enough playgrounds. In other parts, the streets must serve as playgrounds for children.

Many sections of the city have become crowded, their houses pushed close together and with a consequent loss of necessary fresh air and sunlight. Many residential sections of the city are too noisy, too much disturbed by the heavy traffic sounds and noises from industrial plants nearby.

All of these conditions make it extremely difficult for many of our families to raise their children in a balanced, healthy, and normal way.

Financially, the rapid and drastic growth experienced by our city has been costly to both government and private individuals. Real estate values have fallen in many sections but assessments have not always gone down proportionately, thus producing added problems of tax delinquency and higher rents.

What has gone wrong with our city? Why hasn't Minneapolis been able to escape the dislocations so often found among industrial cities in the United States? The answer, in my opinion, lies in the fact that our city has grown too quickly, without plan, and with too little attention given by political leaders to the problems of city planning. A realization of the problem and a conscious and determined effort by the community and its leaders might have prevented the present state of affairs.

The problems of Minneapolis are not peculiar to our city alone. All of our major industrial cities have experienced similar growing pains. Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Buffalo, Syracuse, Los Angeles, Chicago, and others have grave problems of congestion, blighted areas, and war dislocation. But the Mayors and political

officers of each of these cities are making a determined effort to mobilize the resources of their communities in order to overcome their difficulties. These cities are planning now for tomorrow. These cities will be our competitions for industry and commerce. The returning soldier will make his home in the city that has made a place for him.

When we stop to analyze the resources with which Minneapolis has been blessed, we can ~~see that, however, that our own situation is~~ *look to a bright future.* ~~by no means a hopeless one.~~ First of all, we have in Minneapolis a half-million people who are among the most intelligent and progressive and best educated in the world. We have in our city thousands of finely-trained and highly skilled laborers. We have excellent vocational training schools. We have ably-led and cooperative trade union organizations.

There are in Minneapolis great banking facilities. Minneapolis has become in fact the great financial center of the Northwest. We have important flour, steel, machine tool and other industries. There are in Minneapolis large construction companies, ably staffed with trained engineers and technicians. We have technical facilities, such as the laboratories of the University and private industry.

In addition, we are strategically located in the heart of the Mississippi valley, one of the world's richest and most fertile agricultural areas. We are remarkably well located, too, as a river, railway, ~~and~~ truck, and air terminal. Many of the most important trunk highways of America~~x~~, such as Highways 12, 169, and 212, run into and through our city from all directions. We have, only a short distance away, great forests, large deposits of magnesium and the world's most important iron deposits.

Within our city, there are lakes and parks, and areas of striking natural beauty, unusual facilities for recreation and family life.

In short, Minneapolis is potentially a city of great commerce and industry and, hence, of great wealth and prosperity. We have in or near Minneapolis the physical resources, the skills, and the type of population that together can produce a greater Minneapolis - a city of the future.

But this cannot come of itself. It cannot come without direction and determination. In order to achieve a greater Minneapolis, we must plan for it.

Most of us today are thinking primarily of two things: winning the war and planning for the day when our boys return. The first of these tasks is, at the moment, most important and must be done with vigorous and unceasing effort. But the second task must not therefor be neglected. Postwar planning, like the winning of the war itself, is a matter of local and national salvation. It is too important to become a project of mental gymnastics for purposes of winning elections. It must not be treated lightly.

All thinking people today are concerned with the problems of reduced production, reduced employment and reduced incomes that may come at the end of the war. We are justifiably worried that the cessation of war industries will once again produce mass unemployment, idle factories, inflation and poverty. Those of us who have brothers and sons and fathers in military service are especially worried that they will come home to find unemployment and poverty, staring them in the face.

I suggest that the most effective way of preventing a new crisis

is to plan for and actually begin the rebuilding of our city^{ies}. If we begin to rebuild our blighted areas, clear away our slums, replan our streets, construct public works, and provide the needed hospitals, rest homes, children's nurseries, playgrounds and schools, we will be able, ~~I think~~, to maintain our present level of production and employment, and increase the prosperity of all of the members of this community.

Such an undertaking will not only make Minneapolis^a/more wholesome and prosperous place to live, but it will provide an important outlet for both private and public investment. It will create jobs for both skilled and unskilled workers. It will enable us, in short, to find a production program in peacetime that compares with the production program in wartime. We don't need glorified leaf-raking programs, such as we have had sometimes during the period of depression. What we need is a long range and financially sound economic program of rebuilding and rehabilitation. Such a program can be accomplished - it requires vision, imagination, courage, and a willingness to recognize that our future is in our own hands. For the past 15 years too many of our people have looked to Washington and the State Capital for the solution to their problems. We just felt, somehow, that we would be taken care of. We know now, however, that our problems will be solved only when we, the people in the community, begin to understand our relationship to our problems. We are becoming aware now that we must look not only to the nation's resources but to our own as well.

Let me quote from the

What, specifically, can we do about it? ^{7 yrs,} We have in Minneapolis a city planning commission. Studies of our community resources have been made; suggested programs are prepared. However, there has been

*editorial Column of tonight's Star-Journal -
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no concerted effort to bring together all groups and interests mutually concerned with city rehabilitation and postwar planning. Nothing has been done to set in motion the excellent suggestions of the planning commission. The ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ^{virtually} proposal of a postwar development council has been/ignored - yet such a council can be our civilian defense organization for peacetime. ~~Yes, there is a great deal of work preliminary to an effective postwar program. The organizational work must be started now. All existing agencies involved must be engaged in this work as early as possible.~~

We must, ~~I suggest~~, establish a committee of citizens representing every interest in our city. This committee will collaborate with the city planning commission in formulating an overall Postwar Development program. There should be a Research and Technical Committee sharing the responsibility for fact finding, for determining the city's needs and problems, for gathering data on the city's present situation. There should be a Ways and Means Committee charged with the responsibility of studying financial and legal problems along with finding procedures for getting the ~~xxx~~ plans into actual operation. Government and community; business and labor; social agencies and financial institutions must work together. A city planning commission cannot be expected to know all of our needs or chart our future. Government alone cannot save us from disaster.

~~We must, I suggest, set up a committee of citizens representing every interest in our city which will report on the present uses of land, which will decide the areas that need rebuilding, which will outline the need for new roads and bridges, for hospitals and playgrounds, for industries and public works. When this is done,~~ A master plan must be formulated. This plan will describe

the number and type of projects that need to be undertaken, and it will envision the city that is to be built. The plan will aim to achieve new opportunities for employment, ~~and~~ for construction, ^{for} and/investment. In other words, the plan will be the blueprint for the future Minneapolis.

When such a plan is formulated, our city government, in cooperation with a representative citizens' committee, must then begin to put it into effect.

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What about the cost of such a program? It will be necessary to redirect some of our municipal funds toward the purpose of constructing our new city. Private persons, too, must be encouraged to invest in such a program. In addition, tax reforms should be sought so that a greater share of the tax money paid by the citizens of Minneapolis will go to Minneapolis, rather than to the state and federal governments. There is even good reason to believe that both the state and national governments would be willing to lend financial assistance to a well-planned program. If these things are done, then the cost will not be burdensome. Even if the task were to prove expensive, however, the benefits in terms of human welfare are more than worth the cost.

Is it merely a dream to envision the kind of city that I have outlined tonight? Is it impossible to achieve a greater Minneapolis? Not if we really want it enough. Our failures in the past have been failures to control our social environment. If we are to avoid wars and depressions and insecurity, then we must not fail in the future. This is, as one writer has said, a time for greatness. This is a time for men to consciously set out to build for themselves a better world. A better world cannot be built only by utilizing our vision and

and imagination for areas far away from home. It must be built at home as well; here, in Minneapolis, on Hennepin Avenue, and in our own living rooms. I am convinced that we can, if we are so minded, build not only a greater Minneapolis but a greater America and a better world.

~~Tonites Editorial in the Star Journal.~~



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