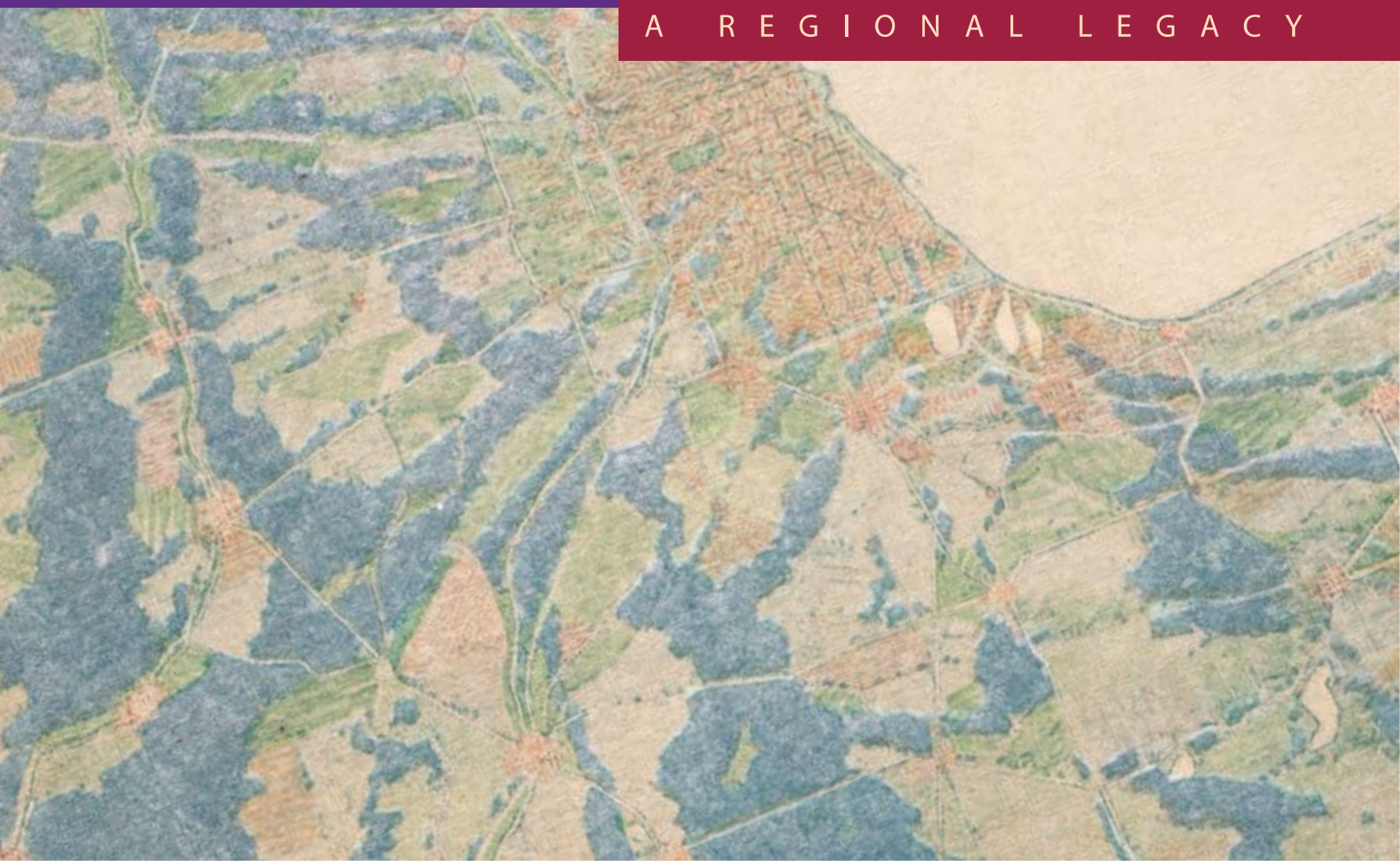




The Plan of Chicago

A REGIONAL LEGACY



BOLD PLANS. BIG DREAMS.

In 1909, Daniel Burnham, Edward Bennett, and the Commercial Club of Chicago launched an era of big dreams for the Chicago region and cities throughout the world with the publication of the Plan of Chicago. In 2009, the Plan's 100th anniversary gives metropolitan Chicago an unparalleled opportunity to recapture the spirit of imagination and innovation that the Burnham Plan represents.

The Burnham Plan Centennial will be a great celebration, but it will also be a time for our communities, leaders and institutions to act together to shape our future. To succeed in the global competition for jobs, prosperity, and quality of life for all, we must have inspiring and well-accepted plans to produce action.

This booklet is an introduction to the Plan of Chicago—the conditions that prompted it, the major recommendations, its implementation and its legacy. The purpose is to allow residents of the Chicago region to understand its ideas and impact so they can more fully enjoy the Centennial—and realize the part they can play in making the next big plans.

The Commercial Club, which helped start this effort a century ago—with the support of 334 individual subscribers—plays a key role in the Centennial. The club in 1999 created the organization Chicago Metropolis 2020 to implement its recommendations for better transportation, land-use planning, housing and other critical regional issues. Chicago Metropolis 2020 in turn is providing organizational and staff support to the Centennial Committee, which is coordinating the programs of 220 partners. All are determined to see that the plans developed in 2009 are implemented as effectively as the Plan of Chicago.



The Plan of Chicago: A Regional Legacy

Copyright 2008, Chicago Metropolis 2020

On the cover: Plate 1 and Plate 110 from the Plan of Chicago.

Congress Parkway

Envisioned in the Plan as a great boulevard to the west and the central spine of the city. Bennett fiercely defended Congress (rather than a route along Monroe) as planning for a West Side Superhighway began in the 1930s. When opened in 1958, it included a transit line but had lost most of its “parkway” amenities.

Arterial street widening

120 miles of arterial streets were widened during the 1920s, with increased urgency due to growing automobile traffic.

Civic Center

Never attempted. New City-County Building was under construction downtown even as the Plan of Chicago was being written.

Chicago River straightening

Accomplished as planned, 1927–29, but through streets were never opened because of railroad facilities that were never removed.

Roosevelt Road

Widened in 1914 as part of Plan's “Outer Circuit” of roadways to route traffic around central business district. Not extended east of Michigan across Illinois Central tracks until 1997.

Grant Park

Cultural Center of museums and libraries planned by Burnham was blocked by Montgomery Ward court decisions; compromise site found for Field Museum south of Roosevelt Road. Landfill and formal landscaping guided by Bennett during the 1920s.

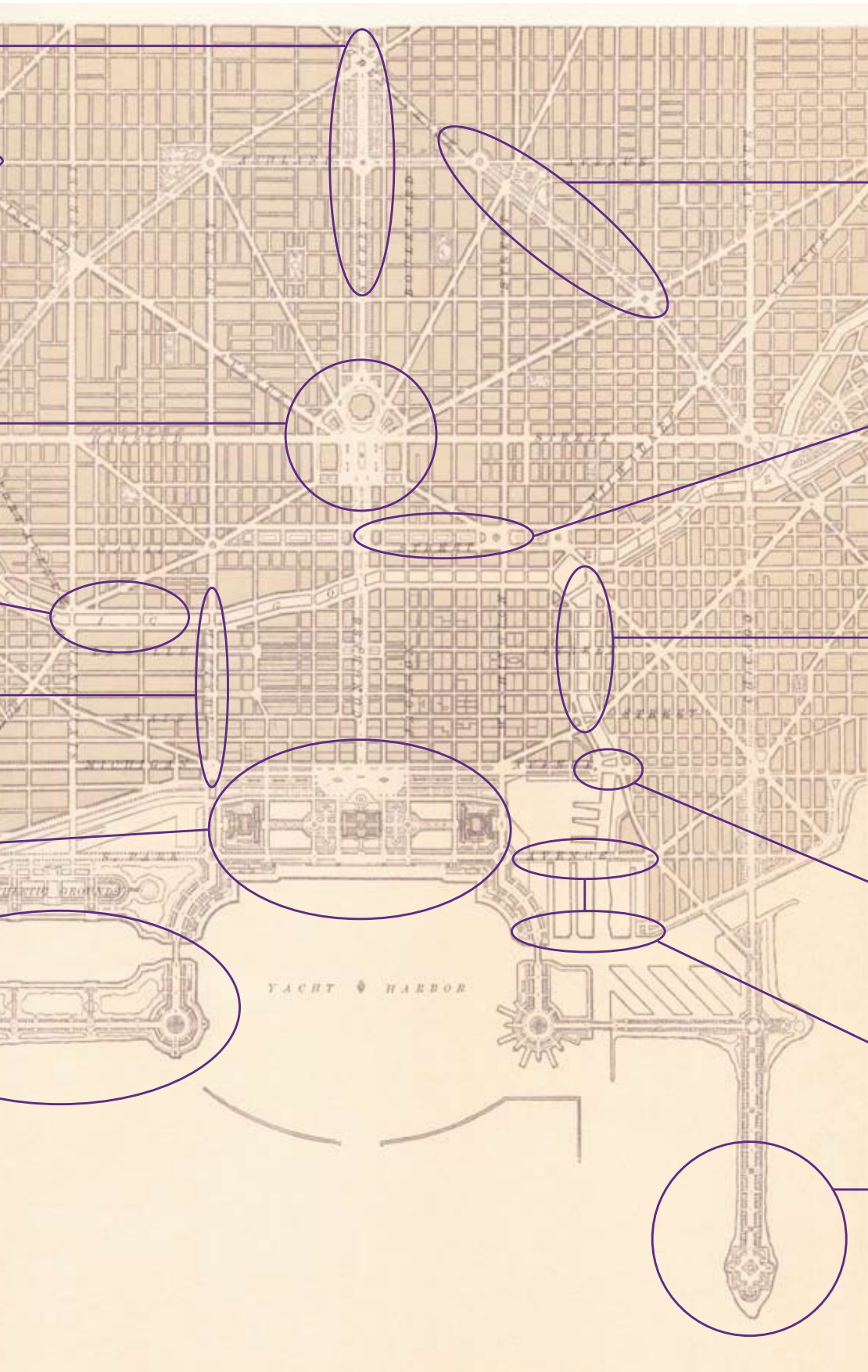
Northerly Island

Landfill constructed by South Park Commission in late 1920s. The island (now a peninsula) was considered for an airport as early as 1924. Used for Century of Progress Exposition 1933–34; and as Meigs Field airport 1948–2003.

Regional highways

Highways encircling and connecting the region were constructed in the 1920s, coordinated by the Chicago Regional Planning Association.





Forest preserves

Preservation efforts already under way were included in the Plan, and thousands of acres of woodland and prairie were preserved as public land.

New diagonal avenues

Only one ever attempted was Ogden Avenue, extended northeast from Ashland by the early 1930s. This required two costly bridges and viaducts, and chopping through the densely built Old Town neighborhood. The entire route from Chicago Avenue to Lincoln Park was vacated and removed by 1993.

Consolidated railroad stations

A new Union Station was planned and built 1916–25 in line with the newly completed North Western Station, but the further consolidation of the central area's six railroad stations was never accomplished. The new post office was built south of Van Buren rather than between Madison and Adams.

Two-level riverfront drives

Wacker Drive replaced the city's produce market in 1926. An extension along the east bank of the South Branch opened in conjunction with the Eisenhower Expressway in the late 1950s. Similar drives along the facing riverbanks were never attempted, though space was left in front of Union Station and the Merchandise Mart.

Michigan Avenue bridge

Double-level boulevard bridge opened in 1920, expanding the business district across the river and beginning the transformation of North Pine Street into a world-famous retailing avenue.

Link bridge

Lake Shore Drive bridge opened in 1937 east of location anticipated for extension of South Park Avenue.

Municipal piers

“Municipal Pier No. 2” was completed in 1916, but at the foot of Grand Avenue rather than Chicago Avenue. As suggested in the Plan, it included recreational amenities, such as a ballroom and promenades, integrated with shipping facilities.

B A C K G R O U N D O F

from *Vistas of the Fair in Color*, 1894



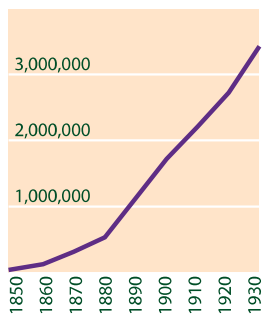
The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 attracted 21 million visitors—at a time when the nation's population was only 66 million. The visitors were awed by the clean, electrically lighted, harmoniously planned grounds of the World's Fair. Interest in city planning took root across the country, and Daniel Burnham, Director of Works for the fair, became nationally renowned for his planning skills. He aided the Senate Park Commission with a 1902 plan for Washington, D.C., and prepared plans for Manila and Cleveland. His plan for San Francisco was delivered shortly before the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed the city.

But Chicago was his home, and solutions to the growing city's problems were always on Burnham's mind. Immediately after the fair, a plan to connect Grant and Jackson Parks with a lakefront parkway attracted attention, but no results. Finally, in 1906–1907, Burnham began work on a Plan of Chicago under the sponsorship of the Commercial Club. Burnham and the Plan's coauthor, architect Edward Bennett, hired draftsmen and began collecting information from officials around the world. In rooms built on the roof of the Railway Exchange Building at Michigan and Jackson, experts came to offer ideas, and tracing after tracing was made over street maps of the city, looking for the most logical solutions to the physical layout and infrastructure needs of the metropolis.

The harmonious arrangement and quiet order of the World's Columbian Exposition (above) contrasted greatly with the city's noise, dirt, and congestion. Could the busy commercial city be made as appealing?



from *Souvenir of Chicago in Colors*, 1910



Chicago's population grew exponentially in the city's first 50 years, with no end in sight.

from *Daniel H. Burnham: Architect, Planner of Cities*



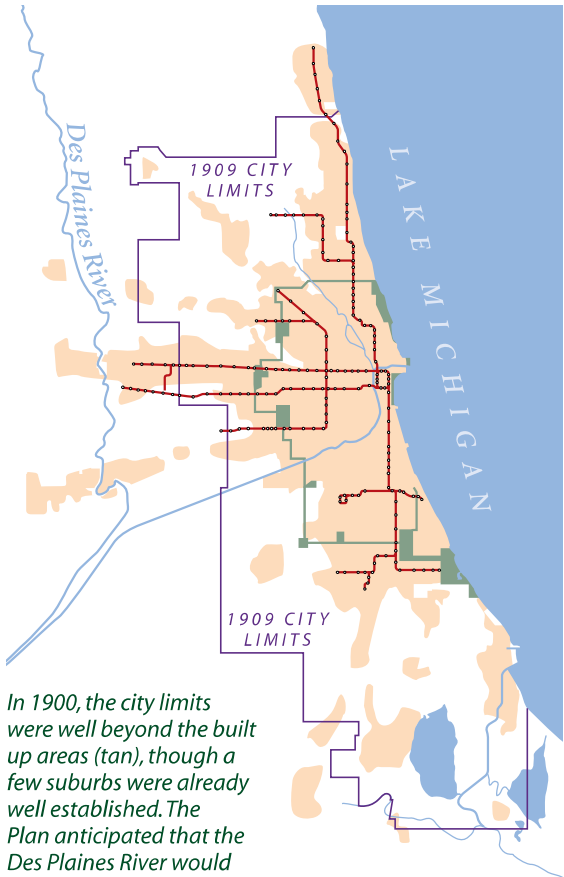
Daniel Burnham, architect, planner, and primary author of the Plan of Chicago.

T H E P L A N

The time has come to bring order out of the chaos incident to rapid growth.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 1

On July 4, 1909, the Plan of Chicago was ceremoniously presented to the city. But more importantly, in the months that followed, the Commercial Club's influential members pushed for official recognition of the Plan and worked for adoption of its recommendations.



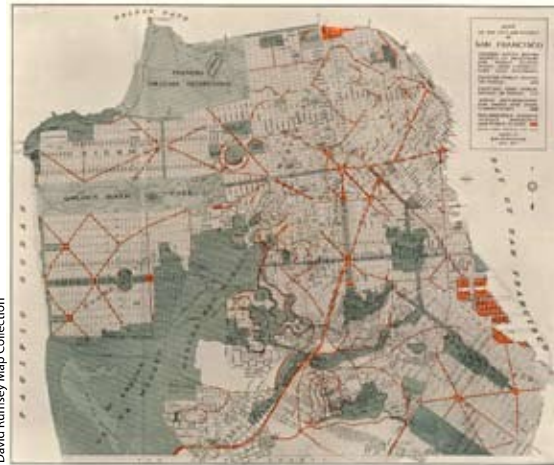
In 1900, the city limits were well beyond the built up areas (tan), though a few suburbs were already well established. The Plan anticipated that the Des Plaines River would become the natural boundary of the city.

Chicago CarroGraphics



from National Geographic, March 1915

The Senate Park Commission, advised by Burnham, prepared a 1902 plan that reshaped the monumental core of Washington, D.C.



David Rumsey Map Collection

Burnham prepared a 1905 plan for San Francisco, but it received little attention after the city was destroyed in 1906 by earthquake and fire.

Growing volumes of shipping congested the river, while streams of railroad freight and wagon traffic converged near the Rush Street bridge (below), threatening to choke the business district.



Postcard circa 1907

Edward Bennett, coauthor of the Plan, oversaw many of its accomplishments in the 1910s and 1920s.

T H E P L A N A S

Plate 107 from the Plan of Chicago



The Chicago River at Lake Street resembles the Seine in this Plan rendering, which shows two-level streets on both downtown riverbanks.

The Plan of Chicago did not invent new solutions to all the region's problems. Some, particularly social and housing needs, were considered beyond the scope of the document, and several sections that Burnham drafted were not included in the final published Plan. In other areas, such as railroad terminal needs and plans for an outer park system, existing schemes were incorporated into the Plan and duly credited.

One entire chapter is devoted to the background and history of city planning, showing how the great European cities had benefited from improved circulation and gracious public space. The book's prose alludes to beauty and pride, but the point is always concluded in economic terms: over the long run, necessary public improvements, done according to a logical plan, benefit a city far more than their cost. When these improvements are made, writes Burnham, "will the people of means be so ready to run away and spend their money in other cities?"

To illustrate his ideas on traffic circulation, Burnham included theoretical diagrams of major streets in European cities.

Plate 97 from the Plan of Chicago

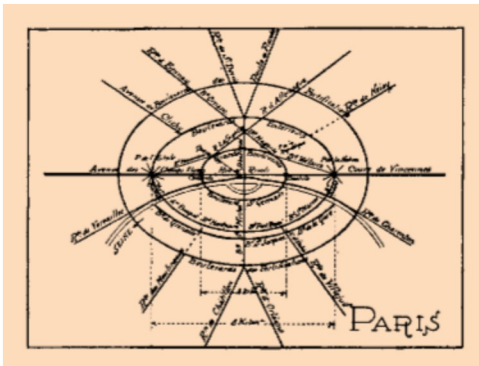
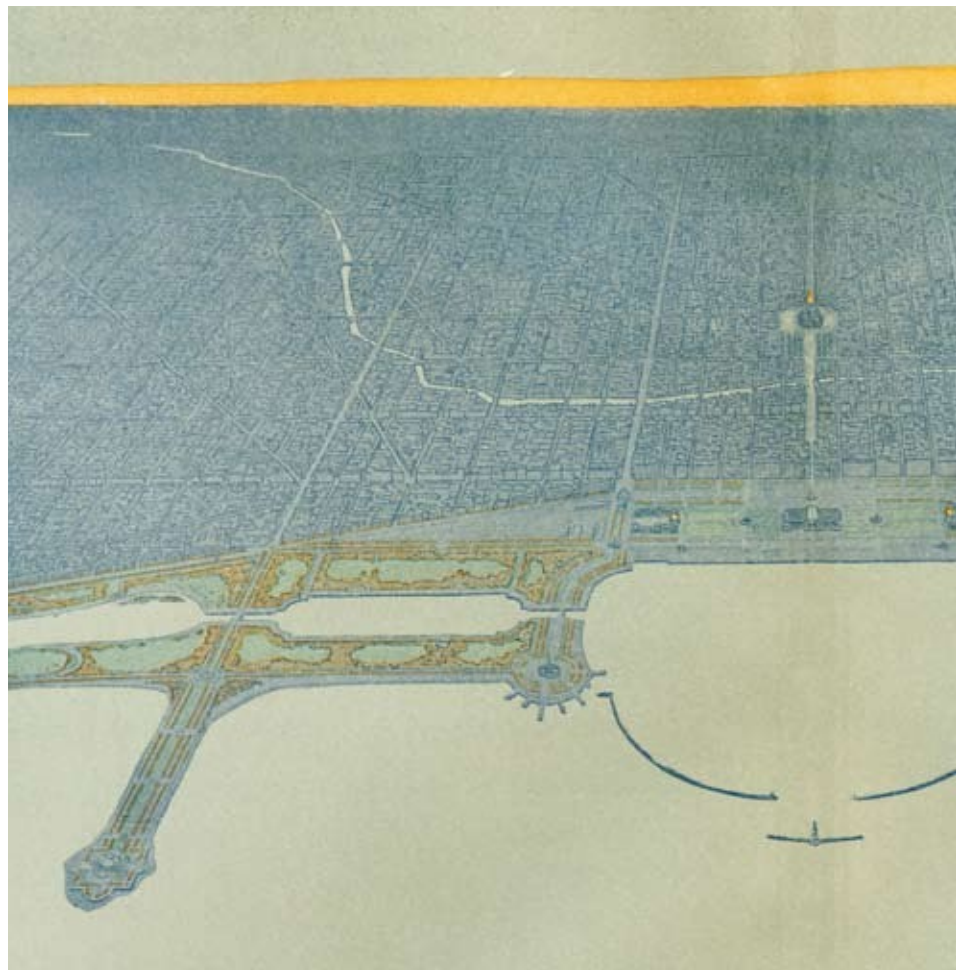
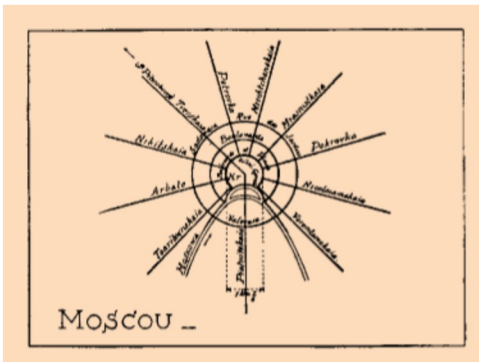


Plate 98 from the Plan of Chicago



D O C U M E N T

The plan of Chicago as presented in illustration and text is the result of a systematic and comprehensive study...mapping out an ideal project for the physical development of this city.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 119

Chicago's remarkable growth, the document argues, makes a farsighted plan imperative. Detailed maps showed a reconfiguration of city streets and railroad lines, and specific street and harbor improvements were shown to serve the central area.

As a comprehensive look at the region's needs, the Plan looked far beyond the city limits, describing highways radiating throughout and encircling the Chicago region, and parks and harbor facilities scaled for the metropolitan area's future needs. It recommended that "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" to ensure that streets connected and were of suitable width, that provisions were made for schools, parks, and libraries, and that building restrictions limited "undesirable classes of structures." An appendix noted the changes to state law that would be needed for the Plan's full implementation.

The Plan's prose is convincing, but the book's illustrations made it memorable. Maps and diagrams were supplemented with birds-eye views and romantic overviews of the city painted by Jules Guérin. Readers could see a beautiful and orderly city that was nonetheless recognizably Chicago, incorporating the city's river and lakeshore, the railroad stations and street patterns.

Plate 122 from the Plan of Chicago



Seductive renderings by Jules Guérin give the Plan of Chicago much of its impact. At left, symmetrical piers and a new Congress Street (center) leads to the Civic Center with a wintry sunset beyond. Above, the proposed West Loop railway stations west of the Chicago River with the Civic Center beyond at Congress and Halsted.



Plate 87 from the Plan of Chicago

Principal points of the Plan of Chicago

The improvement of the Lake Front.

The creation of a system of highways outside the city.

The improvement of railway terminals and the development of a complete traction system for both freight and passengers.

The acquisition of an outer park system, and of parkway circuits.

The systematic arrangement of the streets and avenues within the city in order to facilitate the movement to and from the business district.

The development of centers of intellectual life and of civic administration, so related as to give coherence and unity to the city.

— Plan of Chicago, p. 121

T H E L A K E F R O N T

Perhaps the Plan's most treasured legacy is the city's public lakefront, unique in the world. When the Plan was written, only a quarter of the city's shoreline was publicly accessible. Private land extended to the water north of Diversey Parkway and south of 67th Street. From downtown to Hyde Park, the Illinois Central Railroad tracks dominated the shoreline.

But Lincoln and Jackson Parks provided inspiring examples of public lake shorelines, busy bathing beaches, and calm inland lagoons. "The Lake front by right belongs to the people," declared the Plan. "It affords their one great unobstructed view, stretching away to the horizon, where water and clouds seem

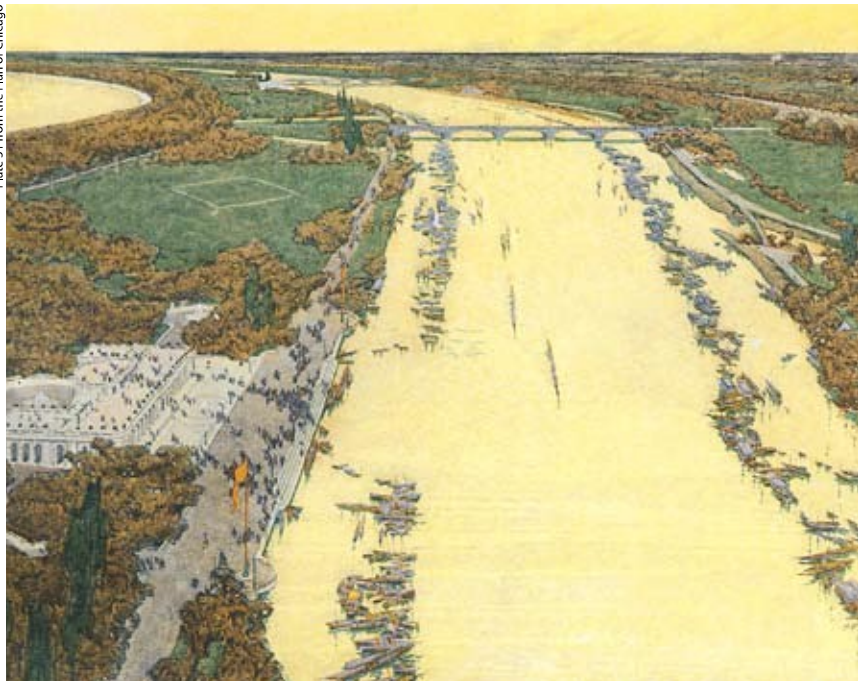
to meet. . . . Not a foot of its shores should be appropriated by individuals to the exclusion of the people." Burnham sketched a series of peninsulas and offshore islands carrying a parkway and sheltering new lagoons.

Landfill operations had already expanded Lincoln and Grant Parks, but Burnham pointed out that the city was annually disposing of one million cubic yards of clean fill—mostly ashes from coal-burning boilers and dirt removed for basements—by dumping it far out in the lake. That was enough to create more than 20 acres of landfill if dumped close to shore. Park authorities eagerly adopted this idea in the 1920s and 1930s. Along the south lakefront, Northerly Island, Burnham Park,

Hundreds of acres of new parkland (green) were created along Chicago's lakefront between 1910 and 1960.

The south lakefront (below) was little more than a dumping ground at the time, but Burnham proposed expanding and transforming it into parkland (right). Offshore islands would shelter quiet lagoons, providing new shorelines and sites for pavilions and ballfields.

Plate 51 from the Plan of Chicago



Chicago CarroGraphics

Chicago History Museum | CH-03211



Plate 49 from the Plan of Chicago



The improvement of the Lake front from Winnetka to the Indiana line is an economic necessity.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 122

and Promontory Point were created. Lincoln Park, 450 acres when the Plan was written, was expanded to 1,200 acres by the 1950s.

Burnham's vision was not of an exclusively recreational lakefront. Great Lakes shipping was crucial to the region's economy, and the Plan anticipated extensive new piers and harbors. But public access and recreational areas were to be cleverly integrated with new slips and loading docks, in a way seen nowhere else in the world.



Chicago History Museum iChi-51870



from Official View Book, A Century of Progress Exposition

Northerly Island, first of a chain planned for the south lakefront, was created in the late 1920s (above). It was the site of the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition (left). After World War II, it was offered as the site for the United Nations, then became Meigs Field airport in 1948.

When the Plan was written, Lake Shore Drive was a short pleasure drive through Lincoln Park (below). By 1935 (right) it was an urban expressway, extended north as landfill created new parkland.



from Souvenir of Chicago in Colors, 1910



Chicago History Museum iChi-51874



A birds-eye view shows the extensive landfill proposed between downtown and Jackson Park.

While the keynote of the nineteenth century was expansion, we of the twentieth century find that our dominant idea is conservation.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 32

The Plan called for more neighborhood parks such as McGuane Park, where children enjoyed the wading pool during the summer of 1905.



Chicago Park District Special Collections

Chicago History Museum iChi-03394



In the 1920s, Bennett's symmetrical French vision for Grant Park transformed it into one of the world's largest formal landscapes, with Buckingham Fountain (completed in 1927) as the centerpiece. Until Congress Parkway was extended in the 1950s, it terminated with a plaza at Michigan Avenue (below).



Postcard, circa 1933

P A R K S A N D

Chicago's existing ring of large parks, connected by leafy boulevards, had been laid out beyond the city limits starting in 1869, primarily by engineer William Le Baron Jenney. As the growing industrial city became more crowded, these pleasure-grounds were important for fresh air and recreation. The Plan of Chicago praised the system, and proposed a major expansion of it. Since density "beyond a certain point results in disorder, vice, and disease," the Plan claims, "the establishment of adequate park area is necessary."

By the 1900s, the fast-growing city had enveloped the original ring of parks, and visionaries like architect Dwight Perkins were encouraging the purchase and preservation of wooded areas along Salt Creek, the Des Plaines River, and the Skokie Valley. Smaller neighborhood parks were being built in dense city neighborhoods. The Plan encouraged

Mt. Forest Reserve

Lake Calumet Reserve



F O R E S T P R E S E R V E S

both movements, noting the moderate cost of acquiring outlying land in advance of settlement. Though the Plan describes the natural beauty of these new parks, the appeal is to the city's employers: "a city, in order to be a good labor-market, must provide for the health and pleasure of the great body of workers." The Plan suggested a regional approach to creating parks in an area ranging from Kenosha to DeKalb to Michigan City.

At the center of the Plan's vision for the city was Grant Park. Burnham envisioned a Cultural Center at the foot of Congress Parkway, including the Field Museum and new homes for the Crerar Library and Art Institute. But in 1911 the state Supreme Court decisively confirmed Montgomery Ward's lonely opinion that the city's original plats forbade any buildings in Grant Park. A site on new landfill south of Roosevelt Road was found for the Field Museum.



Chicago History Museum (Chi-5 1867)

Elmhurst and Salt Creek Reserve



Des Plaines River Reserve

Skokie Valley Reserve

Plate 44 from the Plan of Chicago

Architect Dwight Perkins and others had already surveyed the region's most beautiful woodlands to be preserved (above) and were working to establish county forest preserves. The Plan (left) included and expanded these proposals, and called for new large-scale city parks, and smaller parks in residential neighborhoods. Parkways and boulevards would link the region's great open spaces.

This 1931 sketch shows Lake Shore Drive between Foster and Bryn Mawr on an island, creating a new marina. Instead, Lake Shore Drive was built on solid parkland in the early 1950s.



The Art Institute of Chicago

RAILROADS AND

“**F**reight Handler to the Nation,” Chicago in 1909 was being strangled by freight handling. Virtually all cargo moved long distances by railroad, so every railroad maintained its own freight house near the business district. Slow horse-drawn wagons carried freight through the Loop, impeding downtown traffic. Boxcars sat idle in railroad yards for days at a time.

The Plan proposed an ambitious scheme of shared freight railroad circuits, which would encircle the city at various distances and be used by all railroads, with a huge consolidated freight yard south of today’s Midway Airport. The Plan cited the example of Chicago’s tunnel system under downtown streets, which allowed small freight shipments to move from railroad freight houses to downtown basements without congesting surface streets. Whatever the merits of the proposals, the Plan had little influence over the railroads, which pursued their own business interests.

The Plan also recommended consolidating Chicago’s six passenger rail stations west of the river and south of Roosevelt Road, based on a scheme worked out by Frederic Delano. This in turn would free up huge amounts of railroad land south of Van Buren for expansion of the business district. In 1912, the Plan Commission tried unsuccessfully to persuade

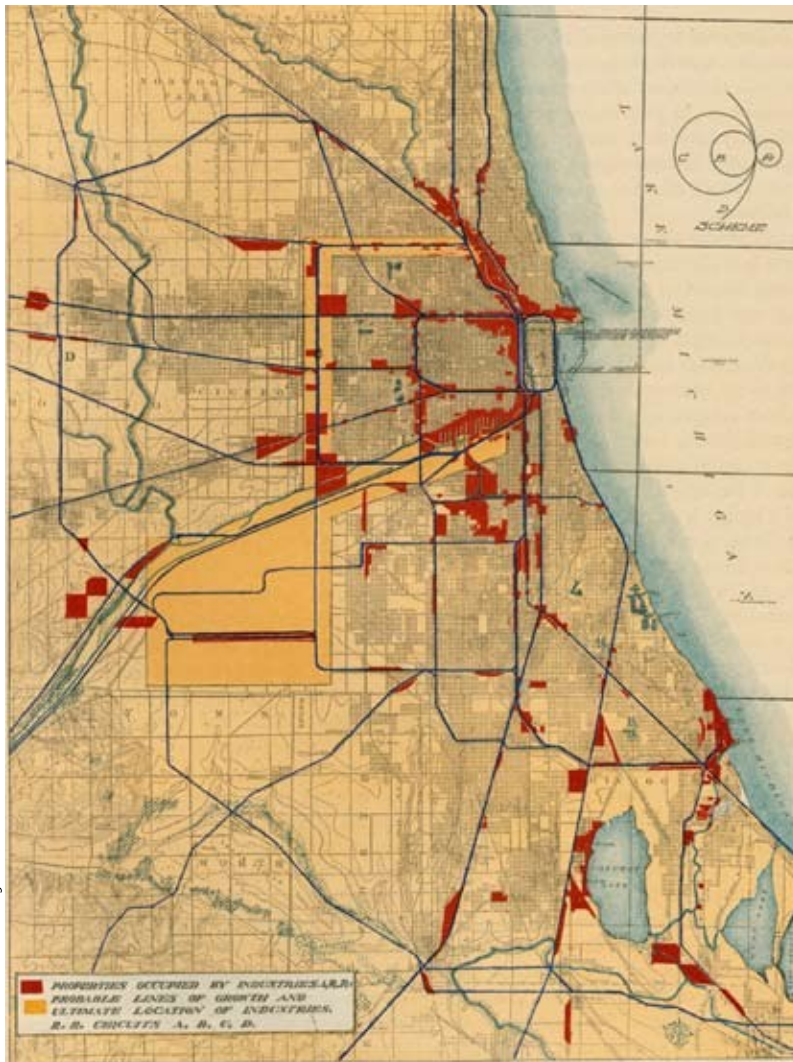


Plate 73 from the Plan of Chicago

The Plan proposes consolidating the region's existing railroad tracks (blue) into a shared network of "circuits." An enormous freight center (gold area) used by all railroads would be linked to downtown and South Chicago harbors, and to central area freight houses.



Chicago History Museum iChi-51878



The Art Institute of Chicago

After construction began on Union Station, the Plan Commission recommended a new post office just to the north (above), but the federal government instead chose a site south of Van Buren Street. The completed Union Station buildings (left) occupied two blocks, and capped a huge complex of new tracks, freight houses, signal towers, viaducts, and bridges.

H A R B O R S

*Chicago has been made largely by the railroads,
and its future prosperity is dependent upon them.*

—Plan of Chicago, p. 61

the Pennsylvania Railroad to locate the new Union Station south of Roosevelt Road. After a decade of construction, the new two-block station finally opened in 1925 between Adams and Jackson. Proposals to consolidate the several South Loop train stations continued until passenger trains declined in the 1960s.

South of the Loop, the South Branch of the Chicago River curved eastward to Clark Street, complicating rail approaches into downtown. As the Plan proposed, this bend was straightened in the late 1920s. That helped untangle railroad lines, but new streets through the area were never constructed.

Chicago was also one of the world's busiest ports, where ships carefully threaded through the narrow river past center-pivot bridges. The Plan proposed a new lake harbor sheltered by piers at Chicago Avenue and Cermak Road, as well as new docks at the mouth of the Calumet River. Navy Pier was built in 1916 at Grand Avenue, but during the 20th century Great Lakes shipping operations both declined and shifted to port facilities at Lake Calumet.

Federal officials worried that devoting the lakefront to recreation would not provide adequate harbor facilities, so the Commercial Club sponsored the more detailed 1927 Harbor Plan of Chicago, which recommended one inland and three lakefront port facilities. It's doubtful that Burnham envisioned commercial airports, but the Plan Commission in the 1920s recommended one attached to Northerly Island near 16th Street, one off the north lakefront near Irving Park Road, and the airfield that is today's Midway Airport.



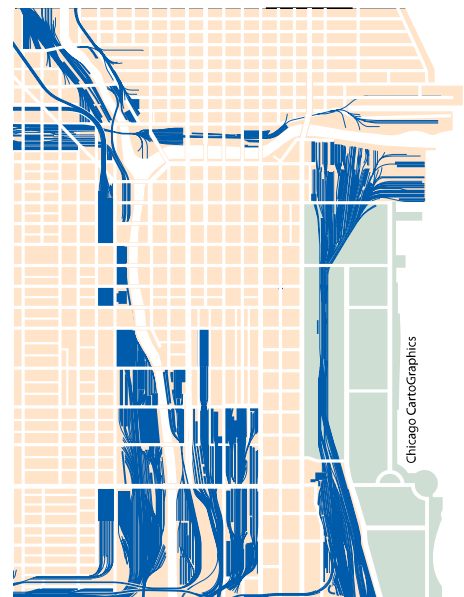
Burnham sketched recreational areas along one side of a new peninsula (above), with docks on the other. Instead, Navy Pier included a ballroom and promenades at both ends (left), with freight sheds in the middle.



from Souvenir of New Municipal Pier, Chicago



In the late 1920s, the South Branch of the Chicago River was relocated into a straightened channel (left) near 16th Street. Despite the Plan's recommendations, central area railroad facilities (in blue, below) were never consolidated.



Congestion is a menace to the commercial progress of the city.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 100

N E W S T R E E T S

Chicago's streets were wide and evenly distributed by European standards, but the busy river and extensive railyards created serious congestion. Incomplete arterials needlessly forced crosstown traffic through the Loop. Heavy freight wagons clogged downtown streets going to and from railroad facilities.

The Plan proposed several circuits of widened streets around the central area, and creation of a broad Michigan Avenue, anticipated to become the busiest street in the world. Widening of Michigan Avenue by taking a strip of Grant Park was the first accomplishment of the Plan, and the former Pine Street was more than doubled in width north of the river. A new double-deck bridge, opened in 1920, allowed north-south traffic to avoid conflicts with freight traffic bound for railyards and docks at the mouth of the river.

Another early Plan improvement was a wide new viaduct to carry Roosevelt Road across many blocks of railyards and the South Branch of the Chicago River, opened in 1916.

Inspired by the Plan but motivated by the growth in auto traffic, the city widened or opened 120 miles of streets between 1915 and 1931, which required shaving several feet off the front of hundreds of existing buildings. Improved business and increased property values on the widened streets convinced owners along other streets to support such projects.

The city's grid was crossed by several historic radial routes, but Burnham praised Haussman's recent work in Paris and encouraged creation of more diagonal streets. Since this required extensive demolition, only one was ever attempted: Ogden Avenue was extended from Union Park to Lincoln Park.

Particularly dramatic was the Plan's suggestion that two-level drives be built along the downtown riverbanks, with an upper level matching the height of new bridge approaches and a lower, riverbank level for freight traffic and handling. The city's wholesale market along the riverbank was moved to the Near West Side and double-level Wacker Drive opened in 1926. Space was left next to the Merchandise Mart and Union Station for similar drives on the opposite riverbanks, which were never built.



from *The Plan of Chicago in 1933*

Ogden Avenue was extended 2.7 miles through the Old Town neighborhood in the 1920s; only 40 years later it was abandoned as unnecessary.



The Art Institute of Chicago

CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
OF
SOUTH WATER STREET
BY
THE
NEW
GARIBOLDI BRIDGE
1916



A Busy Scene on South Water Street, Chicago.

Max Rigot Selling Co. postcard circa 1910

The unique double-deck Wacker Drive (above) in 1926 replaced the crowded South Water Street market along the riverbank.

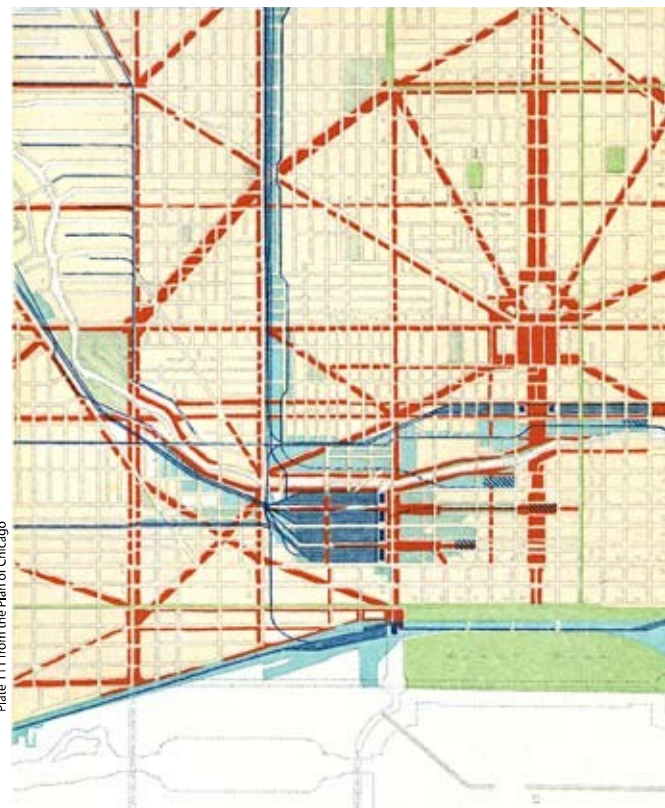
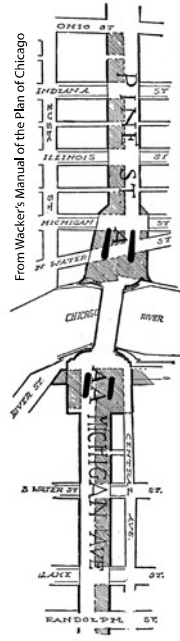


Plate 111 from the Plan of Chicago

A N D B R I D G E S

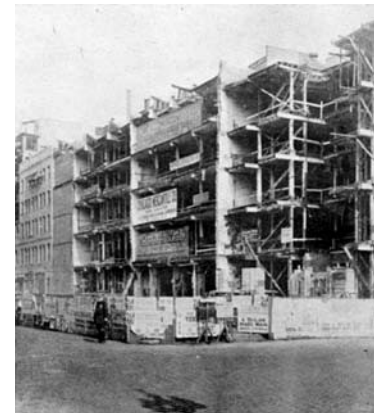
At the center of the Plan's diagrams was Congress Street, at the time an unimportant narrow street running only from State Street to Michigan Avenue. Burnham proposed that it become the city's central axis, running from a Cultural Center in Grant Park to a massive Civic Center at Halsted Street, and then as a great boulevard westward. As superhighway planning began in the 1920s, Plan coauthor Edward H. Bennett personally protested a Monroe Street rather than Congress Street alignment for the West Side route, and objected to the construction in 1930 of the main post office building where it would block the extension of Congress. A tunnel through the post office building was finally used 25 years later for the Eisenhower Expressway, a boulevard considerably less grand than the one Burnham and Bennett envisioned.



Chicago History Museum | CHI-51875

Lake Shore Drive is another legacy of the Plan, though its origins are in the 19th century. As it advanced along with lakefront landfill operations, this parkway intended for pleasure drives took on most of the characteristics of an urban expressway. Writing in 1909, Burnham saw the automobile only as a way for city dwellers to escape for recreation or "the pleasures of suburban life."

North Michigan Avenue (above right) became a grand new boulevard in the 1920s, flanked by new hotels and office buildings. It replaced a narrow residential street north of the river, requiring condemnation of the shaded areas (above left). South of the river, buildings on the east side of the street were cut back and refaced (right), a technique that would be repeated hundreds of times as arterial streets were widened citywide.



from The Plan of Chicago in 1925

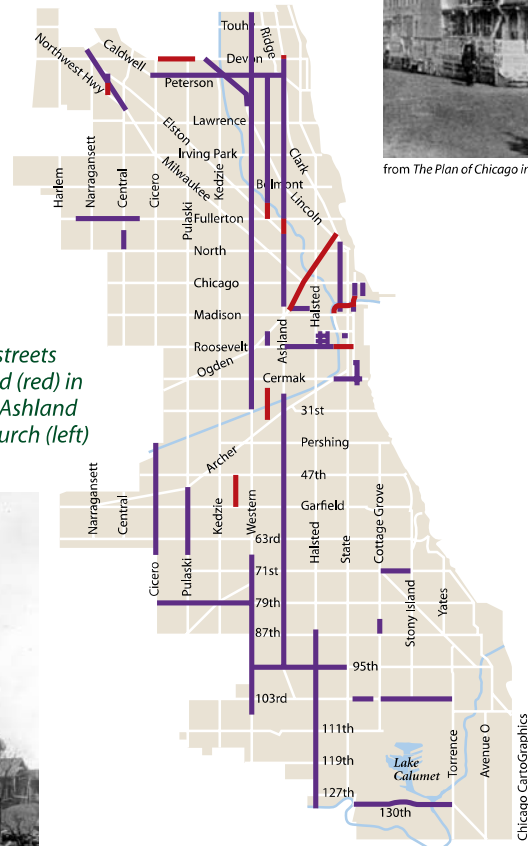


The Plan proposed pushing widened or new diagonal streets (red) through densely built neighborhoods surrounding the Loop. Relocated railroad facilities (dark blue) would allow the business district to expand.

More than 100 miles of arterial streets were widened (purple) or created (red) in the 1920s. To allow widening of Ashland Avenue, Our Lady of Lourdes Church (left) was moved across the street.



Courtesy Our Lady of Lourdes Parish



Chicago Cartographics

P R O M O T I N G T H E

The Plan's dramatic proposals to reshape the metropolis fit the spirit of a place used to big engineering solutions to its problems. Within the memory of its readers, Chicago had raised itself 10 feet out of the mud, tunneled two miles under the lake for fresh water, rebuilt a third of the city after the Fire, transformed a swamp into the biggest World's Fair ever, and had reversed the flow of an entire river. The city's leaders, looking at the city's rapid growth, honestly thought Chicago was destined to become the world's largest city.

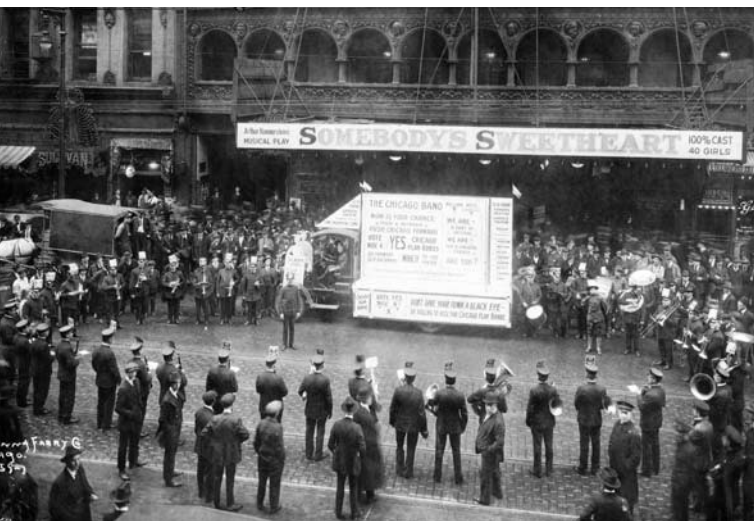
The story of the Plan of Chicago is the story of a city, not a man. Burnham's charismatic leadership was vital, but he himself credited Edward H. Bennett as coauthor, and Charles Moore as editor. After Burnham's death in 1912, implementation of the Plan was the result of inspired leadership and persistent work by others. Retired brewer Charles Wacker devoted himself to realization of the Plan, leading the

Plan Commission until 1926, when he was succeeded by James Simpson. Walter Moody, the Plan Commission's public-relations genius, kept the Plan in the public eye as Chicago entered the boom years of the 1920s.

The Plan's advocates were tireless, giving "magic lantern" slide talks (in a variety of languages) to any group that would listen. Promotional brochures were sent to all the city's property owners and renters paying more than \$25 per month. Articles in newspapers and magazines across the nation showcased the improvements. A short film, "A Tale of One City," was shown over and over in the city's movie houses. Ministers and rabbis were urged to give sermons about the virtues of city planning. A textbook summarizing the Plan, *Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago*, was adopted by city schools and a generation of eighth-graders were taught the benefits of the Plan.



The Art Institute of Chicago



Chicago History Museum ICH137340

Disruptive street widenings were particularly contentious, but the city's overall growth and prosperity usually provided the benefits promised by boosters. This 1922 cartoon appeared in the Chicago Tribune.



The Art Institute of Chicago

A 1919 rally at the Garrick Theater (above) encouraged voters to approve various bond issues for Plan improvements such as the widening of Roosevelt Road (right).



The Art Institute of Chicago

V I S I O N

With things as they should be, every business man in Chicago would make more money than he does now.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 76

The document itself was neither vague encouragement to lofty goals nor mere technical diagrams. Instead, it was a list of specific public improvements that should be made, and the reasons why. It emphasized Chicago's tradition of optimism and bold thinking. It was regional in scope. It focused on quality of life for all residents. And it concluded with a clear call for action.

Rich illustrations—particularly those executed by Guérin—allowed Chicagoans to imagine a transformed city. Reproduced in booklets, pamphlets and magazines, those are the images we remember.

For decades, the young Beaux-Arts-trained Bennett advised the Plan Commission and governmental bodies constructing the projects. He fiercely defended the Plan's core principles, even as that eventually led to conflict with the commission itself. His use of neoclassical elements for modern infrastructure—from park viaducts to bridgehouses to Wacker Drive—brought the Plan's drawings to life.



The Art Institute of Chicago

This summary of central area projects was shown in magic lantern slide presentations and reproduced in such magazines as National Geographic.



Plate 112 from the Plan of Chicago

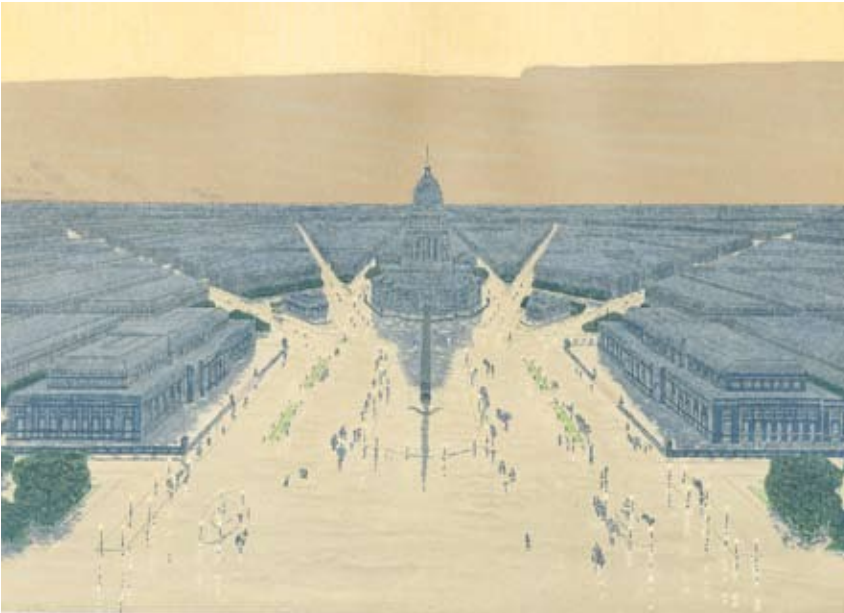
Guérin's memorable renderings showed the remade city bustling at noonday (Michigan Avenue, left) or relaxing at summer twilight (below). The Plan's drawings were exhibited around the world as illustrations of the new science of city planning.



Plate 127 from the Plan of Chicago

LEGACY OF THE

Plate 132 from the Plan of Chicago



Instead of a monumental Civic Center (above) at Congress and Halsted, the site is today the interchange from which the region's superhighways radiate (below). In the late 1920s, Bennett envisioned Congress Street as a landscaped parkway (below left).



from Bennett, Parsons and Frost, *The Axis of Chicago*, 1929



Dennis McClendon

The 1937 Lake Shore Drive Bridge was built in the moderne style, not the classical look favored by Bennett.



Curt Teich & Co. postcard

187—Cater Drive Link Bridge and Skyline, Chicago

Even civic improvement efforts that were already underway were boosted by the attention given the Plan of Chicago. For example, renewed efforts to purchase outlying forest preserves finally succeeded in 1913, and the Cook County district made its first purchase in 1916. By 1922, it had purchased 21,000 acres and today holds 67,000 acres.

The Chicago Plan Commission remained a private body largely supported by the Commercial Club, simply offering advice and expertise to the government agencies who built various public improvements. Bennett advised the city of Chicago as it adopted a zoning ordinance in 1923 and mapped out districts for various land uses. His firm prepared plans similar to the Plan of Chicago for Waukegan, Lake Forest, Winnetka, Elgin, Joliet, and Gary, and for other cities around the country.

In 1923, mindful of work under way in New York and Los Angeles, the City Club of Chicago encouraged formation of the Chicago Regional Planning Association. The new association emphasized coordination and cooperation among independent municipalities rather than a formal vision of a reshaped region. The association successfully coordinated plans for new and improved regional highways. It encouraged forest preserve districts and state parks throughout the Chicago region. Many towns adopted zoning and subdivision ordinances based on the association's research.

In Chicago, 86 bond issues passed, and the Plan's improvements reshaped the central city in the 1920s. Bond issues began to fail at the ballot box in the late 1920s as voters tired of scandals in city government. The Great Depression hit Chicago hard, and only federal public works programs enabled construction of North Lake Shore Drive in the 1930s and the Lake Shore Drive Bridge, opened in 1937.

For all its symbolic importance in the Plan, the massive West Side Civic Center never appears to have been seriously attempted. A new City-County Building was under construction as the Plan was being written, and a downtown location was defended as the most convenient for citizens. In the 1950s, civic center proposals

P L A N

At no period in its history has the city looked far enough ahead.

—Plan of Chicago, p. 80

focused on the southwest corner of the Loop and the area near City Hall.

In 1939, the Plan Commission was reorganized as part of city government, as planning had become an accepted, occasionally bureaucratic, part of municipal decision-making. But the Plan itself became part of Chicago legend, more important than any city planning document before or since, and still influential in civic discussions.

The Plan of Chicago caught the spirit of its time, but also the character of a place that dreamed the impossible and often accomplished it. It is hard to separate the Plan from an aphorism that appears nowhere in it, words attributed to Burnham:

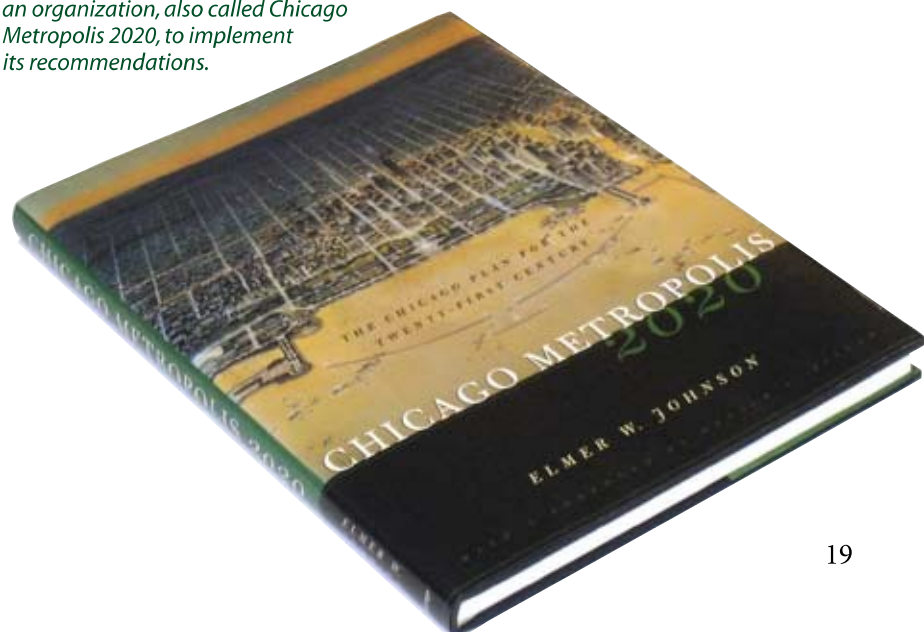
Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die.



Plate 40 from the Plan of Chicago

Regional highways Burnham saw as useful for commerce and recreation reshaped the region in ways he could not foresee.

The Plan of Chicago and even its imagery influenced "Chicago Metropolis 2020," a 1999 report that urged regional solutions to keep the area economically competitive. The Commercial Club of Chicago sponsored the report and created an organization, also called Chicago Metropolis 2020, to implement its recommendations.



Bennett's neoclassical elements such as obelisks and stone balusters (above, at Wacker and Michigan) continue to be reinterpreted as modern markers of civic pride.

TO LEARN MORE

Carl Smith offers an excellent history in *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*. Related essays and the entire *Plan of Chicago* and *Wacker's Manual* can be found at the online Encyclopedia of Chicago, www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org a collaboration between the Chicago History Museum and the Newberry Library.

The Princeton Architectural Press reprinted the *Plan of Chicago* in 1993. Kristen Schaffer's introduction to that edition offers insights into the portions of Burnham's draft that did not appear in the published Plan.

The Plan's effect on the city's infrastructure is recounted in Carl Condit's book *Chicago 1910-29: Building, Planning, and Urban Technology*. A companion volume covers the years 1930-70.

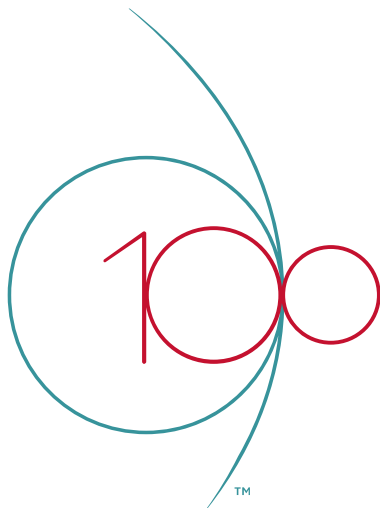
Mel Scott's book *American City Planning Since 1890* gives useful background and context for the Plan.

The Plan of Chicago: A Regional Legacy

Burnham Plan Centennial Committee
c/o Chicago Metropolis 2020
30 W. Monroe, 18th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Written and produced by Dennis McClendon, Chicago CartoGraphics, May 2008

Special thanks to the Chicago History Museum and The Art Institute of Chicago for the generous use of images from their collections.



THE BURNHAM PLAN CENTENNIAL

For more information about the Burnham Plan Centennial please visit www.burnhamplan100.org or contact info@burnhamplan100.org

The Chicago Community Trust is the founding sponsor of the Burnham Plan Centennial. Organizational and staff support is provided by Chicago Metropolis 2020.

