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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE 1929 GENERAL VILLAGE PLAN OF THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN: A CASE STUDY

By Herbert Douglas Maier

Within the short history of comprehensive urban planning, new factors concerning socio-economic research have been introduced into the ever broadening scope of planning investigation. These areas under examination, considered as part of the urban planning programs, are becoming an integral part of the search for greater understanding of the community and its complex interlocking socio-economic factors. A prescribed task within the defined scope of urban planning is to synthesize from described factors a set of goals and purposes suitable to guide the creation of an urban development plan. The basic concept is one that will, in the final analysis, create a plan that recognizes the individuality of each community.

Conceptualization and presentation of this thesis has been developed upon a plan being prepared for a community following an established set of principals, goals and objectives. The programs so developed should be recorded as a part of the plan. The objective was to determine from the Birmingham, Michigan, 1929 General Village Plan emerging trends and indications of growth patterns, and city administrative programs within the community that could be recognized as having originated with the 1929 Plan. The thesis conclusions were drawn by considering the worth of the plan, the degree of its effectiveness

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and guidance provided for decision making, and the principle persons or bodies providing the leadership in utilization of the plan.

To make this evaluation, a plan that had been created for Birmingham, Michigan, a suburban community of Detroit, was secured and examined. This General Village Plan of 1929 was utilized by Birmingham for approximately 20 years as the continuing information system for public decision making in the community's physical development and administrative programs. Because of the extended use of the 1929 Plan as an effective instrument in decision making it lent itself well to an evaluation. Data to aid in the evaluation of the 1929 Plan was gathered from a selected list of other general city plans, technical planning publications, from city administrative records and newspaper records of the Birmingham Eccentric. Because of the brevity of the official city records they were useful only when they were correlated with interviews of persons having an intimate knowledge of the community during the plans' utilization.

The methodology utilized in this thesis includes a consideration of the basic relationships and values of the plan to the community, its feasibility, completeness, and the resultant community actions and reactions. This thesis is concluded by presenting results from examination of completed community representations of the 1929 Plan, an analysis and synthesis of the causal factors and relationships, and the implied values of the Plan and planning process to Birmingham.

Significant is the finding that reiterates a conclusion stated by

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Robert A. Walker that..."[planning] commissions are not doing the job which they were expected to do - namely, to prepare a long-time comprehensive physical plan..."¹ It is noted that although the planning commission did not function for a number of years, many parts of the plan were successfully implemented. The use of zoning as an effective administrative tool to aid in the implementation of the plan was a decisive factor in making this part of the plan successful.

¹Robert A. Walker, The Planning Function in Urban Government, 2d ed. revised. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, p. 163.

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CITY OF BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN: A CASE STUDY
AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE PLAN AND THE PARTS IMPLEMENTED

By

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INTRODUCTION

City Planning is centuries old and known to be changing. City Planning to be considered adequate in the current period must be comprehensive. Comprehensive planning, as it is popularly referred to has, through a process of evolution, been given many connotations. However, for the purpose of this paper the term "general plan" or "comprehensive development plan" will be used to include all forms of total community planning considerations. Whatever the name, it is intended to provide a plan for necessary capital expenditures, specific land developments related to the public and private sectors of the community.

Some plans are indeed comprehensive in scope and consideration, yet others are piecemeal or project plans. Despite the scope of a plan, if it is not used, the community is no better off than if nothing had been done. Although many plans were thought to be adequate, they were found not to be so, and attempted implementation completely failed due to inadequate measures contained therein.

Recent comprehensive plans created in relation to the values of the community have principally focused on determining purposes, goals and objectives. This step and process has been implemented to enable the plan to better fulfill its function as continuing system of public information. Many of the plans being prepared today are related to the community and dedicated to growth; defining growth as being both good and desirable. However, the great American dream of wealth, growth, and satisfaction all contained in a comprehensive plan may be entirely false for many communities. Many municipal officials

were prompted by the idea that all communities should experience extensive growth and so have helped create goals and objectives toward this end.

Proper planning consideration was given by some communities to the formulation of the goals by consulting with persons representing many levels of interest and cross-sections of the basic value structure of the community. Although there was an attempt to build a form of objectiveness into the community goals, there was reasonable doubt in the author's mind, based upon approximately ten years of practice in the planning field, prompted the author to doubt that many goals did not represent the combined thinking of the community. An outgrowth of this doubt was a desire to examine a number of plans to ascertain if goals and objectives had been developed and, if so, by what means. An attempt to establish criteria for verification of goals and objectives contained in a comprehensive plan indicated that an insufficient number of plans had been prepared in this manner. The realization and cognizance of this lack of material for the selected topic prompted a closer examination and narrowing of the field of interest.

Because of the desire to examine factors enveloped in this area of city planning, it was felt necessary to consider the general scope of public acceptance of a plan and the resultant planning process. The Village of Birmingham, Michigan's General Village Plan prepared in 1929 that provided for future development made such an analysis possible. The fact that the 1929 Plan was used as a guide

for implementation principally by the city manager and the Planning Commission for a number of years afforded opportunities to examine its value in providing guidance to the community.

The intent of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the 1929 Plan, the implementation of it, its goals and objectives and its subsequent effect on the change and growth of Birmingham. The following procedures were considered in preparing this evaluation and securing the necessary documentation:

Examine the technical completeness of the report in a reference to the time period in which it was prepared.

To evaluate the plan's goals and objectives which may have been stated or implied.

To determine to what degree there was provided by the plan a useful measure of guidance and influence during the life of the plan.

To compare the plan with the current land use and inspect city administrative records to determine what parts of the plan had been implemented.

To evaluate the total effect of the planning process upon the community, the planning commission and the administrative procedures.

To help achieve objectives of this paper, many sources of information were used. Plans prepared during this same time period were selected from the Michigan State University library resources to make an evaluation of technical completeness. Using this procedure, it was possible to make a valid comparison of the 1929 Birmingham Plan to its contemporary plans and standards rather than to current standards. Background and historical data were obtained from various planning agencies in the Detroit area, from interviews with local municipal employees, other persons who had served as consultants for Birmingham, and from a member of the Planning Commission who had served on the charter

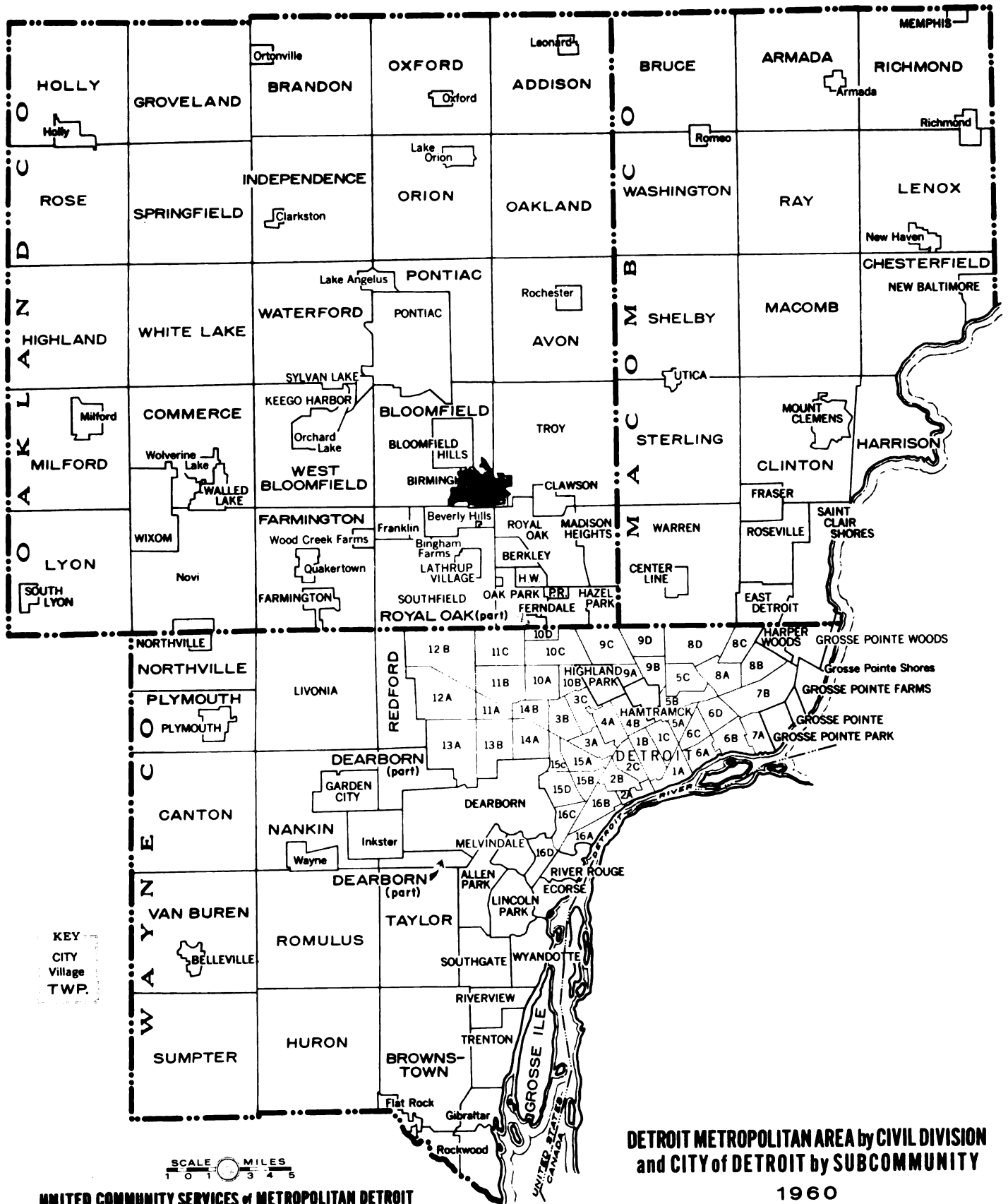
commission at the time the 1929 Plan was presented. Data drawn from these sources places the community in proper development perspective and establishes its relation to the Detroit area. The former City Manager also provided much information concerning the implementation of the plan and helped considerably in filling serious voids found in the Planning Commission records.

Every effort was made to obtain authentic data at all times. However, there were times when it was impossible or impractical to obtain it because of brevity and occasional inconclusiveness of both Commissions' records. They often contained only the citation and final motions for adoption of current issues. Because of these voids in the city records, the documentation contained in this report is at times supplemented with certain inferences and the author's judgments. There were occasions when assumptions were based on sketchy facts and related incidents. Some representations contained herein are also based upon many seemingly related bits of data. Certain voids have been filled with these inferences to develop a continuity and/or relation of facts. The Birmingham Eccentric's files of past issues provided much of the information needed to supplement data and create a sound platform for these necessary inferences and assumptions.

This thesis contains an evaluation of the 1929 Plan for Birmingham and is as complete as time and resources permitted. It sets forth the technical completeness of the plan, how it was used, the areas and parts of it that were utilized, and other related accomplishments including administrative procedures. The zoning program is considered separately from the administrative procedures although it is a very important and

integral part of the planning process.

The circumstances surrounding the national economy following the presentation of the 1929 Plan caused the Planning Commission to cease its normal historical function for an extended period. This event set the stage for the City Manager to use the plan in the absence of the Planning Commission. The usefulness of the 1929 Plan is measured in relation to the goals and objectives of the plan and how closely they were tailored to the needs of the community. The achievements of the 1929 Plan have been measured in the amount of public properties acquired that can be given locational relationship to the Plan, and the administrative programs instigated by the plan or that can be traced to it.



CHAPTER I

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

A brief examination is made of the historical, physical, and locational characteristics of Birmingham, their relation to the immediate surrounding area and to the Detroit region. The historic perspective of Birmingham is presented to show the milestones in its past growth from a settlement, a Village and to a City. Also, to determine the sequence and significance of events in Birmingham's growth that caused the shaping of its socio-economic community. The planning activity prior to the 1929 Plan is examined to determine the sequence of events that caused this Village to have a General Village Plan prepared in 1929.

Settlement Activity. - Birmingham's history can be traced back to the early 1820's when the first settlers located upon a rise of ground on the Saginaw Trail. This trail was used by Indians traveling between what is now Detroit and Saginaw. It is alleged that Chief Pontiac, a famous and fierce leader of Algonquin Tribes, once traveled this trail that extended from Indian settlements on the Detroit River.

The topography of Birmingham and vicinity is gently rolling. The City is located upon a gently sloping hill bisected by the Rouge River valley in a northeast-southwest direction and by Quarton Lake extending from the center northward. Elevation difference from the high to low points is about 60 feet.

Beginning with the early settlement of the 1920's, there were many occurrences that caused the community to develop as it is today. Following are some of the events which in passing helped to shape the

community:

In 1819 the area between Detroit and Birmingham was a flat plain that was covered by extensive swamps. Many accounts of the Saginaw Trail relate that it was impossible for the settlers to travel upon it most of the year. This caused the early settlers, including John W. Hunter, Birmingham's first settler, to use the inland waterways of Mt. Clemens and Clinton Rivers to get close to this area.

In 1819 and 1822 acts were passed by the Michigan legislature to establish a road on the site of the Saginaw Trail between Detroit and Pontiac. However, both acts failed to effect completion of the road.

In 1824 a third act was approved by the legislature that allowed the Pontiac and Paint Creek Turnpike Company to incorporate. A plank toll road was then completed between Detroit and Pontiac and remained in use for some time and served Birmingham adequately. As the planks became worn and impassable the surface was graveled and graded.

Until 1830, other roads between Pontiac and Detroit were inadequate and impassable at certain seasons of the year.

In 1832, according to an early story, following a meeting of the townspeople attempting to name the town, to which none could agree, a foundry man named Merrill hung up the sign "Birmingham." This was selected because of the industrial activity and how much it reminded him of his old home in Birmingham, England. The name of Birmingham, however, was not yet official and it apparently became fixed by acceptance rather than choice.

In the middle 1800's, Birmingham was a community of bustling industry and manufacturing enterprise. Although no specific records were kept, the industrial activity diminished over a short period of years. It is reported that after the industries became incapacitated one at a time by some occurrence, they were never rebuilt.

In 1839, the first rail line came to the community and was a milestone in the progress of Birmingham. This was prompted by the growing importance of nearby Pontiac and Detroit as industrial towns. It wasn't until 1839, however that the track was extended to Birmingham and the first steam engine made a trip to Birmingham from Detroit.

In 1864, the Village was incorporated and contained an area of one square mile.

In 1884, one of Birmingham's leading citizens, the late Martha Baldwin, helped organize the Village Improvement Society. This was perhaps the earliest civic planning effort in Birmingham, unconsciously made in her determination to keep the Village clean and orderly. According to The Birmingham Eccentric, the community's newspaper, she was influential in having the Town Board pass several ordinances relative to the enhancement of the Village, assure its cleanliness, upkeep and natural beauty. The so called Village Improvement Society was still in existence in 1913 at the time of her death.

In 1885, a new Village charter was prepared, providing for six commissioners.

In the early 1900's much of the public transportation between points in southern Michigan was by the electric inter-urban system. One such line, linking Detroit and Pontiac, helped to open the area around Birmingham for settlement. The natural rolling fields of Birmingham and vicinity produced a pleasing contrast to the flat area of Detroit, inducing many people to immigrate. Attesting to the importance of the area, The Birmingham Eccentric stated in 1929 that the late Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford... "who rarely made public appearances,"... were present at the laying of the cornerstone for the community center.

In the 1910 - 1920 decade the Village population increased by 2,087 persons. The following decade showed an even greater increase which, without doubt, was an important factor in the attitude toward creating a Plan in 1929. (See Table No. 1, Population, page 10.)

In 1913, another Village charter was adopted providing for a three commissioner type of government.

From 1920 to 1930 there was also recorded a large growth in the population of Birmingham of about 5,845 persons.

By 1925, the expanding use of the motor bus and other economic troubles caused the inter-urban system to fall into receivership. In 1928, it was reorganized and operated until 1931 when the line running through Birmingham was discontinued.

In 1927, a charter amendment was put into effect, re-establishing the previous six man commission and mayor, a seven man board.

In the late 1920's, communities were eager to grow and develop. Many communities aided developers by financing public improvements by issuing bonds against the property for work completed and financed by the community. Birmingham thus found itself in the development business during this period by following this practice. (See Table No. 2, page 11, for tax levy and debt structure.)

By 1928 the area of Birmingham had increased in physical size from the 640 acres in 1864 to an area of 2,600 acres.

In 1931, the year which seemed to be particularly bad for the inter-urban bus transport companies, a high point was reached for the railroad. In August of this year the Grand Trunk Railroad celebrated its new commuter service. This service brought the north Woodward Avenue communities, including Birmingham, closer to Detroit in travel time.

In 1933, Birmingham became a city and retained the previous seven commissioners, one of which was elected mayor.

In 1947, the community had elevated its credit rating according to Moody's Investor Services, to "BAA." Prior to this it was "BA," not enough to qualify for general bank investments.

In 1955 the credit rating reached a high of "A."

TABLE 1

Population Growth, Birmingham, Michigan

Decade	Population	Actual Increases	% Increase
1860	520	--	--
1870	628	108	21
1880	733	105	17
1890	899	166	23
1900	1,170	271	30
1910	1,607	437	37
1920	3,694	2,087	130
1930	9,539	5,845	158
1940	11,196	1,657	17
1950	15,467	4,271	38
1960	25,525	10,058	65

Areal Characteristics. - Detroit's and Pontiac's industrialization had a marked impact upon Birmingham's character. With increased mobility brought about by the automobile, managerial and professional people were

TABLE 2

Comparative tax levies, City of Birmingham, Michigan

Tax Year July 1	Assessed Valuation	Tax Rate Per 1M	Debt Service Levy	Percent Levied for Debt Service	Estimated Population	Percent Collected Prior to March 1st of Following Year
1928	23,441,100	12.00	84,971.90	30.21	8,650	77
1929	25,280,230	13.00	103,619.59	31.53	9,250	73
1930	24,872,440	13.50	122,446.61	36.47	9,539 (C)	62
1931	23,411,265	13.50	101,199.20	32.02	9,650	57
1932	22,858,480	12.00	115,362.96	42.05	9,725	44
1933	12,889,330	17.50	70,771.68	31.38	9,850	38.33
1934	12,655,173	15.81	62,814.73	31.40	9,900	51.04
1935	12,419,010	19.00	50,000.00	21.19	10,050	60.60
1936	12,769,710	19.00	50,262.21	20.72	10,125	68.38
1937	13,408,300	19.00	47,582.86	18.68	10,350	73.58
1938	13,778,420	19.00	44,068.40	16.83	10,659	76.22
1939	13,969,720	19.00	50,095.11	18.87	10,925	79.19
1940	14,161,480	19.00	61,494.03	22.85	11,196 (C)	86.19
1941	13,829,980	18.50	53,087.76	20.75	11,450	91.62
1942	14,330,400	18.41	52,551.11	19.92	11,700	92.90
1943	14,459,780	19.71	53,560.35	18.79	11,950	94.85

TABLE 2 (Continued)
Comparative Tax levies, City of Birmingham, Michigan

Tax Year July 1	Assessed Valuation	Tax Rate Per 1M	Debt Service Levy	Percent Levied for Debt Service	Estimated Population	Percent Collected Prior to March 1st of Following Year
1944	14,908,900	19.71	55,281.55	18.81	12,100	95.72
1945	15,189,220	19.91	59,781.25	19.76	12,250	97.12
1946	17,226,800	20.00	71,431.66	20.73	12,450	96.81
1947	19,785,720*	19.50	88,854.36	23.03	12,683 (C)	95.76
	19,755,080					
1948	20,993,780	20.00	75,164.65	17.90	14,000	96.14
1949	27,582,240	20.00	72,271.50	13.10	14,750	96.69
1950	30,604,020	19.70	77,378.78**	12.83	15,467 (C)	97.15
1951	35,503,320	19.50	81,568.93	11.78	18,000	97.30
1952	41,153,820	19.50	92,217.61***	11.49	20,000	97.93
1953	45,453,840	19.00	91,405.00	10.58	22,000	98.23
1954	48,807,260	19.50	93,566.00	9.83	22,500	98.32
1955	53,249,460	-	99,161.90	-	23,000	-

(C) Census

* Reduced by State Tax Commission after spread of roll. Difference paid by City. See Vo.#11096-47

** Includes 23M levied to pay back General Fund for advances made to retire callable bonds.

*** Includes 9M levied to pay back General Fund for advances made to retire callable bonds.

Source: Finance Officer, City of Birmingham, Michigan.

TABLE 3

Selected Detroit area community comparisons

	Median Family Income		Population		Median Home Value	
	1959	1954	1960	1950	1960	1950
1. Birmingham	10,800	9,500	25,525	15,467	20,200	13,640
2. Bloomfield Hills	20,000	20,000	2,378	1,468	35,000	52,259
3. Troy	6,500		19,058		14,200	
4. Royal Oak	8,000	7,800	80,612	46,898	14,200	9,516
5. Beverly Hills	11,200		8,633		27,700	
6. Lathrup Village	13,000		3,556		31,400	
7. Pleasant Ridge	12,100	11,800	3,807	3,594	18,300	15,054
8. Huntington Woods	12,900	12,800	8,746	4,949	23,200	17,779
9. Grosse Pointe Farms	13,000	10,900	12,172	9,410	31,000	20,000
10. Grosse Pointe	12,200	12,000	6,631	6,283	26,300	19,100
11. Grosse Pointe Woods	11,600	10,700	18,580	10,381	29,800	16,248

Sources: 1960 U.S. Census; Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission.

able to live in a country estate atmosphere, yet retain offices and places of employment in the employment centers. This desire and trend aided communities, such as Birmingham to become predominantly residential, although at first this privilege was extended only to the managerial and professional classes who could afford, financially and through work conditions, to reside in the early suburban communities.

The Detroit metropolitan area is still experiencing this trend. There is a changing emphasis in employment patterns however, as shown by studies completed by the Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission's studies of the shifting industrial patterns,¹ Between 1937 - 1949, 83 plans were relocated north of the City of Detroit. Between 1950 - 1960, 151 shifted to the segment of the metropolitan area containing Birmingham. The trend has now become a pattern of industrial decentralization, favoring suburban communities. Principle industries involved in this shift were machining and tool making companies, metal fabricating shops, and chemical firms.

The first five communities listed on Table No. 3 are those adjacent to Birmingham and comprise that segment of the metropolitan area having Birmingham as the designated center. Their relative importance to the entire metropolitan area can be seen by comparing them to other high income areas of the Detroit region. (Communities numbered 6 through 11 on Table No. 3) The general land use characteristics of all the communities except Royal Oak and Troy are predominantly residential. They contain very little industry and most of them have shopping facilities of major significance within their corporate limits.

Planning History. - The Planning Commission was created by Village Commission ordinance in January, 1926. Its beginning activity was quite dynamic and somewhat startling. In a little more than two weeks

¹The Changing Pattern of Manufacturing Plants and Employment 1950-1960 in the Detroit Region, Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission, April, 1961.

after adoption of the ordinance, the Planning Commission at its first official meeting, are considering a civic center plan prepared for them which was advanced in design enough to recommend to the Village Commission by a unanimous vote. The citizens of the commission were undoubtedly highly regarded, because after they reaffirmed their recommendation of the civic center plan, the Village Commission proceeded to follow, at least in principle, their recommendations.

After a somewhat brilliant start and some good committee organization the interest seemed to lag. (Examine Chapter II's chronological list of planning commission activities excerpted from the minutes of their meetings for detail of the committees). For the largest part of the following year the commission was either unable to assemble a quorum or to conduct meetings whose agenda contained only items concerned with day to day business. The early interest and work of the Planning Commission generated high goals, ideals and aims which are apparent in the committee structure it established. Its' structure also indicated what the commission felt should be accomplished within the city planning framework. Judging from the material available, the commission had a person or persons who were aware of certain planning principles of that time.

After a two year incubation period, the Planning Commission realized the magnitude of the task of preparing a plan and turned to Arthur C. Comey for technical, professional assistance in preparing a General Village Plan.

Planning Commission Activity Prior to the 1929 Plan. - The following items were selected from Planning Commission minutes to indicate planning activity prior to employment of Arthur Comey and the subsequent Village Plan. These activities are set forth below in a chronological sequence:

18 January, 1926. The Village Commission establishes the Planning Commission.

3 February, 1926. The organizational meeting of the Planning Commission was held. At this meeting the Planning Commission recommends a site plan to the Village Commission for the municipal buildings. The plan recommended a civic center, indicating a close physical relationship of the proposed buildings for the center. After their first meeting and realizing their responsibilities the commission members obligations caused them to develop committees to discharge their duties more effectively. Each member assumed a committee chairmanship with the committees members to be selected from the community's citizenry.

The following committees were formed to provide for:

1. Developing a plan for protecting existing and increasing street tree planting;
2. Publicity and education work;
3. Traffic study and regulation;
4. Provisions of adequate parks;
5. Development of a civic and community center and other public buildings; and
6. Supervision over projects within and without the corporate limits.

5 June, 1926. The Planning Commission reaffirmed the original recommendation on the civic center plan.

1 July, 1926. The zoning ordinance was adopted. A petition from Birmingham's citizens was received by Village Commission to hold a referendum within 90 days on the zoning ordinance.

4 August, 1926. The Planning Commission's park committee presented

comprehensive report on park conditions and measures necessary to make them sanitary and safe. The Planning Commission recommends that the zoning ordinance be adopted and presented to the people for a vote.

- 7 September, 1927. The Planning Commission begins investigation for a full time planner to be hired.
- 5 October, 1927. The Commission recommended that Merrill St. be opened and property necessary for the right-of-way be acquired at a cost of \$100,000.00
- 7 March, 1928. A representative of John Nolen Co., Planning Consultants appeared at the meeting to discuss a proposal for city planning for Birmingham.
- 9 April, 1928. Village Commission council accepts resignation of Planning Commission en toto. The reason is not apparent although indications point to the Planning Commission's objection to Village Commission selections of a planning consultant. (No record of Planning Commission taking action in their meetings regarding resignations, nor did the personnel of Planning Commission change following this.)
- 18 July, 1928. The Planning Commission recommends that the city install ornamental street lighting on certain streets.
- 13 October, 1928. The Planning Commission requested authorization to employ a village planner at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.00.
- 7 November, 1928. After an extensive investigation concerning prospective city planners, a report was made to the Planning Commission about Arthur C. Comey and the John Nolen Co. A discussion was held with interested citizen groups concerning the Woodward Avenue beautification project.

The Commission members indicated they would like to increase contact with school board to be in a better position to correlate planning between the two groups. It was suggested that a member of the school board be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Planning Commission.
- 20 November, 1928. Arthur Comey appeared to discuss his proposal for a "path finders survey."
- 5 December, 1928. The Commission recommends to Village Council that Arthur C. Comey be appointed to prepare a village plan for Birmingham.

17 April, 1929. Arthur C. Comey indicated he would have a tentative plan ready by May 16, 1929.

17 May, 1929. The Comey plan was discussed with adjoining Bloomfield Township, the Birmingham School Board and the Village Commission.

15 July, 1929. Arthur C. Comey submitted a General Village Plan Report; no action was taken.

17 July, 1929. The Planning Commission sought \$750. to print a formal version of the Comey report for general distribution. A letter of transmittal for the Village Plan was adopted.

2 October, 1929. Printed reports of the General Village Plan are received to be distributed as follows: 1000 copies to be mailed to a selected mailing; 1000 copies to be placed at convenient places within City Hall for general distribution, and 1000 copies to be placed in the vault of the City Clerk for future use.

The Planning Commission minutes are not discontinued upon retaining Mr. Comey. Instead, they are extended as the Commission's activity increased until the depressed economy of the early 1930's when Planning Commission activity ceased for about ten years. The Planning Commission minutes from the above concluding data following the completion of the 1929 Plan will be utilized in Chapter III, "Implementation of the Village Plan."

CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGE PLAN OF 1929

The General Village Plan prepared for Birmingham followed by a few years the achievements in city planning made by the Chicago Plan. Aided by the nations expanding economy, the city planning efforts such as these began to grow. Most of the plans developed in the early 1920's stressed the "city beautiful" rather than an economic functioning unit. At the beginning of the 1930's, however, the emphasis was shifting to economic considerations. The city was being considered as a functioning unit interrelated by economic forces.

Arthur C. Comey prepared the plan for Birmingham during the transition period and it reflects some of both eras. Thus, the General Village Plan for Birmingham, Michigan, was prepared, reflecting both the "city beautiful" and the economic concepts.

As noted from a biographical sketch in the Appendix, one of the consulting jobs Mr. Comey had was with Detroit, Michigan during the 1915-1920 period and later in the 1920's. It can be reasonably speculated that someone from the Birmingham area, or connected with the village, knew of Mr. Comey and his work in Detroit. From this it can be deduced that Mr. Comey's invitation to plan Birmingham came because of his work in the Detroit area.

Village Plan. - The General Village Plan of Birmingham, Michigan, a report to the Village Planning Commission was submitted in July of

1929.² The general plan was submitted to the Planning Commission which in turn submitted it to the Village Commission. Letters of transmittal covered each presentation. The physical plan consisted of three parts, two parts which were bound together forming the report, and the General Village Plan Map (a copy of the General Village Plan Map is on Plate II, page 22) and the "preliminary zoning study map" which was placed in the municipal building for review by interested persons. A copy of this part is no longer available for review for this study.

The Village Plan Report discusses various elements not shown on the General Village Plan Map. This may be the type of plan which was contracted for and referred to in the informal correspondence between Mr. Comey and the Birmingham Planning Commission as a "Path Finders Survey." This has been construed to mean only sufficient detail of the plan needed to develop only the basic elements of a plan and to organize a planning program. This conclusion was arrived at only after studying the Village Plan.

Some elements in the 1929 Plan are listed as items for consideration in the growth of the community which would be needing attention at a later date. These items are discussed by noting that the "...plan must pay due regard..." and then describing the activity briefly in a short paragraph.

The descriptive material of the plan is contained within twenty-nine

²A copy of the plan is a part of the Appendix.

GENERAL VILLAGE PLAN BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION

ARTHUR C. CONEY, CITY PLANNER
JUNE 1929

EXISTING DAKS
EXISTING PLAY GROUNDS
EXISTING SCHOOL GROUNDS

LEGEND
 1. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 2. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 3. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 4. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 5. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 6. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 7. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'
 8. 100' WIDE HIGHWAYS 150' 200'

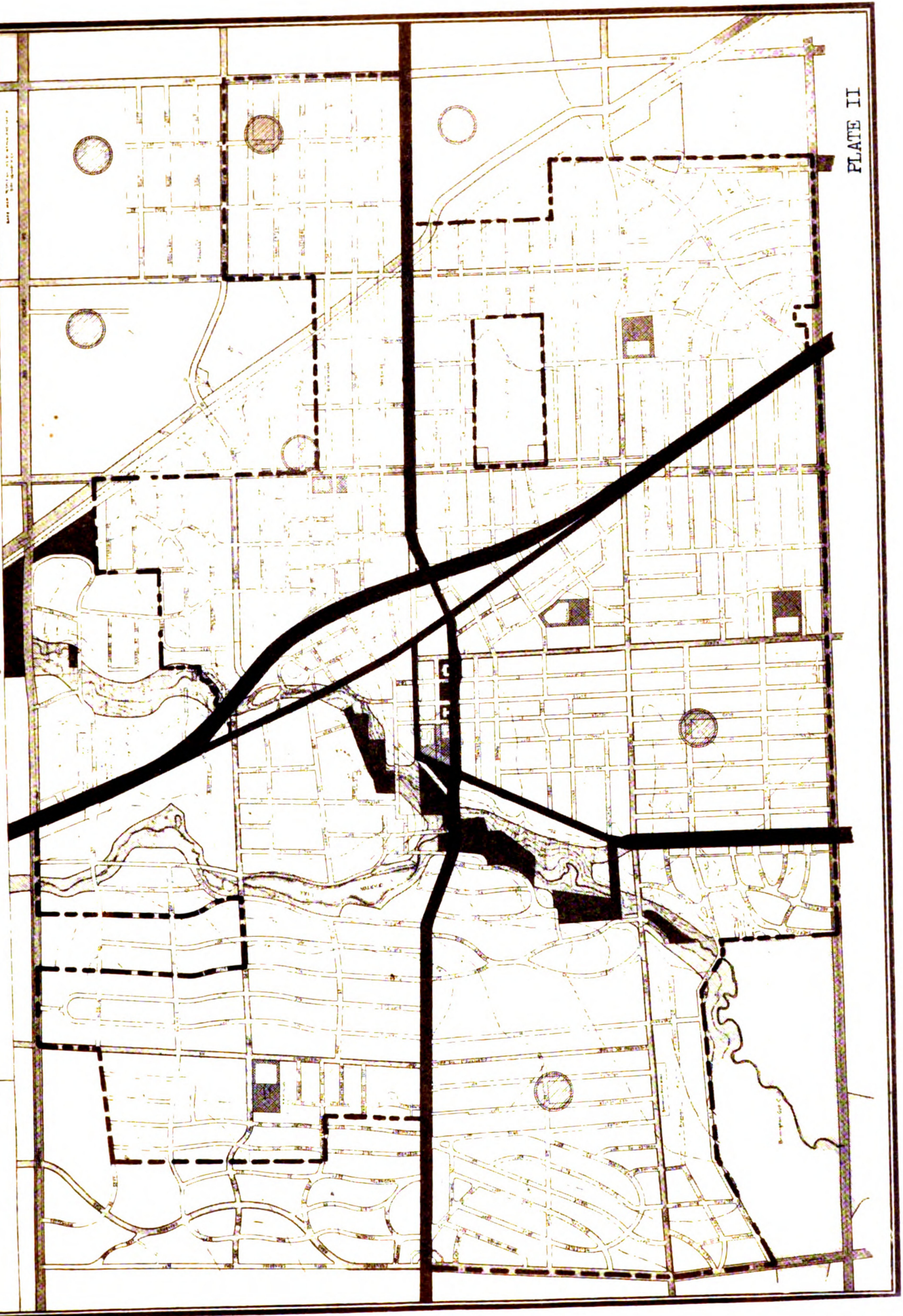


PLATE II

pages of text, graphics and photographs. It is divided into the following major parts:

A. Introduction

Planning Limitations, Desirable Village Limits, and Needed Legislation.

B. Regional Aspects

Detroit - Pontiac Regional Plans, Super Highways, Intervening Highways and Regional Park System

C. General Plan

I Circulation - The Highway System, Flatting Control and Transit

II Park System

III Zoning

IV Public Functions

V Private Property

The General Village Plan Map is attached to the back cover and indicates general location of playgrounds, parks and parkways, roadway extensions and some highway locations.

Plan Goals and Objectives. - The primary reason for establishing goals and objectives is to recognize the values of the community and to incorporate them in the planning process. Today, these goals and objectives are made an integral part of most planning reports. However, during the period when this plan was prepared stated goals and objectives were generally not included in the planning reports.³ This is true of the General Village Plan of Birmingham. However, when

³ The lack of goals in this period was discovered when a number of plan reports were examined to determine technical completeness later in this chapter on pp. 30-34.

the report was evaluated, there seemed to be a series of implied goals and objectives in the introduction of the plan report.⁴

They were assumed to be goals and objectives, for they appear to be the guides by which the author developed the plan and framed the proposals.

The implied goals set forth in the text of the 1929 Plan are:

1. "...ninety to one-hundred and twenty thousand people will eventually be living within the present area of Birmingham."
2. Acknowledging the change in population: "Will this change occur without destroying the present attractiveness of the village."
3. Can this growth be so utilized as to result in enhancing Birmingham's high standards.
4. The prospect of "... indefinite expansion of Birmingham in area does not at present appear particularly desirable."
5. "... a possible future village corporate line is indicated on the Plan of Birmingham and Vicinity, utilizing the natural or artificial barriers where feasible to separate Birmingham physically from surrounding municipalities."
6. The zoning plan should be adopted as soon as possible to harmonize the private sector of the economy with the public sector. An evaluation in greater depth shall be made in a later chapter using these goals and objectives.

⁴ Arthur C. Comey, General Village Plan of Birmingham, Michigan, 1929, p. 7-9.

Plan Evaluation. - An evaluation of the 1929 Plan will help determine if the report and models are representative of the community and whether or not the purposes, that is, either stated or implied, are achieved. Invariably, some of ones' values are bound to appear which makes the critique less objective than would be desired.

In this evaluation, the letter of transmittal becomes important because it lists the major plan considerations of the plan. These "main features" are offered in the following four parts of the Village Plan:

1. A regional plan showing Birmingham's relation to the surrounding area.
2. A general village plan - emphasizing general location and widths of major streets, systems of parks and playgrounds.
3. A general zoning plan prepared as part of the village plan - presented separately.
4. A report accompanying and explaining briefly the plan and a brief survey of all principal aspects of village planning.

If the report and subsequently, the general plan are to be evaluated there must be some framework, some factors about the community which will be the guide for the plan preparation. The causal relationships which structure the comprehensive plan are the given facts about the community. They can be physical relationships or social and economic considerations, but each has a marked influence upon the ultimate design proposed for the community. Mr. Comey has stated some of the

more obvious causal factors and alludes to others in the plan report. Those which are stated in the report under the Introduction are:⁵

- 1.) "Birmingham is an integral part of the Detroit - Pontiac region;" and 2.) "It is ... more or less a self contained residential community."

The following items are included in the 1929 Plan Report under the "Planning Limitations" section.⁶

- 1.) The past physical development has caused the pattern of the community to become established for future growth; 2.) A majority of the existing area within and some outside the Village has been subdivided and the streets surfaced and graded; and 3.) Scattered home development within the existing subdivisions retards realignment of the street system.

An inference is made to the factors listed below without actually identifying them as planning limitations.

- 1.) Growth direction is limited to the east, west, northeast, and southwest because of existing communities to the southeast and northwest of Birmingham along Woodward Ave;⁷ 2.) The "superhighways," section line roads and quarter section roads will be keyed in with the plan adopted by the township authorities;⁸ and 3.) The Village has some existing community center buildings and a planned nucleus for a civic center.⁹

The 1929 Plan was examined to determine if it had been realistically prepared by considering the goals and objectives discussed earlier.

⁵Ibid., p. 7

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 8

⁸Ibid., p. 11

⁹Ibid., p. 27

To do this, the author examined various concepts and implications and tested their application within the established parameters of the 1929 Plan. Listed below are some statements about the plan developed out of this examination.

1. A program of controlled expenditures was proposed to regulate the improvements within the village's means to expand.
2. The growth factors are examined recognizing regional implications of highways and parks.
3. Economic considerations which were felt to be influential in the growth of the community were recognized and noted.
 - a. The plan proposed development of the Village as a residential community in relation to the outside economic factors dominating the employment base.
 - b. Certain types of industry needed to serve the basic needs of Birmingham are recommended.
 - c. All other industries over a certain size shall be subject to a public hearing relative to the "welfare of the village."
4. In view of the rapidly expanding residential areas, a recommendation to acquire land in advance of needs was quite realistic.
5. The recommendation that parts of the Rouge River Valley be used for open spaces to help develop and enhance residential areas of "high character" was of real value. This topography and its suitability for homesites undoubtedly attracted many people to the area.
6. Perhaps the greatest inconsistency was in the zoning and

population proposals. The plan acknowledged the pleasant character of the Village and its unique atmosphere, yet implied that the existing community would expand to a high density and a population of over 90,000 people.

Public Interest. - The awareness of the public can very seldom be measured with any degree of accuracy. This is especially true when trying to determine public reaction to a historic event after a period of years.

One way of reflecting the interest of the community is through a local newspaper. The Birmingham Eccentric has been a very reliable source with its fingers on the pulse of the community for many years. Granted, the reporting and editorial policies may be subjective; but, by and large the Eccentric is judged to have been quite objective in its reporting. This is especially true during the period when the 1929 General Village Plan was prepared and presented.

The newspaper had little or no personal interest in the hiring of a planning consultant and did not carry any stories or editorials prior to the presentation of the plan to the community. However, the Eccentric did carry a short news story about the plan on the third of July and each succeeding week as the newspaper was published as follows:

11 July, 1929. The plan was given a front page news story complete with a picture of Arthur Comey. The news story indicated there were no radical proposals but that the report sets forth practical methods primarily to achieve growth and prevent the setting in of "degenerating elements" within the Village.

1 August, 1929. Another front page news story indicated the plan will be reviewed by the Village Commission.

12 September, 1929. An editorial appeared concerning the growth of Birmingham dwells on the enjoyable community aspect despite its predicted growth. (Seems to be similar to some aspects of the Comey plan).

10 October, 1929. Again, the Eccentric carried a front page news story about the Village Plan. The story gave information on the printing of the report, mailing procedure and its availability to the citizens of Birmingham. Accompanying this was a lengthy story discussing the elements of the plan in some detail.

17 October, 1929. A short news story appeared about the work of Comey, the plan and the fee paid for developing the plan. An editorial favorably supporting the plan, stated "...not 100 percent correct for Birmingham, but does contain many practical suggestions."

24 October, 1929. A story about Village Manager Parry addressing the Rotary Club on the aspects of the Village Plan. The news coverage again relates details of the plan and its potential.

31 October, 1929. An editorial posed the question of limited industry and asked the people what they desired concerning the industrial expansion.

14 November, 1929. A personalized article written by a Village Commissioner, a regular feature of the paper, showed the influence of Comey's report in predictions for the Village, taxing and industrial attitudes.

Interest in the Village Plan may be judged to have been quite high at the time of its presentation. If this is not true the newspaper went to rather unexpected lengths to keep it before the public. The stories were carried for approximately five months.

Another way to determine how well the plan was received is the way in which it is implemented. If the plan is realistic and well received chances are, the financing of most projects will be smooth with limited adverse public reaction. The true test of a plan is in its implementation. It is at this point the people choose to spend or not to spend their money according to what they feel will be best for the community.

Implementation of the Village Plan is considered in Chapter III.

Comparisons. - To be of real value, a comparison involving the 1929 Plan must be made which will keep to a minimum, a subjective evaluation based on current standards. To do this and to measure the technical completeness, standards and criteria were also established. The criteria were established and developed by securing a number of plans completed about the same time as the 1929 Plan. (The five plans and their full titles are listed in the Bibliography.) To obtain a relatively representative sample of the limited number of available technical reports and plans the five were selected from different parts of the United States and were each prepared by a different consultant. The following criteria were developed to determine the selected plans, technical completeness:

1. The individual or individuals providing the technical assistance, and the methodology used for preparing the plan and report;
2. The completeness of research and presentation;
3. Were the proposals related to reality, and did they hold promise of being implemented;
4. The elements considered and included in the plan.

To facilitate plan comparison various factors were combined into two tables. The first three criteria are shown on Table 4, page 31; the fourth one is contained in Table 5, page 33. Table 6, page 34 is presented to examine and compare the physical elements of the selected plans and the Birmingham 1929 Plan.

TABLE 4

Report contents: An evaluation of selected community plans*

Selected Communities and Plan Prepared by:	Evaluation
Birmingham, Michigan 1929, Arthur C. Comey	The relation to true aspects of life and to regional elements was done with meaning. Elements were well defined and adequately presented. The number of elements indicate the research was adequate. Graphics were adequate and readable.
Cincinnati, Ohio 1925; Technical Advisory Corp., Consulting Engineers	The economic development, relation to areal and regional factors label this plan as quite real and sensitive to the community setting. Accompanying the report is an overwhelming abundance of statistics indicating extensive research. Perhaps a shortcoming is in having so many facts and figures in the report. It is the only report of the six that does contain related research material.
Columbia, Missouri 1935; Hare and Hare, Consultants	The report was in touch with the academic population but was not related to other areas of economic base. Primarily concerned with physical relations and esthetics. The presentation could have been better, the maps were small scale, difficult to read and there was not a complete plan relating all of the concepts and features. The University of Missouri and two other educational institutions are located here.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 1931; Harland Bartholomew and Associates	Developed around physical relationships, movement of people and goods and is concerned with physical and economic being of the community. Number of elements and presentation indicate substantial research related to the regional context. Adequate maps and graphics made the presentation successful. A section dealt with parking and traffic problems.
Melrose, Massachusetts 1938; Eva G. Osgood, Consultant	The setting of this plan may have been out of touch with reality as the town was considered in isolation, not a part of a large area. Basic philosophy was to develop a residential town yet the economic aspect, either in or out of town, was ignored. Research completeness can be questioned due to many different persons involved; board members, high school students and department heads were all involved. The presentation was adequate with photographs, graphs and plan maps.

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Report contents: An evaluation of selected community plans*

Selected Communities and Plan Prepared by:	Evaluation
Winnetka, Illinois 1921; Edward H. Bennett	The report was drawn with an awareness and a sensitivity to the larger context of metropolitan Chicago. Considering the number of elements and treatment the research was a little on the brief side. There were many photographs of situations in other cities cited as good solutions to problems here. Graphics were good and well presented and complete. This plan was selected due to proximity to Chicago and possible influence of Chicago plan.

* Evaluation based on list of criteria as presented on page 30.

TABLE 5

Plan report elements: A comparison of selected communities

Selected communities						
Plan elements	Birmingham	1 Cincinnati	2 Columbia	3 Cedar Rapids	4 Melrose	5 Winnetka
Zoning	X	X	X	X	X	X
Park and Recreation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Thoroughfares	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public and Semi-Public	X	X	X	X	X	X
Schools	X	X	X		X	
Transportation	X	X	X	X		
Transit	X	X	X	X		
Regulations Subdivision	X	X	X	X		
Regional Relations	X	X		X		X
Waterways	X	X			X	
Public Utilities	X	X				
Building Code	X	X				
Downtown Traffic		X		X	X	
Plan Program		X	X			
Street Structure		X				X
Finances		X			X	
Flood Plains		X				
Citizens Plan		X				
Administration		X				

X Indicates the plan considered these items in the report.

TABLE 6

Selected activity for comparison of plan completeness

TABLE 1 * Type of planning activity

Type of Activity	Number of Cities
Zoning ordinance	1,322
Control of plats (mandatory)	275
Comprehensive plan	217
Thoroughfare plan	205
Park and parkway plan	168
Playground plan	150
Public building plan	99
Drainage and sewerage plan	97
School and library plan	97
Transit plan	86
Water supply plan	61
Transportation plan	29
Long range financial plan	8

* Compiled from National Resources Committee, Circular X, Appen. B, p. 11. (Survey completed in 1936.)

Source: Robert A. Walker, The Planning Function in Urban Government, 2d ed. revised. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, p. 32.

CHAPTER III

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VILLAGE PLAN

The degree of implementation of the Village Plan could not be determined by utilizing the minutes from either the Planning Commission or the Village Commission because the Village Commission minutes were too brief to be very valuable. The Planning Commission minutes did prove to be of some value, although they also were somewhat sketchy.

As an alternative to city record examination to determine degree of implementation, a 1963 existing land use map was compared with parts of the original plan. The comparison was reinforced by interviews with the former City Manager, Mr. Donald Egbert, and the Planning Commission secretary and City Clerk, Miss Irene Hanley, who has served the Planning Commission for many years.

This first Village Plan was contracted for and prepared when the economy of Birmingham and the nation was developing and increasing. It was presented in July of 1929 to the Planning Commission and introduced to the community in October of 1929. When the economic chaos settled upon the nation the following year, capital improvements began to be dropped from the Village program. Thus, the plan at the most could have had only a year or two of effective operation before the depressed economy forced postponement or removal of many capital improvement programs.

The Village had extended its financial obligations prior to the recession by assuming two types of large debts: 1) The general obligation bonds for the development of the civic center and other Village improvements; and 2) Special assessment bonds in the name of

the city against special districts. While the second debt was not actually a part of the Village's obligation, it did affect the Village's tax structure. Some development during the 1920's against which the city had assumed part of the debt, became tax delinquent during the early 1930's when tax revenues decreased by approximately fifty percent and other revenues by approximately sixty percent. An ensuing debt rate effectively prohibited the city from issuing bonds for further improvements. (See Table 2, page 11.)

In the seventeen year period from 1931 to 1948 only \$90,000 in general obligation bonds were sold for capital improvements. In fact, between 1930 and 1937 there were no utilities or pavement constructed. The relatively small amount of capital improvements made during the seventeen year period were financed primarily out of tax revenues. From 1948 to 1952 a policy was adopted for concentrating on reaching a sound financial plateau rather than developing an extensive capital improvements program. Prior to that, in 1933, a charter amendment prohibiting special assessment bonds was passed in 1933 to prevent defaulting such as occurred in the early 1930's. At that time, nearly \$100,000 of special assessment bonds were defaulted. By 1955 the credit rating of the city was restored to "A".

The situation was not as dark as it appeared, however, for a basic policy on delinquent taxes helped developed some reserves. Following the period of low tax revenues when the citizens began paying delinquent taxes, the tax rate was not reduced. The delinquent taxes being paid were put into a reserve account to be used for capital improvements and other uses, while the current taxes being paid were used to

provide current operating funds. Tax delinquent lands were obtained by the city for parks and the site of the present high school was tax delinquent land.

Development Sequence. - It can be correctly assumed that very few physical improvements were completed during the period of the depressed economy. However, the report section of the plan was being utilized by both the Village Commission and the Planning Commission. Although the Planning Commission records are somewhat sketchy they do provide an insight into the activities of the commission between 1930 and 1951. The activity of the Planning Commission during the 20 year period is indicated by excerpts taken from the commission minutes. (An asterisk will precede excerpts from the minutes that can be related to the 1929 Plan.) Although these items can be traced to and related to the plan there is no evidence available to correlate their occurrence to Planning Commission action guided by the 1929 Plan.

The excerpts are listed below in a chronological sequence:

- 16 April, 1930, 7 May, 1930, 14 May, 1930. A continuing discussion about the future of a major highway presently called Hunter Boulevard is to be constructed on the old Grand Trunk right-of-way and whether or not the highway should be a grade separation at the intersection of Maple Avenue.
- *4 June, 1930. Discussed the possibility of acquiring Quarton Lake for a public park site.
*Recommends that a board of architects be established to aid the building inspector in approving building plans.
- *2 July, 1930. Conference held with Village attorney to draft an ordinance establishing the architectural advisory board, the same to be submitted when finished to the Planning Commission for their review.
- *8 October, 1930. The Village attorney suggested the architectural

advisory board be written into an appropriate section of the Building Code.

*5 November, 1930. Discussed proposed zoning maps.

*10 December, 1930. Recommended the tree ordinance be referred to the Village Manager to be put into final form. Resulting copies are to be submitted to the Planning Commission. Mr. Comey to be asked to submit cost of drafting zoning proposals.

*7 January, 1931. Proposed division of the community into districts to hold zoning ordinance hearings in each district before drafting final regulations for recommendation to the Village Commission.
*Recommend a form and text of tree ordinance to the Village Commission.

4 March, 1931. through 26 January, 1932. Held hearings on the zoning map. (Author's note: The Planning Commission seemed to be tailoring the regulations to the wishes of the people because the commission recommended many changes in the districts during the course of the hearings.)

*6 May, 1931. First formal record of a plat submission to the Commission and its subsequent favorable recommendation to the Village Commission.

*9 December, 1931. First draft of proposed zoning ordinance as presented by the Building Inspector, D. C. Egbert.

*23 November, 1933. A proposal was discussed for a C.W.A. project for beautification of parks and boulevards. Those areas to be included if the city should acquire them are: Rouge Valley, Quanton Lake and Bloomfield Township Park and Woodward Avenue.

No further official recorded meetings for almost a ten year period; until October 11, 1943.

23 February, 1944. The Planning Commission was reorganized.

29 March, 1944. Discussed the possibility of a comprehensive study of the community and its coordination with Pontiac and Royal Oak.

3 May, 1944. Recommends to City Commission that consultants of Wilcox and Laird, Landscape Architects be retained for six months at \$1,000.

*30 August, 1944. Recommended to the City Commission that playground space be acquired in the Birmingham-Woodward

Subdivision. The recommendation was adopted.

- 29 November, 1944. Discussed the development of Smith-Poppleton Park. (Area "F" shown on Plate IV.)
- 14 March, 1945. Recommended that one-half mill be earmarked from the 1945-46 budget for planning activities. (Request granted.) Discussed ways to improve and fill Quarton Lake Park.
- 14 April, 1945. Planning Commission and school board agreed to school plans. Commission agreed to study street pattern and to try and make it safer for children.
- 30 January, 1946. Requested one-half mill for planning operation.
- 26 June, 1946. A proposal and report prepared by consultants to add off-street parking requirements for residential and business structures to the zoning ordinance was submitted to the City Commission.
- 26 August, 1946. The Planning Commission received an invitation from the City Commission to attend its meeting September 3, 1946. Primary topic for discussion will be policy considerations. Single project plans are submitted to Planning Commission by consultants Wilcox and Laird.
- 28 January, 1947. The meeting with City Commission on Policy was held. Discussion centered on plans for procedure, zoning, off-street parking and Planning Commission reports.
- 2 September, 1948. New members were appointed to the Planning Commission.
- 13 October, 1948. The Planning Commission was reorganized according to city ordinance #372 upon recommendation of the City Manager.
- 13 January, 1949. The Planning Commission recommended that it review all plans for construction in zoning districts Business "A" and "B" before permits are issued by the building inspector.
- 27 January, 1949. City Manager reported adoption of ordinance #377 requiring plans be submitted to Planning Commission for review.
- 10 March, 1949. Citizens committees interested in planning submitted reports to the Planning Commission on various problems.
- 23 June, 1949. A report for a park program was submitted to the City Commission.

13 October, 1949. Planning consultant C. W. Barr is to be retained for preliminary study and master plan report.

24 September, 1950. Preliminary study and master plan was completed by C. W. Barr. He was to be retained further to prepare zoning ordinance revisions.

25 January, 1951. The master plan, prepared by C. W. Barr was publically presented for the first time for Planning Commission adoption.

29 May, 1951. On this date the last meeting of the Planning Commission was held following several meetings and discussion concerning the possibility that an adopted master plan creates a cloud on property titles. (A more complete discussion on this matter will be presented in Chapter V.)

Plan Achievements. - There is some evidence, as is presented in the chronological sequence of excerpts from the Planning Commission minutes, that the plan report had some influences upon the thinking of the Planning Commission. It also exerted a certain influence upon the former City Manager, Donald C. Egbert. In an interview with him he indicated that he kept a copy upon his desk for reference and guidance. Mr. Egbert, no doubt, developed a certain sensitivity toward the planning process while serving as Building Inspector, City Assessor and other jobs prior to becoming City Manager. As Building Inspector he was associated with the Planning Commission while he prepared the first zoning ordinance. Following are a series of occurrences which Mr. Egbert relates to the plan or the plan report.

1. The building and housing codes were combined in one ordinance.
2. The 1931 zoning map was recommended by Mr. Comey and the ordinance by Mr. Egbert, even though it failed to get popular approval.
3. The 1937 zoning ordinance was passed.

4. A tree planting guide was established.
5. A billboard and sign ordinance was developed. The sign ordinance allowed flat signs only upon buildings in the business district.
6. Followed the recommendation that sanitary water be secured from the Detroit system.
7. Even though the sewage treatment system was designed before the plan was it did help in securing development of the sewerage system.

Another element mentioned in the report and one that gained prominence was the civic center. Although the civic center plan was completed before the hiring of Mr. Comey, he mentions it in the plan report. He said "The present attractiveness and dignity of the new village center may be materially enhanced if future private buildings on each side facing it is in keeping." The Planning Commission and city officials must have kept this very statement in mind while encouraging the proper development in the civic center area. There is no doubt that placement of the new post office building located in the civic center and dedicated on May 18, 1940 was affected by this policy.

The 1929 Plan also recommends that other buildings of a quasi-public nature be located near the civic center. ("...it is the natural location for various quasi-public edifices such as churches, clubs and other community buildings,...")

In its 75th anniversary edition, the Birmingham Eccentric alludes to early developers of the civic center plan. It described the post office dedication, "...climaxed many years of hopeful dreaming and

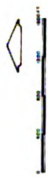
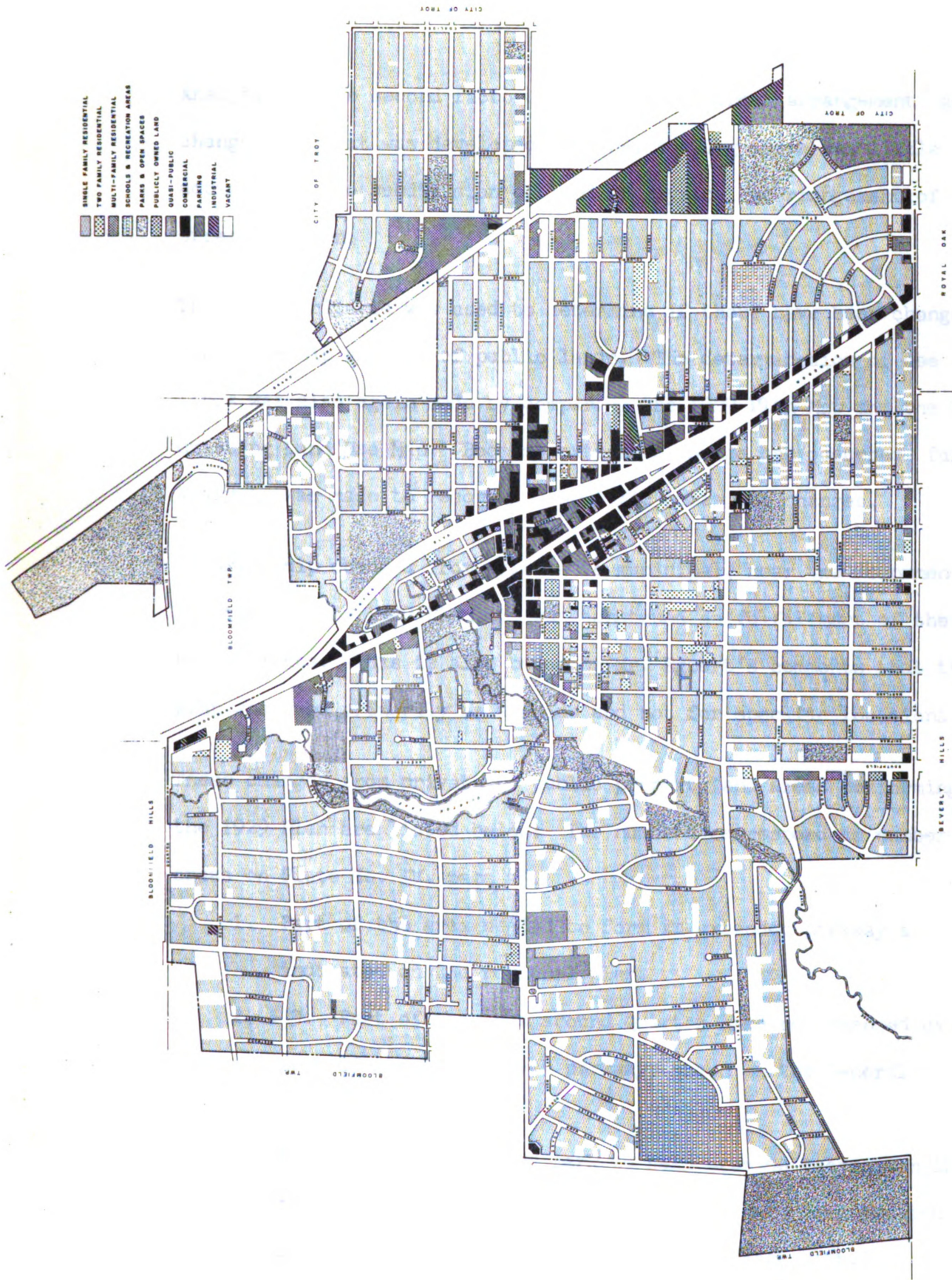
intensive planning by the original founders of Birmingham..." The paper further indicates that the civic center is as complete as will be found in a city of Birmingham's size. The center includes the post office, municipal building, public library, the Community House, old Baldwin High School, and a city park.

The 1929 Plan and Present Land Use. - To determine what influence the 1929 Plan had on the community's land use pattern from 1929 to the present, the elements of the 1929 Plan and the 1962 existing land use were compared. (See Plate III, p 43.) This comparison indicated the physical elements of the community that can be related to the 1929 Plan or that may have been developed from it and the resultant resemblance between plan elements and the city as it has developed. The resemblance was remarkable where public property was involved and where those elements relegated to the public sector were able to be influenced by city administration measures and decisions and action.

To further analyze the 1929 Plan the following three additional areas affecting the plan and its implementation were examined:

1. The expansion of the corporate limits;
2. The subdivision pattern and street arrangement that was existing in 1929, and;
3. The land that was under Village ownership in 1929, and use of it as described by the plan.

The first factor indicated that although the corporate limits have changed since the 1929 Plan, the changes are not significant enough to have affected the application of the plan.



Analysis of the second factor indicated the street arrangement has not changed since it was developed in 1929, showing there was little activity in the subdivision of land or physical rearrangement of the street pattern.

The third criteria was used to determine if there have been changes in the ownership and use of public lands. The determination of use of lands was also again made by comparing the 1929 Plan Map and the 1962 existing Land Use Map. Because extensive change had occurred, further analysis was made to record the specific areas and changes.

If ownership changed from private to municipal, near the recommended location of the 1929 Plan, it was construed as fulfillment of the plan requirements. This is also based on Mr. Egbert's comments that the plan was used primarily as a guide and not for specific locations.

These changes from private to public property and areas conforming to the 1929 Plan are listed below: The numbers correspond to numbered areas on Plate No. IV, page 45.

1. Part of the area needed to form an extended parkway as indicated on the regional plan.
2. & 3. Part of the area around Quarton Lake recommended as part of the Rouge River parkway; shown on the General Village Plan.
4. Part of large proposed park to help provide recreation in this area where a majority of the homes are located upon smaller lots. (Part of the General Village Plan.)
5. This area appears to be in lieu of the large area directly west as mentioned under 4 above, recommended in the plan but

GENERAL VILLAGE PLAN

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION

ARTHUR C. CONEY, CITY PLANNER

1929

LEGEND

- EXISTING PARKS
- EXISTING PLAY GROUNDS
- EXISTING SCHOOL GROUNDS
- PROPOSED PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
- PROPOSED SCHOOL GROUNDS
- PROPOSED HIGHWAYS
- PROPOSED RAILROADS
- PROPOSED TRAM LINES
- PROPOSED WATER LINES
- PROPOSED SEWER LINES
- PROPOSED GAS LINES
- PROPOSED TELEPHONE LINES
- PROPOSED CABLE LINES
- PROPOSED LIGHT RAIL LINES
- PROPOSED AIRPORTS
- PROPOSED MARINAS
- PROPOSED YACHT CLUBS
- PROPOSED GOLF COURSES
- PROPOSED COUNTRY CLUBS
- PROPOSED RESORTS
- PROPOSED HOTELS
- PROPOSED RESTAURANTS
- PROPOSED THEATERS
- PROPOSED CONVENTIONS
- PROPOSED OFFICES
- PROPOSED FACTORIES
- PROPOSED WAREHOUSES
- PROPOSED SHOPS
- PROPOSED HOMES
- PROPOSED CHURCHES
- PROPOSED SCHOOLS
- PROPOSED HOSPITALS
- PROPOSED PRISONS
- PROPOSED JAILS
- PROPOSED COURTHOUSES
- PROPOSED CITY HALLS
- PROPOSED POST OFFICES
- PROPOSED FIRE STATIONS
- PROPOSED POLICE STATIONS
- PROPOSED JUDICIAL BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED EXECUTIVE BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED BUREAUS
- PROPOSED LABOR UNIONS
- PROPOSED TRADE ASSOCIATIONS
- PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES
- PROPOSED CLUBS
- PROPOSED GOLF COURSES
- PROPOSED COUNTRY CLUBS
- PROPOSED RESORTS
- PROPOSED HOTELS
- PROPOSED RESTAURANTS
- PROPOSED THEATERS
- PROPOSED CONVENTIONS
- PROPOSED OFFICES
- PROPOSED FACTORIES
- PROPOSED WAREHOUSES
- PROPOSED SHOPS
- PROPOSED HOMES
- PROPOSED CHURCHES
- PROPOSED SCHOOLS
- PROPOSED HOSPITALS
- PROPOSED PRISONS
- PROPOSED JAILS
- PROPOSED COURTHOUSES
- PROPOSED CITY HALLS
- PROPOSED POST OFFICES
- PROPOSED FIRE STATIONS
- PROPOSED POLICE STATIONS
- PROPOSED JUDICIAL BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED EXECUTIVE BUILDINGS
- PROPOSED BUREAUS
- PROPOSED LABOR UNIONS
- PROPOSED TRADE ASSOCIATIONS
- PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES
- PROPOSED CLUBS



not acquired. It is also intended to help provide recreation in the area subdivided into smaller lots.

6. The area along Maple Avenue used to widen the roadway at this point.
7. To include the new high school site may be stretching the point but it is near a proposed location and the site does contain a new elementary school as recommended by the 1929 Plan.
8. This area is much larger than indicated but is certainly a part of a proposed green belt intended to surround the community as it is shown on the Regional Plan.
9. A park, another area near a recommended location as shown on the General Village Plan.
10. A park area exactly where it was recommended in the General Village Plan.
11. & 12. These areas may be considered as part of the green belt recommended on the east side of Birmingham and shown on the regional map.
13. Although it may be again stretching a point, this area may be considered a substitute for the site to the east of and outside the corporate limits at this point.
14. A substitute for the large park area recommended to the east of Adams Road.

Other Achievements. - Additional areas have also been acquired by the community which are not a part of the Village Plan. These areas set forth below in letter sequence correspond to the letters on Plate IV, page 45.

- A. Several areas around the central business district utilized for parking.
- B. An extension of the school grounds.
- C. A park area unrelated to the 1929 plan.
- D. & E. Additional extensions to school and recreation areas.
- F. An open space unrelated to anything except perhaps part of the Rouge River parkway, which is not likely.

As mentioned in the 1929 Plan Report, the municipal property is only part of the community picture. The private sector of the community must also be considered. It is necessary to correlate and harmonize the two if a successful plan is to be fulfilled. The zoning regulations, an integral part of any plan, are analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV
ZONING PROGRAM

The Village of Birmingham has a long, turbulent history of zoning provisions with the results not always coinciding with zoning proposals. People residing within the community did not see zoning as an acceptable solution for solving problems of mixed land use for quite some time.

After the first proposed ordinance of 1926 there was enough agitation by the local real estate people to cause a referendum concerning the adoption of the ordinance. The zoning ordinance was defeated by 1,482 votes against 588 in favor.

Development Sequence. - There were other ordinances proposed and adopted by the Village Commission before one was finally accepted by the community. For a quick perspective of the zoning ordinance progression the following list has been prepared from the minutes of the Planning Commission.

24 May, 1926. The first ordinance was presented to the Village Commission and was held for 30 days for a public hearing. T. Glenn Phillip prepared this first zoning proposal.

23 June, 1926. A public hearing was held on the zoning proposal.

1 July, 1926. The first zoning proposal, Ordinance No. 126 was adopted. Following this adoption, a petition was presented asking for a referendum on the zoning ordinance. The referendum was to be held within 90 days.

23 August, 1926. A referendum was held on the ordinance, resulting in a decisive defeat for the ordinance.

17 July, 1929. A zoning proposal was presented as a part of the General Village Plan of Birmingham.

4 March, 1931. Public hearings begin on zoning proposals and continued until January, 1932. Following the hearings, the entire matter remained inactive until 1937.

18 February, 1937. The zoning proposal was adopted and enacted into Ordinance No. 221 following public hearing by the City Commission.

The following items are amendments to Ordinance No. 221.

30 January, 1939. Use and height of fences were limited.

16 August, 1943. Public hearings on all amendments and a 15 day notice in the official newspaper were to be required. A three-fourth vote of the commission was also required to override a protest of abutting property owners.

23 July, 1945. Building lines in all residential zones were changes. The depth was increased for front, side, rear and the number of stories was limited.

5 August, 1946. Uses allowed in the Business A Zone were broadened to allow some additional uses.

4 August, 1947. Home occupation and professional office use were clarified. Greater restrictions were placed on those uses located in the single family zone.

8 December, 1947. A new section was added, defining and requiring off-street parking facilities for all buildings. A provision for public parking facilities was created and extending the powers of the Board of Appeals in matters of assessment of cost for public parking areas.

21 November, 1949. Home occupations were eliminated from single family zones and greater restrictions were placed on professional offices in the single family zone.

11 September, 1950. General requirements were raised for the lot area per family of the Income Bungalow, Terrace or Attached Residence and the Multiple Family Zones. (See Appendix for original figures and changes.)

8 June, 1953. Professional offices were eliminated from all residential zones except the Multiple Family Zone.

2 July, 1953. A "Parking A" district was established for non-commercial parking areas where no fee is charged.

3 May, 1954. A "Parking B" district was created for commercial parking where a fee is charged.

10 January, 1955. Off-street parking and loading facilities were defined and required. The Board of Appeals was granted power to hear parking grievances.

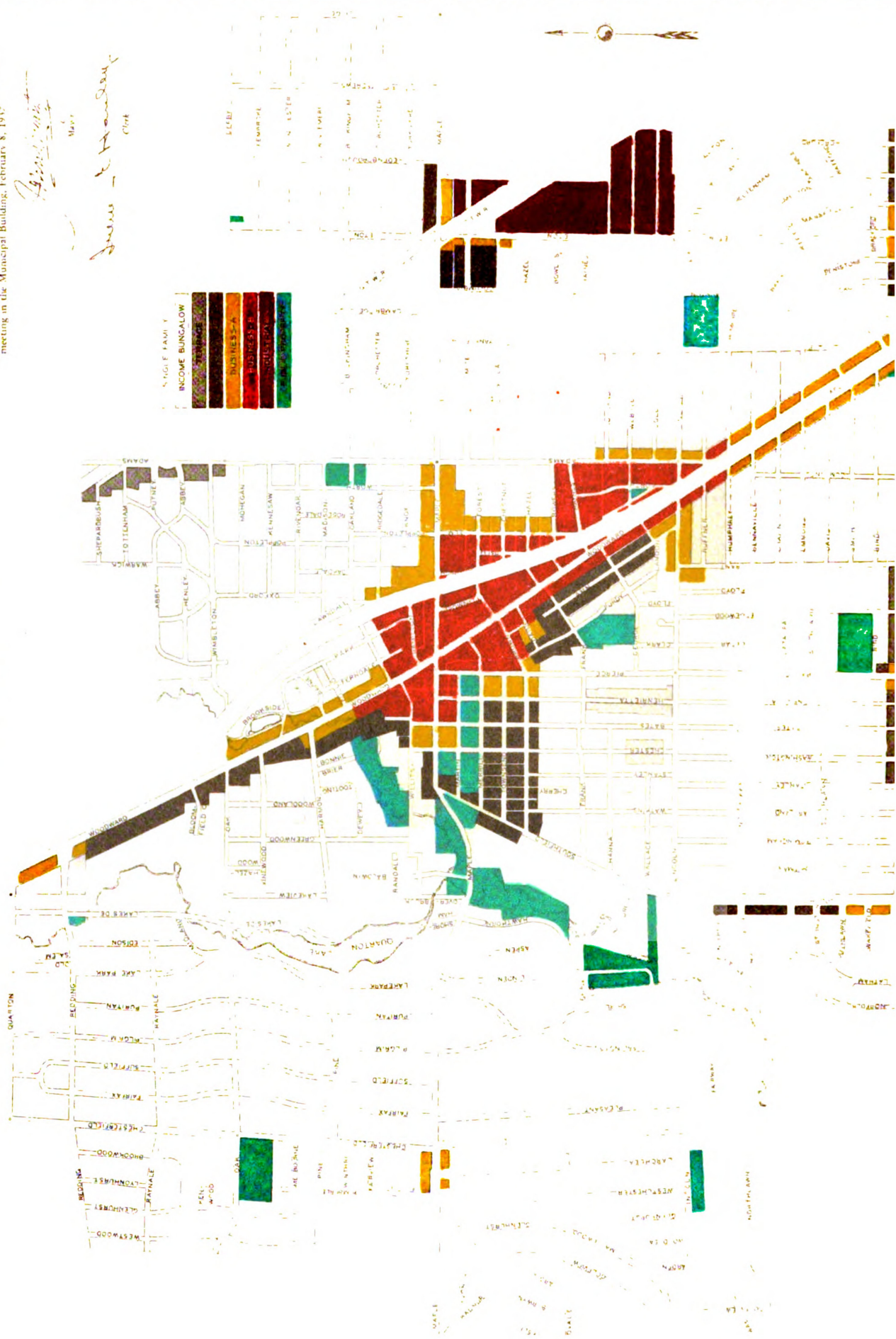
5 December, 1955. A "Business "C" Professional Office district was established.

There were no further changes of major importance until the current zoning ordinance was enacted and adopted on March 31, 1958.

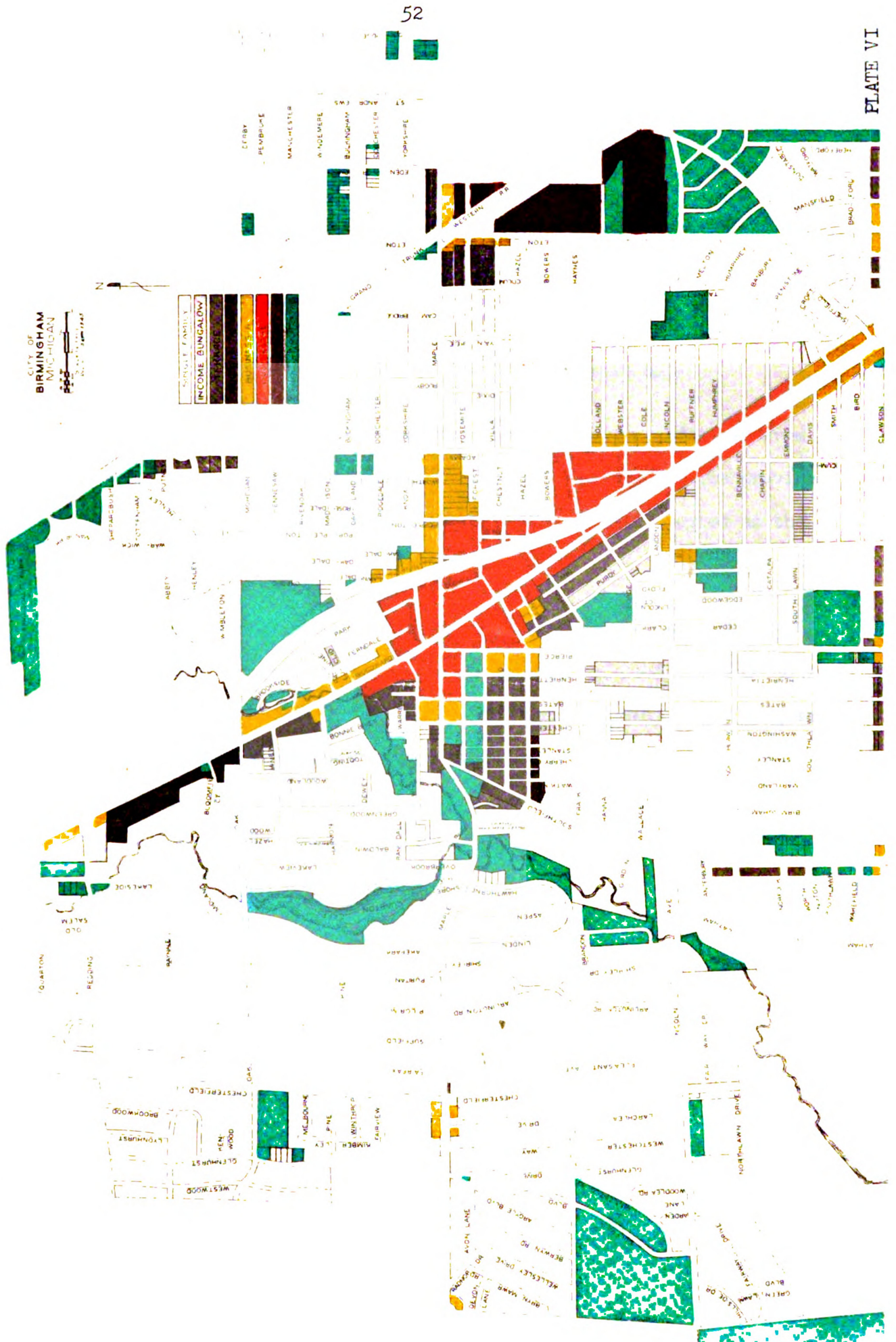
Zone District Map Changes. - As indicated above, a zoning ordinance was finally adopted in 1937. It came eleven years after the original proposal. Such a proposal was submitted with the 1929 Plan. (A copy of the 1937 District Map is presented on Plate V, page 51.)

The Zone District Map, part of the first zoning ordinance, was not amended until 1945 when an up-dated map was prepared. The new map incorporated all of the intervening years' amendments concerning zoning district changes. In a comparison between the 1937 Zoning District Map and the 1945 Zoning District Map, it was noted that there were only minor alterations in the boundaries of the later map. This was also true of the text which was only slightly altered. (A copy of the 1945 Zoning District Map is presented on Plate VI, page 52.)

A series of zone boundary changes and amendments from 1945 to 1956 rendered the previous 1945 map obsolete. When the 1956 map was amended there were again only minor variations found in the district boundaries as compared to the previously amended 1945 Zoning District Map. Major changes were necessary in the zoning ordinance text to meet the shifting values in residential standards from small lots and higher densities to larger lots and lower densities.



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN -- ZONING MAP, 1945
















Two business zones were also added to accommodate the new trend in urban living influenced by the automobile. In the residence zone districts an extension was made in the "Terrace" category. The "Income Bungalow" was practically eliminated from the Zone District Map except for isolated areas. In the commercial section, "Business C" and "Parking B" were added to the Zone District Map.

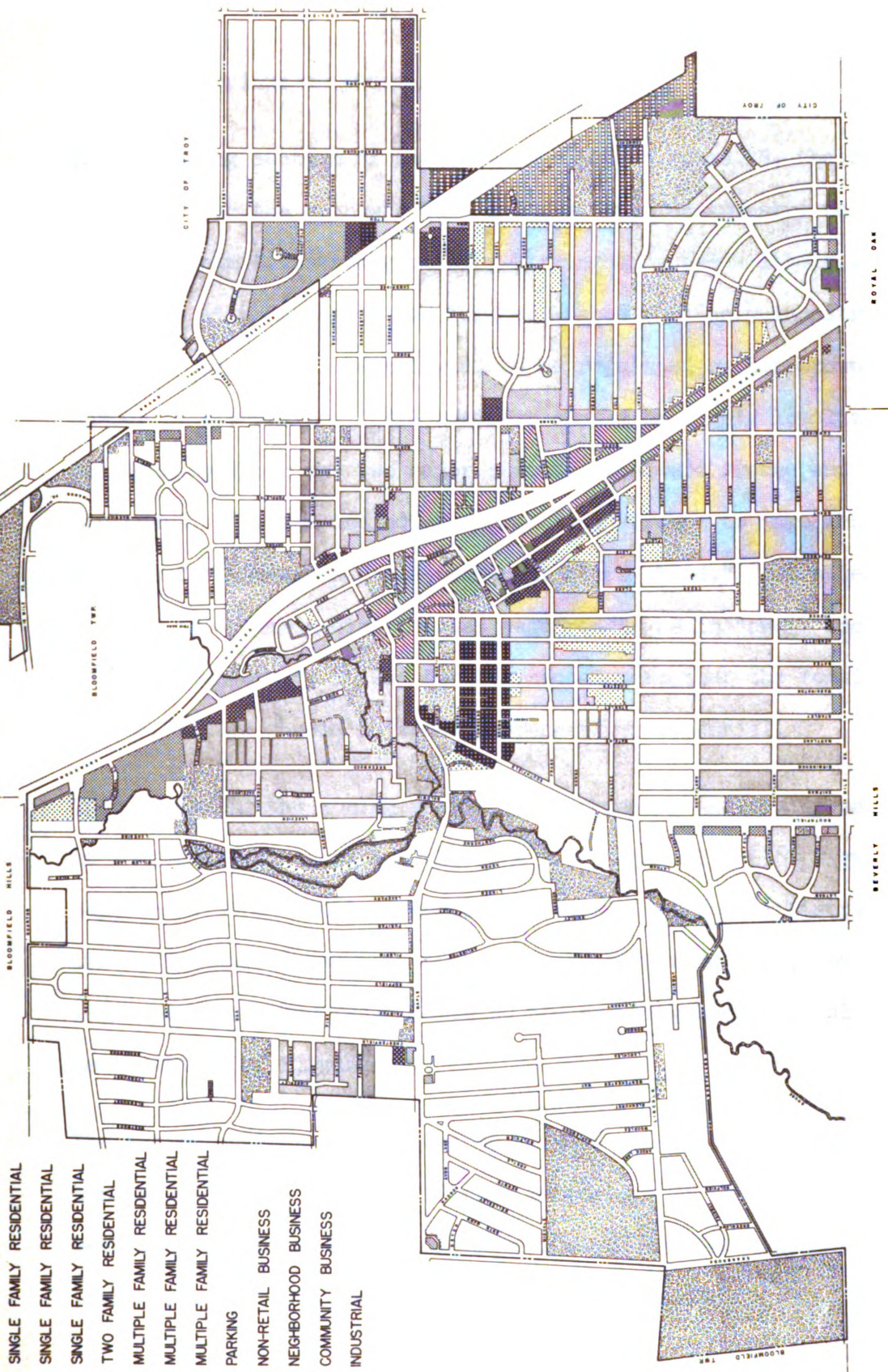
Two years later, in 1958, need for a new zoning was indicated from regular and frequent amendments to the 1937 ordinance. The previous ordinance was repealed and Ordinance Number 527 was adopted as the new zoning ordinance.

The 1958 Zoning District Map reflects the changes made in the text. In the amended 1937 ordinance, there were eleven categories or zones and in ordinance number 527 there are thirteen districts. The greatest change is in the residential use district which now contains seven categories where previously there were four. (A copy of the 1958 map is not shown as the current 1963 District Map is the same except for minor variations. The 1963 map is on Plate VII, page 54. Very little change can be noted on the 1963 map when compared to the 1958 map. There are only minor variations in the zone districts of the multiple family and the public property districts.

Zoning Relation to 1929 Plan. - The zoning program for the Village was based upon the 1929 Plan. The first district map of "preliminary zoning study map" was presented by Mr. A. C. Comey as a part of the 1929 Plan. The text adopted for the 1937 ordinance was prepared by Mr. D. C. Egbert, then Building Inspector. There are parts of the zoning ordinance that reflect the goals and purposes taken from the 1929 Plan report and out-

ZONE DISTRICTS

-  PUBLIC PROPERTY
-  R-1 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-2 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-3 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-4 TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-5 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-6 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  R-7 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  P PARKING
-  B-1 NON-RETAIL BUSINESS
-  B-2 NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS
-  B-3 COMMUNITY BUSINESS
-  I INDUSTRIAL



ZONING MAP - 1963

THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MICHIGAN

birmingham planning board

lined in previous chapters of this thesis.

In the Zoning section of the 1929 Plan Report, page 25, the discussion is related to the economic base and the need for industry to be located in Birmingham "...serving chiefly Birmingham's needs itself..." Even with this stipulation it was further stated that only industry below a certain size shall be allowed, to be regulated by horsepower and number of operatives. "All business should be highly localized..." principally along the two major streets, Woodward Avenue and Hunter Boulevard. "...and including enough side streets to make ample provisions for the needs for a number of years ahead." All other business outside of the main district was required to be in "small local business centers." It was further recommended that the remainder of the Village should be zoned permanently residential.

Upon reviewing the zoning section and comparing the zoning maps, it is immediately apparent that the latest map, the 1963 District Map, bears a remarkable resemblance to the 1937 Zoning District Map. It is even more remarkable that both of the zoning maps, the 1937 and 1963, bear a marked resemblance to the existing land spatial development pattern of Birmingham.

The zoning ordinance as a tool to be used in effectuating a comprehensive plan is a good one if used properly. In Birmingham it has been used efficiently and expertly in developing the goals of the zoning plan as outlined in the 1929 Plan.

CHAPTER V

SUCCEEDING PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

Studies Updating the 1929 Plan. - When the Planning Commission was reorganized early in 1944 the members also recognized the need to have parts of the 1929 Plan up-dated. At this date early in 1944, the Planning Commission was considering another comprehensive study of the community to supplement the 1929 Plan. Along with a community planning study they were concerned about the relationship of Birmingham to Pontiac and Royal Oak. The latter community, is a contiguous suburb of Detroit and Pontiac is a satellite type city in the Detroit region. However, for more than two years, Laird and Wilcox, landscape architects, worked with the Planning Commission to aid in revisions of segments of the plan.

Judging from available records, their work was not comprehensive but consisted of unrelated supplemental studies. For example, a study was made of off-street parking regulations for residential and business areas to be included in the text of the zoning ordinance. Also, piece-meal parking regulations were to be instituted for West Maple, Hunter Boulevard and certain other streets, all unrelated to a plan or comprehensive traffic studies.

The Planning Commission could not realize its ambition to complete a comprehensive study and Birmingham's relation to the region until 1944 when the City Commission agreed to retain Mr. Charles W. Barr, Planning Consultant. By September of 1950 the study was completed. The study was presented to the Planning Commission and the first public hearing

held by January, 1951. However, unexpected opposition arose during the public hearings. George Cram, a lawyer and a resident of Pontiac and a property owner in Birmingham challenged the validity of the Planning Commission to adopt and record the master plan. He premised his attack on the belief that if the master plan were adopted and then recorded by the County Registrar of Deeds, it would place a cloud on the legal property titles and that this cloud would seriously restrict the constitutionally guaranteed rights of use and marketability of property. (He made specific reference to the areas designated on the master plan for public use.) Mr. Cram contended that the master plan became a legal document when it was adopted and recorded in the office of the County Register of Deeds, according to the state statutes. He further contended that property so established would be eventually acquired by the city at a future date, unknown to either the city or the private property holder. This action or lack of it would place a cloud upon that title, making the property unsaleable or at best, very difficult to sell. George Cram continued his attack by writing articles about the situation and having them published.¹⁰ Such a furor was created over this issue that the Michigan Chapter of the American Institute of Planners and others challenged his contention.¹¹ Although an excellent rebuttal was presented by the Michigan A.I.P., the issue was never legally resolved. A test for a solution was perhaps avoided by the withdrawal of the master plan, and the dissolution of the

¹⁰One such article was published in the Michigan State Bar Journal, V. 35 #4, April, 1956, pp 9-16.

¹¹A series of articles and selected pertinent material, including the Cram article, have been printed in a publication entitled, Master Planning and the Law, Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission, July, 1957.

Birmingham Planning Commission, and the formation of a Planning Board by city ordinance. (A copy of the Planning Board ordinance is included in the Appendix.)

The Planning Board was established on a limited basis, allowing it to function solely on matters referred to it by the City Commission. By diligent effort, the board managed to regain the confidence of the commission and is now functioning much as they did before the Planning Commission was discontinued.

Current Planning. - That the citizens of Birmingham have long felt a need for city planning is evident even in 1929. That the planning program has been a continuing effort is testified to and reinforced by periodic studies and the continuous employment of full time planning technicians since 1952.

Special studies recently completed by private planning consultants are the "Central Business District" in 1961 and the "Population, Existing Land Use and Neighborhood Unit Plan" in 1962. The latter is the first part of a two year study of a comprehensive development plan. The plan is expected to be completed in approximately two years.

William Brownfield, the current City Planner of Birmingham, indicated in a recent interview that future plans may involve urban renewal. This will follow the comprehensive plan and will depend upon specific reports and recommendations in that plan. It is possible that a central business district project and some residential rehabilitation work will be started.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Forces shaping or mis-shaping the community are always present. That these forces need directing is the basic premise of need for a community development plan. For just such a purpose, a plan was created in 1929 for the Village of Birmingham. A comparative examination of other plans of this period revealed the Birmingham Plan to be as technically complete as some, and more so than others. This is also true for the concepts and scope of the Plan.

The 1929 Plan was used by the Birmingham Planning Commission and the City Manager for the benefit of the community during the life of the Plan. The fact that their use of the Plan was for only a few years does not detract from its value. The true worth of the Plan and the value that was added by the Planning Commission lies not in its recommendations for implementation, but in the careful way the plan was composed, the faith that the Planning Commission and Council had in Mr. Comey, and the necessary guidance given to him in its development. Conversely, the City Manager's efforts in implementing the plan demonstrated its value to the citizens of the village.

In implementing the plan, Mr. Donald C. Egbert used his position as City Manager and his awareness and knowledge of city planning procedures to effectively use the 1929 Plan's basic principles, standards, proposals and concepts. He was more effective than the Planning Commission could have been because there are indications that imply the City Commission had more confidence in the manager than in the Planning Commission. This is true even though the Planning

Commission is neither a legislative or administrative agency, but a body whose primary defined responsibility is creating and recommending a comprehensive development plan and program.

The usefulness of the 1929 Plan can be measured by whether or not the goals and objectives were satisfactorily tailored to the future needs and desires of the community. Most of the objectives were appropriate for Birmingham and the community did develop according to the proposals set forth in the 1929 Plan. Some objectives fulfilled are apparent today in the almost village-like atmosphere retained in the residential areas, around the "village square" and, to some extent, the character of retail stores of the central business district. The longevity of the 1929 Plan objectives can be explained by the high education level and the economic strata of the managerial and professional people that influenced the objectives. People of this same socio-economic level continue to reside in Birmingham.

When the location of existing public properties is compared with the 1929 Plan recommendations, it is evident that community development in the public sector was given substantial guidance by the Plan. The City Manager, guided by the basic concepts of the 1929 Plan, made recommendations to the City Commission for capital improvement programs. As a part of this program, Mr. Donald C. Egbert recommended the acquisition of a number of tax delinquent properties which proved to be useful to the city. He was given direction both in acquisition and retention of property by the 1929 Plan. Adequate parks and playgrounds have been established according to the 1929 Plan objectives and proposals. It can be assumed the original civic center plan was an appropriate

one and that its subsequent growth according to the 1929 Plan qualified as another achievement.

The administrative codes are an indirect force in community development. The Planning Commission, before it atrophied, was instrumental in securing adoption of codes necessary to aid guidance of the community's growth. The first general zoning district plan presented by Mr. Comey was influential in guiding development of the private sector of the community. Zoning districts were established according to the 1929 Plan "objectives" and the zoning program was extended over the years to satisfy these requirements. While the community grew from a Village to a City, the location and extent of commercial growth recommended in the 1929 Plan was substantially maintained. During this process and growth there were only minor variations in zoning districts and text changes to meet changing conditions and community values. To a limited degree this zoning stability indicated the satisfaction of the community with the zoning program. This satisfaction is more or less determined through the actions of elected and appointed representatives.

The positive influence and effectiveness of the 1929 Plan is also conclusively shown by the type of community that has developed. The regulated industry, the well contained, orderly business districts, and the residential areas of "high character" all fulfilled "objectives" of the 1929 General Village Plan.

A prevailing conservative attitude in the community also had a part in retaining the plan and making it effective. This attitude even

today reflects and maintains the community's aesthetic values and design concepts expressed in the 1929 Plan.

SUMMARY

When assessing the total growth of the community with the effectiveness of the 1929 Plan, it can be concluded that the plan provided a significant measure of guidance. This can be more readily accepted by examining the elements of development that are relegated to the public sector of the community and those designated specifically to the planning function. Those elements with which the city planning Process is concerned were contained in the 1929 Plan. That these elements were developed primarily from the 1929 Plan, can be attested to by the only comprehensive development plan that has guided Birmingham. Guidance in the development of the public sector has been provided for public facilities, public improvements and administrative procedures and codes, of which the zoning code is extremely important. The zoning has kept pace with the community's growth, yet maintained the original guide lines established for and by the 1929 Plan.

From this evaluation I can only conclude that the 1929 Plan provided a concrete measure of guidance. Birmingham's use of the 1929 Plan substantiates the basic premise that a comprehensive plan does provide a means to orderly community development. The realization of achievement can be had by carefully preparing the community goals and purposes within that comprehensive plan. The planning process in evidence in Birmingham

ham is one that is marked by substantial achievement. This planning process closely followed the real goals of the community as the decision making body determines in the face of public opinion what course to follow.

PROPOSALS

Some proposals or recommendations that came from an examination of Birmingham's process and an evaluation of the 1929 Plan may be subjective because of the peculiar circumstances under which the plan was presented and the manner in which it was implemented during its useful life. However, the findings indicate the need for a greater understanding between the administrators, the legislative body and the professional planner involved. Guidance toward a better understanding should be provided by a comprehensive plan program; by implementation of that plan and by professional planners. Even though the circumstances involved in plan implementation were peculiar the author believes the following recommendations have validity:

1. The public administrator of the community should be involved in the comprehensive plan formulation, its goals and objectives, and the standards responsible for its form;
2. There should be a more direct relation between the administrator, the technical aspect of the plan, and the application of planning principles, concepts and programs;
3. Formulation of goals and objectives should be an important factor in establishing the basic framework and program of a comprehensive plan;

4. The zoning program should be carefully developed and keyed to goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan to help stabilize the zoning administration;
5. The Planning Commission's role can be transferred to a citizen advisory committee to provide the citizen's reaction required in a complex and changing urban community. This would be a special committee for the specific purpose of formulating goals and objectives which would then be used by them as guides in creating a comprehensive development plan. A new committee would be appointed each time that a programmed major revision would be scheduled.

Although recommendations 1 through 4 are generally accepted theories of planning procedure and implementation of plans, they are rarely practiced in the actual operation of a public agency. In the practice the administration of zoning and rezoning decisions by the decision making body are determined by short range goals based on nebulous policy, rather than on firm long range goals of the comprehensive plan.

This evaluation further strengthens the case and need, and plausibility of creating a department of planning. Such a planning department should be an operating agency working closely with the city officials who should be reasonably familiar with the purposes, goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

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APPENDIX I

Biographical Sketch of Arthur C. Comey
(Creator of the 1929 General Village Plan)

APPENDIX I

Village Plan Consultant. - Arthur C. Comey, creator of the General Village Plan of Birmingham was well known throughout the United States as an urban planner and landscape architect. He was a graduate, in 1907, of Harvard University with a degree in Landscape Architecture. Later, he served on the faculty as an assistant professor in the Harvard School of City Planning, as an associate professor in the Harvard Department of Regional Planning and was a lecturer in the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture. During this time he was author of several books, among them "Transition Zoning" of the now famous Harvard City Planning Series.

The activities of Mr. Comey included service in many professional societies, some of which he served in important capacities. He was a charter member of the American Institute of Planners, and his name may be found in nearly all early issues of the A.I.P. Journal. He also served on the Board of Governors, performed on panels and reviewed books for the membership. He was also a member of the following organizations: American Society of Civil Engineers; American Society of Landscape Architects; Massachusetts Homestead Commission; American Institute of Construction Engineers and American Planning and Civic Association. Included in the various activities was service to local, state and federal boards and commissions. Some of those he served upon are: Trustee of Public Reservations; Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Open Spaces; Federal Planning Boards and the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership.

Before getting involved in the many responsibilities outlined above, Mr. Comey worked for the municipalities of Dixon, Illinois; Ithaca, New York; Milwaukee County, Wisconsin; and Boston, Massachusetts. Somewhere

in between he managed to win two competitions; one in Richmond, California and the other in Chicago, Illinois.

With Mr. Comey's great depth and wide range of knowledge he served in still another capacity, that of consultant where he served many villages, cities, state and national agencies. The cities include, among others: Portland, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Dover, New Jersey; Detroit, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Houston, Texas. National and regional organizations were: United Nations Headquarters Commission; Natural Resources Planning Board; Maine State Planning Board and New England Regional Planning Commission.

APPENDIX II

Copy of Ordinance Creating the Birmingham
City Planning Board

CHAPTER 40 CITY PLANNING BOARD

5. 151. Board Continued. The City Planning Board heretofore created, is hereby continued. Adoption of this Code shall not affect the terms of incumbents. The City Planning Board shall consist of seven members, who shall be qualified electors and freeholders in the City of Birmingham, and who shall represent insofar as is possible, different professions or business interests, and who shall be appointed by the City Commission. The term of each member so appointed shall be for a period of three years from the first day of July of the year in which he was appointed, or until his successor takes office. Vacancies occurring otherwise than through the expiration of the term shall be filled for the unexpired term by the City Commission. All members of the City Planning Board shall serve without compensation. The City Manager and the City Engineer or the authorized representative of either of them, shall be members ex-officio of the City Planning Board, and shall have all rights of membership thereon except the right to vote.

5. 152. Removals. Members of the City Planning Board may, after a public hearing, be removed for cause.

5. 153. Organization; Meetings. The City Planning Board shall, from its appointed members, elect a chairman, and shall fill such other offices as it may determine. The City Clerk, or his or her duly authorized deputy shall act as Secretary and Clerk of the City Planning Board and shall keep a record of all of its proceedings. The Board shall hold at least one regular public meeting quarterly, shall adopt rules for the transaction of its business, and shall keep a full and complete record of its resolutions, transactions, findings and determinations, which record shall be available to the City Commission upon request.

5. 154. Assistance; Budget. The City Planning Board may call upon the City Manager for such services and data by the various departments as it may require. The City Planning Board may recommend to the City Commission the securing of such professional and consulting services as it may require; provided, however, that no expenditures of funds shall be made, or contracts

entered into for providing such professional or consulting services, unless the same shall first be approved and authorized by the City Commission. Not later than the first day of April in each year, the Planning Board shall prepare and submit to the City Manager a tentative outline of its program for the ensuing City fiscal year, together with its budget for such ensuing year, which outline and budget shall serve as a guide in the appropriation of monies by the City. Provided that nothing herein contained shall be interpreted to require the City to appropriate the amount requested for such budget. No funds shall be expended in connection with City Planning in excess of amounts appropriated for that purpose by the City Commission.

5. 155. Duties. It shall be the function and duty of the City Planning Board to advise the City Commission in regard to the proper development of the City of Birmingham, and to make suggestions for the development of any areas outside its boundaries which, in the Commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality. In this regard, the Planning Board is authorized to advise with and to co-operate with the Planning and Legislative bodies of other governmental units in any area outside the boundaries of the City of Birmingham. The City Planning Board is authorized to prepare a recommendation for the physical development of the municipality, either in its entirety, or in part. Such recommendation, together with accompanying maps, plats, charts and descriptive matter, shall show the City Planning Board's suggestions for the development of such territory. Said City Planning Board is also authorized to recommend for the guidance of the City Commission, a Zoning Ordinance for the control of the height, area, bulk, location and use of buildings and premises. The Board may from time to time, amend, extend or add to such recommendations, and the same shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs. The City Planning Board may hold such public meetings and/or hearings, from time to time, as it may deem advisable or necessary in connection with the proper performance of its functions hereunder. Joint meetings of the City Commission and of the City Planning Board, shall be held at least quarterly at a time to be designated by the Mayor, and it shall be the duty of the Mayor to call such meetings

in accordance with the provisions hereof.

5.156. Approval by Commission. When any recommendation, or part thereof, has been approved by the City Planning Board, the same shall be referred to the City Commission.

5.157. Matters Referred to Board. In addition to functions hereinbefore set forth, it shall be the function of the City Planning Board to pass upon all matters referred to it by the City Commission and to give to the City Commission the benefit of its judgment with relation to such matters so referred. Matters so referred may include, but not be restricted to, requests for change of zoning, requests for closing, opening or altering of streets, or alleys, requests for issuing building permits, and any other matters which bear relation to the physical development or growth of the municipality.

APPENDIX III

Résumé of the 1937 Zoning Ordinance
(The First One Adopted in Birmingham)

APPENDIX III

RÉSUMÉ OF 1937 ZONING ORDINANCE

#221 CITY OF BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

The only available copies of the original zoning ordinance in 1937 are documents which neither the City Clerk nor the Planning Director will allow to leave the city hall. Because of this, a résumé has been made of the use sections and is presented in abbreviated form in this appendix.

The zoning districts are: SINGLE FAMILY; INCOME BUNGALOW; TERRACE OR ATTACHED RESIDENCE; MULTIPLE FAMILY; BUSINESS A; BUSINESS B; and INDUSTRIAL.

The text for each of the above districts is as follows:

SINGLE FAMILY: This use district provides primarily for single family dwellings

Other uses allowed: Professional offices and home occupations, boarding schools, churches, and colleges. Accessory uses: Shall not provide a storage space for more than one motor vehicle for each 2000 square feet of ground area of a lot. Such use may also contain living quarters.

INCOME BUNGALOW: This use district is primarily for a two family dwelling upon one lot. Specifically this zone is for not more than two families in a single residence and one which must resemble a single family dwelling.

Any of the uses listed in the previous section are permitted. Other uses that are allowed: Hospitals or sanitariums, other than for insane and feeble minded, which shall not cover more than 25% of the lot; philanthropic or eleemosynary institutions; children's nursery; and accessory uses which shall be the same as single family except the motor vehicle storage ratio is limited to one vehicle for each 1,500 sq. ft. of lot area.

TERRACE OR ATTACHED RESIDENCE: All uses listed in the previous section are permitted, including terrace and attached or row houses. (A definition for this type of dwelling is attached single residence buildings built in groups of three or more.)

MULTIPLE FAMILY: All uses listed in the previous section are permitted, including multiple residence dwellings, hotels and apartment

hotels. Any of these may be the principle building, as part of such building or as an accessory building. Other uses that are allowed: Passenger stations, clubs, social-recreation and community center buildings, except activity as a service or as a business, such as public dance hall or a public bowling alley or non-commercial storage or motor vehicles, dining room, restaurant, barber shop, florist or confectionary which are customarily located within an apartment hotel or club, provided it shall be located wholly within a building occupied as permitted within the multiple family district and be an accessory use with no exterior advertising.

BUSINESS A: This use district is primarily intended to serve as a retail function that is now associated with a neighborhood retail center or service stores.

All of the uses contained in the previous section are permitted, including (There is a listing of retail convenience and service stores.) any similar uses to those listed above. (Meaning the list of retail and service stores under this section.)

BUSINESS B: This district is primarily intended to serve as the zone for the heavier commercial and some manufacturing and fabricating uses. All of the uses contained in the previous section are permitted.

In addition to a list of permitted uses, 20% of the floor area may be used for industrial purposes. However, in the operation of such uses it shall be restricted to 10 mechanics or workers, and use not more than 25 horsepower.

(A list of uses permitted is contained under this section which is comparable to extensive industrial and fabrication of material and foodstuffs.)

(This list is followed by one of prohibited uses of more intensive industries.)

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT: This use district is intended to permit the heaviest industrial uses.

All of the uses contained in the previous section are permitted.

Any other uses of mercantile, commercial or industrial activity or establishment, except: (There is contained in the ordinance an extensive list of some 37 prohibited uses.)

A section on the interpretation and application of the ordinance was included within. It stipulated, "...the provisions of this ordinance shall be held to be the minimum requirements adopted for the promotion of the public health, safety and general welfare."

POWERS OF BOARD OF APPEALS: Specifically stated to mean they shall not be allowed to change classifications of any property on the zoning maps, only to interpret the ordinance and authorize variations in accordance to this section.

RESUME OF 1937 ZONING ORDINANCE
AREA REQUIREMENTS

Zoning District	Minimum Floor Area	Minimum Lot Area	Allowable Densities Within Zone Districts According to 1937 Zone Ordinance ¹		Amendment of Sept. 1950 Sq. ft. per Lot per Family
			Density per Gross Acre	Density per Net* Acre	
Single Family	500	Sq.ft. per Lot per Family 4,500	8.7	6.7	4,500
Income Bungalow	480	2,400	18.1	12.7	3,000
Terrace	450	2,000	21.7	15.2	3,000
Multiple Family	360	500	87.1	60.8	2,500

* Assuming 30% for streets

¹ This figure was calculated by using the Village area of 1929, the net densities obtained from the 1937 Zoning Ordinance and zone districts percentage of the city. The percentages were obtained from the land use plan prepared in 1950 by C. W. Barr. It can be safely assumed the change in zones and corporate limits during the intervening years was not sufficient to affect the correctness of calculations.

APPENDIX IV

Report of the Village Plan Commission
(This Copy of the 1929 Plan was Secured From the Present
City Clerk and is One of the Original Copies Produced
by the Plan Commission for General Distribution.)

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REPORT
of the
VILLAGE
PLANNING
COMMISSION



BIRMINGHAM, MICH.

GENERAL VILLAGE PLAN
of
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

Report to the
VILLAGE PLANNING
COMMISSION

by
ARTHUR C. COMEY
Consulting City Planner



JULY, 1929

"The plan is not a call for great immediate expenditures, but rather a program by which those expenditures which will be made in any event may be most effective and much wasteful expenditure avoided."

Foreword

DURING the past 10 years Birmingham has grown from a quiet village community of 2,500 to a metropolitan suburb of 12,000. Realizing that this growth would continue at the same rapid rate, a Planning Commission was appointed and they, after careful investigations, employed Mr. Arthur C. Comey, a national authority on city planning, to study the situation and needs in Birmingham with the idea of preserving and protecting the natural beauty of this village and making it a highly desirable residential community. This study has been made and we hereby submit the report and maps prepared by Mr. Comey to the Village Commission.

VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION.

H. N. Davock, *Chairman*

Chas. E. Lewis

R. J. Coryell

J. A. Wendorph

H. T. Ellerby

Mrs. S. F. Wilson

J. W. Parry

"While no close estimates are, in the nature of the situation, possible, even without counting on a much expanded apartment house population at the center, ninety to one hundred and twenty thousand people will eventually be living within the present area of Birmingham. No planning can prevent this influx however undesirable this may be deemed by the majority of the citizens. Will this change occur without destroying the present attractiveness of the Village?"

OFFICES OF THE
VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

July 26, 1929.

The Honorable Village Commission,
Birmingham, Michigan.

Gentlemen:

We are forwarding to you a copy of the report of Mr. Arthur C. Comey, expert village planner employed by the Village Planning Commission on authority of the Village Commission.

The Village Planning Commission, after various meetings with Mr. Comey and careful study of his report, recommend at this time that action be taken in a reasonable time on the following items embodied in Mr. Comey's report:

1st. That land be acquired so that future east and west traffic may be passed through the center of the Village by a plan approximating that submitted by Mr. Comey.

That land be acquired to provide a future traffic way to parallel the new Grand Trunk Railroad in a way approximating the plan submitted by Mr. Comey.

2nd. That land be acquired to provide for parks and play grounds under the guidance of a definite plan approximating the suggestions as made in Mr. Comey's maps.

3rd. That this Village Commission decide on definite village limits so that the municipal service systems may be logically planned and developed, and the Village Planning Commission recommend the limits as outlined by Mr. Comey.

4th. In order to preserve and enhance the high standards of Birmingham as they now exist, we recommend the preparation of a zoning ordinance for study and adoption, and that Mr. Comey be employed to assist in drafting this ordinance.

5th. That the Village Commission draft and adopt Ordinances that will protect the high standards of a residential community with specific respect to street tree planting, sign control and the architecture of commercial buildings approximating the recommendations of Mr. Comey's report.

Very truly yours,

VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION.

By MYRTLE E. CARSON,

MEC:BG

Secretary.

ARTHUR C. COMEY
CITY PLANNER
Fellow, American Society of Landscape Architects

‘ ‘ ‘
HARVARD SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
Abbot Building

8 July, 1929

Village Planning Commission
Birmingham, Michigan

Gentlemen:

I beg to submit herewith a general village plan for Birmingham, comprising four main features—(1) a regional plan showing the relation of Birmingham to the surrounding district, especially in regard to major highways; (2) a general village plan, emphasizing general location and widths of major streets, system of parks, and the general location of playgrounds; (3) a general zoning plan, prepared as part of the village plan but presented separately; and (4) a report accompanying and explaining briefly the plan and including a brief survey of all the principal aspects of village planning.

Certain supplementary material has also been filed for your future use in the custody of the Village Engineer, Mr. H. H. Corson. May I state that his cooperation, as well as that of Mr. J. W. Parry, the Village Manager, and numerous other village and township officials, has been most hearty and has contributed much to the progress of the plan. I also received cordial assistance from Mr. Walter Blucher, Executive Secretary of the Detroit City Plan Commission, Mr. John P. Hallihan, Chief Engineer of the Detroit Rapid Transit Commission, Mr. T. Glenn Phillips and staff, in charge of Pontiac city planning, and several county officials and others active in the region, all of which helped to make my task a congenial one.

Respectfully submitted,

ARTHUR C. COMEY.

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Aerial View of Birmingham

A. INTRODUCTION

BIRMINGHAM is an integral part of the Detroit-Pontiac Region. It is also a more or less self-contained residential community. Neither of these two aspects can be slighted: their harmonizing presents the greatest problem of the plan of the village.

GROWTH

Birmingham is as yet a young community; its population of ten or twelve thousand is but a tithe of that which it is likely to have within a few decades. Situated on a super-highway connecting the great industrial metropolis of Detroit, eighteen miles southeast, with the thriving new industrial center of Pontiac, seven miles northwest, it is in the direct line to receive the full effect of the growth of the region as a whole. If southeastern Michigan continues to grow at all in population, Birmingham seems sure to develop. With even a portion of the continued growth that all expect, Birmingham should grow rapidly until substantially all its area is built upon.

While no close estimates are, in the nature of the situation, possible, even without counting on a much expanded apartment house population at the center, ninety to one hundred and twenty thousand people will eventually be living within the present area of Birmingham.

No planning can prevent this influx, however undesirable it may be deemed by the majority of the citizens. Will this change occur without destroying the present attractiveness of the village?

Further, can this growth be so utilized as to result in enhancing Birmingham's high standards? These are the major problems a village plan must solve.

PLANNING LIMITATIONS

Now is the time and the opportunity to so plan as to care adequately for the future population. On the other hand, the planning that has already taken place, or the growth that has occurred without planning, seriously interferes with any idealistic scheme for the future city and, in fact, has, to a large degree, stamped the physical arrangement of many of its main features, particularly its shopping centers and street system. Practically the entire area within the present village limits and most of the land just outside of the village is already platted. While many of these subdivisions are as yet but little built upon, nearly all have the streets graded and surfaced, with scattered houses already built and the majority of the lots sold to individual owners, thus rendering practically impossible any radical departure from the existing plats. While most of the earlier subdivisions were on a rigid grid-iron system, the more recent ones have departed more or less from the rectangular blocks and straight streets, so that much of the village is now laid out in a charming manner designed to give each block and in lesser degree each lot some individuality of its own.

DESIRABLE VILLAGE LIMITS

The village government has today a certain amount of authority in regard to any future plats within the village limits. If these limits are extended to include farm land before plats are filed, this may in some cases be effective in assuring thereafter

As Birmingham becomes more urban the need for parks and other public recreation areas will develop rapidly. During the same period the opportunities to establish such areas will practically disappear.



Birmingham has just completed an excellent civic center, with administrative offices, central police and fire departments under one roof.

proper safeguarding of community interests. In Michigan, cities have control of plats for three miles outside their limits. Thus if Birmingham became a city it could control the platting of extensive areas that might at some future time be taken into its corporate area. However, the indefinite expansion of Birmingham in area does not at present appear particularly desirable. Either some regional or metropolitan form of government satisfactory to all portions of the region should be found, or else its local government areas should continue to comprise neighborhoods with considerable common interest. Along the principal radial highway, Woodward Avenue to the southeast and northwest, this subject is now of merely academic interest, as at both ends of the present village other municipalities already exist. East and west as well as northeast and southwest, on the contrary, the village may advantageously be extended a half mile to a mile to include areas likely to be sufficiently similar to the general high type of suburban residential development that characterizes Birmingham's present tendencies. Such a possible future village line is indicated on the Plan of Birmingham and Vicinity, utilizing natural or artificial barriers where feasible to separate Birmingham physically from surrounding municipalities.

NEEDED LEGISLATION

New plats are now made to conform in regard to widths for main highways and "superhighways" to the standards recently adopted by most of the townships in the three counties embracing the region. Many mistakes were, however, made in the



Beyond a block destined for park treatment lies the new library.

past. Under present laws, to remedy these would often prove tedious and unduly expensive. The United States Department of Commerce under Secretary Hoover's guidance in 1928 promulgated a model planning enabling act, which among other things would authorize the establishment of an authoritative city or village plan, effectively preventing buildings hereafter from being erected so as to block the future widening of those main highways now seen to be too narrow for future needs. This principle may also be extended to protect the locations of future park lands. It is recommended that a similar enabling act be secured for Birmingham. Doubtless other municipalities in Michigan can be brought to cooperate in securing this legislation.

The official village plan should also be an effective guide to the location of future municipal buildings, schools, and playgrounds. Further legislation along the lines of the "Hoover" act would prevent hasty action overturning the plan. One part of the general scheme, the zoning plan, may and should be adopted at an early date, so that private activity may not be out of harmony with the needs of the community as a whole. After considering certain inter-relations between Birmingham and the surrounding region which vitally affect Birmingham itself, the plan for its future will be considered in some detail under the specific elements that go to make it up: highways and other means of circulation, park system, zoning, various public functions, and the proper development of private property.

The plan is not a call for great immediate expenditures, but rather a program by which those expenditures which will be made in any event may be most effective and much wasteful expenditure avoided.

In the quality of the appearance of its street improvements Birmingham has an opportunity to retain and enhance its well-deserved reputation as a suburb of distinction. High grade pavements not too wide for the traffic that will use them, well constructed curbs with broad curves at intersections, ample park strips for trees and in some cases shrubbery, uniformly placed concrete walks, again of a width that is needed for the pedestrian travel, all go to stamp a community as a desirable one in which to live.

B. REGIONAL ASPECTS

DETROIT-PONTIAC REGIONAL PLANS

In order to plan intelligently for the village itself some attention must first be given to its relation to the region within which it lies. Only after effectively meeting the problems of regional origin that occur within the village limits can a sound and enduring solution to the local village problems themselves be found. Working from the larger area to the smaller the foundations of the plan may be well laid. Much excellent planning work has already been done in the region. As a result of early efforts of the Detroit City Plan Commission, including a report on Suburban Planning by the present author in 1915, and later amplified and carried over a larger area by the Detroit Rapid Transit Commission, a Detroit regional highway plan has been promulgated, relating Birmingham on the edge of this region to Detroit. The Detroit City Plan Commission has also prepared a preliminary parkway plan covering an even larger area, but this has never been followed up to any degree. Quite recently the Pontiac City Plan Commission has had a Pontiac regional plan prepared as a part of its city planning studies, again relating Birmingham, which appears on the edge of this smaller region, to Pontiac. Hitherto, however, no plan has expressed the relationships of the portions of the region of which Birmingham is the approximate center to one another. A preliminary skeleton of such a regional plan is presented herewith as a necessary basis for Birmingham's village plan. It would be very desirable if a regional plan conference of all municipalities, townships and counties interested could work out such a plan more completely, or, better yet, a larger group develop a comprehensive plan for all southeastern Michigan.

SUPERHIGHWAYS

Township authorities have in most instances adopted the Detroit superhighway plan and now require new plats to dedicate the full width of 204 feet thereon indicated for superhighways. The plan herewith presented extends this superhighway system and articulates it with the Pontiac regional plan. Between the two regions it indicates such additional superhighways as are needed to afford a complete system throughout the region. These will be discussed more in detail under the chapter on the highway system.

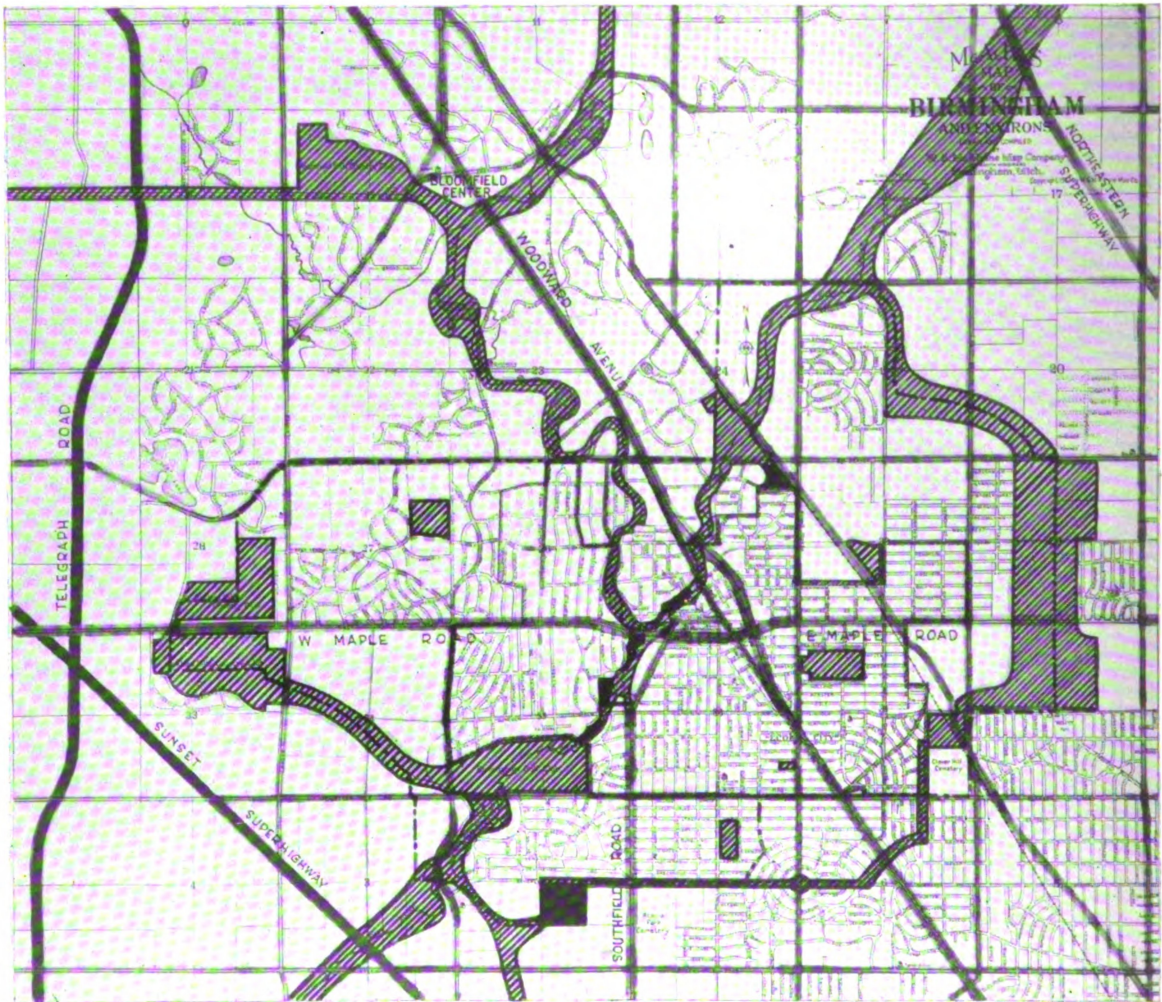
INTERVENING HIGHWAYS

The same authorities incorporated as part of their plan and platting requirement the proposition that in general all section-line roads should be 120 feet wide, thus fitting in between the superhighways with a rectangular net of wide thoroughfares one mile apart. We see no reason for departing from this standard except in an occasional instance where local conditions make it inappropriate. They likewise established the width for highways on quarter-section lines at 86 feet. These we have also incorporated in the plan wherever a fairly close ultimate building development is anticipated. On the west side of the village, however, the very open development on large lots makes some of these intermediate thoroughfares unnecessary.

East and west as well as northeast and southwest, on the contrary, the village may advantageously be extended a half mile to a mile to include areas likely to be sufficiently similar to the general high type of suburban residential development that characterizes Birmingham's present tendencies. Such a possible future village line is indicated on the Plan of Birmingham and Vicinity, utilizing natural or artificial barriers where feasible to separate Birmingham physically from surrounding municipalities.

REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM

In the matter of parks, the village system is so planned that it may later become part of a comprehensive park system for the region. Until such time as the latter is developed the village parks will continue to serve local needs. There is a law in Michigan under which inter-county park commissions may operate. It is recommended that the possibilities of action by such a commission in the region about Birmingham be studied. Several of the other elements of the comprehensive village plan having regional aspects will be alluded to as each is taken up in subsequent chapters.



Plan of Birmingham and Vicinity—The shaded areas indicate proposed future parkways some of which will form artificial barriers to separate Birmingham from surrounding municipalities.

C. GENERAL PLAN

For convenience, the village plan may be divided into component parts according to function, but in practice no complete separation can ever be made. The inter-relation of these parts is the essence of the plan itself. In the order of their importance, there arise problems of circulation by highway and otherwise, the park system, zoning, public functions, and the use of private property.

I. Circulation

Means of movement have been likened to the arterial system of the body, giving it its life blood. Circulation of persons and goods may be by highway—by far the most important part today—by rail, by water where available, or by air.

THE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

INCREASE OF SUPERHIGHWAY EFFECTIVENESS

To secure efficiency it is essential to classify the highways of a community according to the type and volume of service. The greater Detroit superhighway system calls for a network of great roads about three miles apart and two hundred and four feet wide. These are at present being constructed with two forty-foot pavements at grade and a forty-foot reserve strip in the center. Local streets enter these through traffic pavements wherever platted, and in built-up sections there are direct crossings of the central reservation at frequent intervals, with as a rule a stop and go control system of traffic lights. As a relatively inexpensive initial development these methods are reasonably effective. By synchronizing the lights progressively, speed may be maintained, even though traffic capacity is reduced, and the number of vehicles turning on or off from side streets or parked along the edge of the main thoroughfare is as yet so small as to constitute little hindrance to through traffic. The ultimate ideal may be a single or even a pair of roadways separated entirely from other roads in grade, but this will be so extremely expensive that some intermediate design should be found which will permit through traffic to flow practically uninterruptedly, even after the region is fully built up. As this problem is common to all superhighways in the district, a solution acceptable to all authorities should be found before being put into effect in Birmingham or elsewhere.

ALTERNATE ROUTES

The superhighway with heaviest traffic in the vicinity of Birmingham will doubtless continue to be Woodward Avenue. Most fortunately, the state is now planning to complete this 204 foot route (1) by relocating the Grand Trunk Railway about one mile to the east and merging its present right-of-way with Woodward Avenue where it is adjacent to it, and (2) by widening this right-of-way as it by-passes the center of the village. This route may then be made capable of handling an enormous traffic. In addition, however, means for through traffic not destined for local points along its course to completely by-pass the Woodward Superhighway will be very de-

On the east no topographic features serve as a basis for large parks, except several scattered groves of fine trees. On the other hand, this district will stand in even greater need of such recreation facilities than that along the River Rouge, as a more intensive residential development is already beginning and likely to continue, particularly if the Grand Trunk rapid transit is inaugurated.



Birmingham has within its limits the first real landscape unit other than the flat plain that one meets in coming out from Detroit—the valley of the River Rouge, nearly 60 feet deep in spots, and now for the most part a delightful tangle of natural vegetation.

sirable, thus not only relieving Woodward Avenue but also preventing congestion on those routes that feed into Woodward Avenue. On the southwest the new Northwestern Superhighway is too far away to be of much benefit, but nearer to Birmingham Sunset Superhighway has recently been authorized from the Eight-Mile Road to the Eleven-Mile Road. It is very desirable from Birmingham's point of view that this should be extended as far as W. Maple Road, for it would then constitute, in conjunction with Telegraph Road, now opened 150 feet wide, a complete by-pass on the west of Birmingham. Similarly on the northeast the Northeastern Superhighway project from Stephenson Superhighway to the outskirts of Pontiac would form another great by-pass.

EAST-WEST SUPERHIGHWAYS

Running east and west, Eleven-Mile Road, four miles to the south of the village center, is already adopted as a superhighway and Square Lake Road, four miles to the north, is definitely projected as a similar route under the Pontiac plan. The logical location for a superhighway between these is Maple Road. A diversion to any other through route involves complications that would be likely to defeat the purpose in view and would harm the village more than help it. Maple Road should be 200 feet wide where feasible and at least 150 feet wide throughout, except in the village center where present building interferes with widening. Here a new route following Merrill Street and extending it through to rejoin Maple Road near Elm Street will be a less expensive and more efficient solution. Ultimately a broad roadway should pass under Southfield Avenue and over both Woodward Avenue and the new Grand Trunk Superhighway. To compensate for the land taken from the Hill School lot, Martin Street may be turned over to the School District between Chester Street and Southfield Avenue. Opposite the village center the total width of the thoroughfare may be reduced without reducing its capacity, and also between Woodward Avenue and the Grand Trunk, where a two-level street will give full capacity for through traffic.

NORTH-SOUTH SUPERHIGHWAYS

Running from south to north are Telegraph Road on the west and Stephenson Superhighway on the east. Between them lies Southfield Superhighway, a very important by-pass route, though the completion of Telegraph Road will relieve it somewhat for a time. Its present northern terminus at Lincoln Avenue presents the village with a serious prospective traffic problem. It is recommended that the northbound commercial traffic be routed by Southfield Avenue, widened to 86 feet, and Merrill Street as extended to Woodward Avenue or the Grand Trunk Superhighway, and southbound by way of Maple Road at its present width into Southfield Avenue, and that eventually for passenger cars a park road be provided in the Rouge Valley park, with a broad connection from Southfield Superhighway at Lincoln Avenue. This will by-pass the village center and form an attractive route through the village, where automobiles will be adequately provided for, and will not destroy the charm of the village landscape. Similar park roads along "Muddy River" in the Fens in Boston and Brookline, along small streams in Westchester County, New York, and elsewhere have proven the value of this type of improvement in enhancing both aesthetic and financial values. To the north the Pontiac plan calls for developing Opdyke Road as a superhighway, one branch by-passing Pontiac, the other swinging over to the Dodge Road at a point several miles north. Taken in conjunction with the Northeastern Superhighway, this constitutes a sufficient traffic net and obviates any necessity of developing Adams Avenue as a superhighway.

No time should be lost in putting zoning into effect, now that its general scheme has been related to the comprehensive village plan. On the basis of the present or a similar tentative plan an ordinance should be drawn up and hearings held prior to the adoption of a "final" plan and ordinance. Such plan itself, it should be remembered, is in no sense crystallized, but by the state law may be changed after suitable procedure to meet new requirements.

SECTIONLINE ROADS

Between the superhighways practically every sectionline road should be 120 feet wide. In the vicinity of Birmingham, running east and west these will be, on the south, Fourteen-Mile or Clawson Road and, on the north, Big Beaver Road, which should be extended through to connect with Quarton Road, the latter also extended northwest and west at its westerly end to regain and then follow the section-line. Running north and south, on the east the 120 foot highways will be Crooks Road, Coolidge Highway, Berwick-Adams Avenue connected via Cummings Street, and, on the west, Evergreen Road as far north as Maple Road and Lasher Road. One other important 120 foot connecting and distributing avenue should be opened by widening Kensington Avenue and extending it along the New Grand Trunk Railway through from the southern edge of Pontiac to Crooks Road in Royal Oak. With the development sure to come along this new railroad route, especially if rapid transit service is provided, this possibility of securing direct communication among neighborhoods on its east side without crossing and re-crossing should not be lost.

QUARTERSECTION ROADS

Within the village, 86 foot east and west quartersection roads should be established on Lincoln Avenue and Derby Road. The latter should be extended via Mohegan Avenue to the Grand Trunk Superhighway. Oak Street extended should be 86 feet wide from the superhighway to Woodward Avenue, but owing to the open type of development need be made only 66 feet wide west from Woodward Avenue. North and south the 86-foot roads will be Eton Road and Pierce Street. Chesterfield Avenue should be uniformly 80 feet wide north of Maple Road and at least 66 feet wide from Maple Road to Lincoln Avenue. Cranbrook Road should be 86 feet wide in extension of the 120-foot Evergreen Road.

LOCAL STREETS

While little change can be made in existing system of local streets, near the village center several minor streets should be so extended as to facilitate local circulation of traffic on the west side of Woodward Avenue. Ann Street should be extended 60 feet wide north to the extended Merrill Street; Henrietta Street should be extended 60 feet wide to Willets Street; and Bates Street should be extended at least 50 feet wide by a curving road along the proposed river park to Woodward Avenue.

ALLEYS

Wherever detached houses are to be the standard type, alleys are probably not worth their expense nor the usual attendant evils of unkemptness. Rear lot-line easements will meet sufficiently the requirements. In apartment house areas alleys may or may not be incorporated according to the type of service provided within the block. In business blocks, however, the alley is more likely to prove its worth for service access and should be included in the plats for such areas. The subsequent provision of business alleys in plats where none exist is a matter of determination of relative cost and benefit in each case.

PASSENGER DRIVES

In addition to the principal system of highways serving all types of traffic—passenger and commercial—such a region as this will find it advantageous to develop a partial

A further step should be taken in a progressive community such as Birmingham. Whenever a building is proposed to be erected unsuited to its site it will be worth while to sit down with the designer and owner and suggest how to improve the design. Elsewhere this is successfully done by committees of architects, by fine arts commissions, or by the planning commissions themselves.

secondary system of passenger drives of more attractive type in conjunction with the park system, utilizing natural topographic features where they exist. Provision should be made for a continuous drive through park lands along the entire River Rouge north from the present large park within Detroit city limits. In connection with a series of border parks on the east side of Birmingham a less important but nevertheless valuable circuit drive may be established from the River Rouge on the north to the bounds of Clover Hill Cemetery at Clawson Road on the southeast, thence by Beechwood Avenue and the "Parkway" across Woodward Avenue and along Beverly Road, all much widened, to Dodge State Park No. 6. A short parkway connection will then bring this drive back to River Rouge, making a complete circuit. Other aspects of these park drives will be considered in the section devoted to the park system.

PLATTING CONTROL

Reference has already been made to the desirability of exercising greater control over plats despite the fact that the "horse is stolen"—nearly all the land within the large limits being already platted. Plats for the remaining farm land in the vicinity should require approval by the Village Plan Commission before being recorded. Standards should be adopted by the Plan Commission as a guide for such work. Fortunately, the Detroit City Plan Commission has already adopted a code of principles and standards eminently suited for this locality, so that, using this as a precedent, little or no change need be made before a similar adoption for Birmingham.

STREET TREATMENT

In the quality of the appearance of its street improvements Birmingham has an opportunity to retain and enhance its well-deserved reputation as a suburb of distinction. High grade pavements not too wide for the traffic that will use them, well constructed curbs and broad curves at intersections, ample park strips for trees and in some cases shrubbery, uniformly placed concrete walks, again of a width that is needed for the pedestrian travel, all go to stamp a community as a desirable one in which to live.

ROADWAY TYPES

For the main highway system the widths of pavement at first constructed will be narrower than those ultimately needed. Curbs, trees, poles, etc., should be placed, however, so far as possible, in their permanent position, and the remaining width grassed over until needed. Each superhighway is a problem in itself. Woodward Superhighway will be constructed by the State of Michigan. Its cross-section in Birmingham should doubtless be uniform with that elsewhere. Whether the present double roadway type is the best adapted to heavy traffic through built-up regions is a moot point. It may prove that a system of virtually four roadways—two one-way express ways with one-way local roadways on the sides—will pass a larger volume of traffic. Further study should be given to this by all authorities concerned, local and regional.

The 120-foot highways should probably be as a rule ultimately of the two one-way roadways type, local traffic mingling with the stream of through traffic, weaving across it, and turning in the central reserved area into the opposite stream of traffic in order to

The "superhighways" themselves, and particularly the Woodward Superhighway, soon to be completed through Birmingham, should be planted with some larger species of tree, such as the American Elm, so that the present hideous perspective of lines of telegraph poles may be replaced with great vistas of massive foliage.

reach a point on the opposite side of the highway. Here again, however, more complete study of the great region is necessary for a positive determination. The 86-foot intermediate thoroughfares will be developed with a single wide roadway, 40 or even 60 feet across according to the traffic actually using each particular portion. On 66-foot streets when carrying considerably more than local traffic there will be needed a 40-foot pavement. Purely local streets, on the other hand, need never be constructed with more than a 32-foot pavement, and short stretches may be but 24 feet wide. Sidewalks on local streets need be but $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 feet wide, leaving ample space, preferably 6 feet or more, for tree planting strips.

TREE PLANTING

Trees, signs, lights and wires are all capable of being handled in a way to increase the beauty and interest of the village. Hitherto only two or three of the species of trees that will grow well in this latitude have been planted. While the rule of planting but one species on a street is an excellent one a much greater variety of trees can be used to advantage on different streets. The Detroit City Plan Commission has published an authoritative document (now on file with the Birmingham Planning Commission) setting forth succinctly the opportunities in this direction, listing a wide range of species, some of them suited to certain special types of streets only, and also outlining the best schemes of spacing as well as methods of growing trees for street use. In the near future it will be desirable to replace the present part-time forester with one on full time within the Park Department and having charge of the trees both in the parks and on the streets.



The irregular line of upper stories will be masked and yet the business entrances and show windows will not be shut off. In this way Birmingham may regain its distinctive appearance of an attractive suburban community. (Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D. C.)

Woodward Avenue running through the heart of the village presents a special problem and a special opportunity in the use of street trees. The one thing of prime value that attracts people to Birmingham and makes them prefer to stay is the getting away from the intensive city conditions of Detroit. Yet Woodward Avenue today, with its wide pavement adorned only by "white-way" light poles and flanked by a heterogeneous collection of stores and other business buildings, some good, some bad in facade, but none harmonizing with another—this Woodward Avenue is but a small-town copy of Woodward Avenue in down-town Detroit minus the dignity of the great buildings of the latter street.

Birmingham should indicate on its main street that it is distinctly an open community with tree-lined streets. The most appropriate treatment for such a business street, however, will not be spreading or dense shade but trees used more formally in the nature of a high hedge along the curb, as is common in many European cities and occasionally seen in this country. Only a few species are really well adapted to such treatment, notably the Horse Chestnut, the Plane, certain Lindens, certain types of Elms and the Hornbeam. Some of these do not do well under such artificial conditions in the Detroit region. While the Hornbeam grows slowly, it may prove to be the best in the end, or experiment may demonstrate that some other well-known species may be adapted to this type of use. Such trees, spaced rather close together, will soon be high enough to permit clear trunks for the first ten or fifteen feet, thus in no way impeding the view or access to the first floor business frontage. They will also be kept (by clipping, etc.) well away from the buildings themselves and should not be allowed to spread over the center of the street. Eventually the effect will be of a great vista between high walls of foliage, with the store windows showing between the trunks below. The inevitably inconsequential irregular line of upper stories will be masked and yet the business entrances and show windows will not be shut off. In this way Birmingham may regain its distinctive appearance of an attractive suburban community.

The "superhighways" themselves, and particularly the Woodward Superhighway, soon to be completed through Birmingham, should be planted with some larger species, such as the American Elm, so that the present hideous perspectives of lines of telegraph poles may be replaced with great vistas of massive foliage.

ORNAMENTAL FIXTURES

Other street furnishings should receive equal attention. Street signs, lighting poles and fixtures are already to a large degree standardized. Special types will doubtless, be needed in certain locations, as for instance a few years after the new trees are planted on Woodward Avenue, when a light held farther out from the curb than the present ones will be more effective. Ornamental posts should gradually be installed throughout the village.



Trees, signs and wires are all capable of being handled in a way to increase the beauty and interest of the Village. (Wisteria growing on lamppost, Washington, D. C.)

The United States Department of Commerce under Secretary Hoover's guidance in 1928 promulgated a model planning enabling act, which among other things would authorize the establishment of an authoritative city or village plan, effectively preventing buildings hereafter from being erected so as to block the future widening of those main highways now seen to be too narrow for future needs. This principle may also be extended to protect the locations of future park land.

WIRES

Overhead wires are an unmitigated eye-sore. They should be placed underground as fast as financial circumstances permit, particularly where concentrated on main streets. Elsewhere the present standard of a pole line on an easement along the rear lot line should be insisted upon if at all possible.

BILLBOARDS AND STREET SIGNS

Advertising signs have, of course, value where placed on premises to which they relate. Billboards advertising things not carried on the same premises have less reason for existence. They should certainly be excluded from all residential areas and placed under reasonable control in business areas. Birmingham cannot afford to lose its attractive suburban character through the occupying of the landscape by numerous large advertising signs, whether billboards or not. All signs should be limited in height and in length. If any signs are allowed over the street they should not in any case be permitted to project more than two feet. This will permit all forms of signs flat against the building otherwise acceptable, and also permit vertical signs standing out at right angles to the building. The passer-by can then see a series of such signs along the street, none obscuring the next, and this may be considered an added convenience and attraction, particularly if all projecting signs are required to be electrically lighted. Such signs as are frequently found on business streets projecting five or even ten feet out over the sidewalk soon defeat their own end by obscuring one another, besides destroying whatever beauty the business facade may have and constituting a potential danger to pedestrians. The placing of signs over the sidewalk is a revocable right which a municipality may at any time cancel.



The present hideous perspectives of lines of telegraph poles may be replaced with great vistas of massive foliage

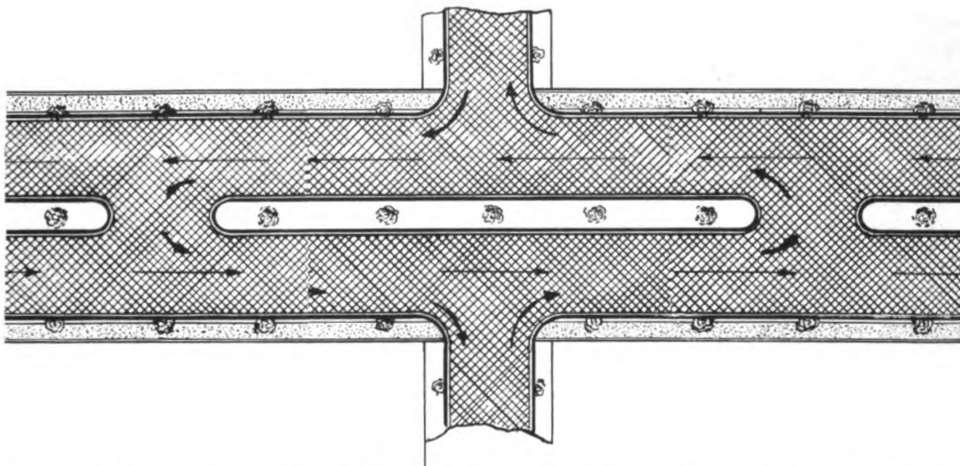
Transit

AUTOMOBILE BUSES

While today the private automobile is the largest factor in transportation in the Birmingham region, as population densities increase some one or more forms of mass transportation will become more and more important. Today bus and electric street car travel is practically limited to Woodward Avenue. Electric street cars do not seem likely to regain their former place in such suburban regions as this and may safely be disregarded, except insofar as they approximate rapid transit service. Buses will doubtless increase a great deal in numbers, and eventually in number of routes operating, but, as they are free-moving vehicles, from the point of view of city planning they constitute simply one of the many elements that go to make up the mixed vehicular traffic on the thoroughfares and do not require separate provision in the plan. The precise routing of future lateral feeder bus lines cannot now be foreseen, but they will as a rule naturally run along the major highways, which are designed on the general plan to be of ample width to include such traffic. The principal local bus route will remain along Woodward Avenue, with long-distance buses operating by the new superhighway along the Grand Trunk Railway.

RAPID TRANSIT

Likewise, rapid transit by rail, when the passenger traffic becomes dense enough to support it, will be chiefly along the Woodward Superhighway, with possible routes in the distant future along certain of the other superhighways. The great width of these has been designed with a view to providing for such rapid transit on the central reserved strip. On the other hand, large cities elsewhere are providing rapid transit along the existing steam railroad rights-of-way. Only one such possibility occurs within the Birmingham region, but, especially in view of the fact that proposals are again being made by the railroad company, the possibility of electric rapid transit along the



The 120-foot highways should be of the two one-way roadways type. Local traffic mingles with the stream of through traffic, weaving across it, and turns in the central reserved area into the opposite stream of traffic in order to reach a point on the opposite side of the highway.

Grand Trunk Railway between Detroit and Pontiac should be kept in view. With one or more stations within the Birmingham village limits this would revolutionize commuting conditions and permit a stream of population to pour into Birmingham now held in Detroit by the length of time necessary to reach the down-town office or store. Stations on this route are recommended to be at Clawson Road or Coolidge Highway, East Maple Road, and Big Beaver Road or Adams Avenue. If this rapid transit on the Grand Trunk Railway comes before conditions for fast trolley service along Woodward Avenue are materially improved—as for example by a subway from down-town Detroit out to the Six-Mile Road—it is likely to shift some of the emphasis of the growth of Birmingham for the time being at least to the east side.

THROUGH RAILROADS

With the removal of the Grand Trunk Railway to its new right-of-way modern freight yards may be developed near E. Maple Road, with space for expansion as the region grows in population. No other facilities for car-load rail freight appear likely ever to be provided within the village. Trucking will, of course, bring much of the freight destined for the village, both from other railroads and from the nearest water terminals in Detroit.

AIR TRANSPORT

With airplanes increasing in number and mileage flown, attention should be paid to their convenient use by people residing or doing business in Birmingham. At present outside of sight-seeing and similar recreational uses their greatest value seems likely to be in long-distance trips. It is, therefore, not essential to have terminals distributed at close intervals throughout the region. These at present involve large areas of land and are an unmitigated nuisance to residential areas nearby. Advances in the art may at any time reduce the areas needed for landing fields, and much of the noise may be obviated. However, that caused by the beat of the propellers on the air may not be readily susceptible of elimination. Therefore, for Birmingham's best interest an airport should be within a few miles but not close in to its center. Moreover, a study of the southeastern Michigan region as a whole shows four airports within twelve to sixteen miles of Birmingham, to the south, southeast, east and northwest, respectively. In the future a single new airport located just east of Birmingham, in the general location recently proposed for one, would be almost midway between these four and bring every point in the region within seven or eight miles of a port. This is not too great a distance for local automobile travel to and from the port in suburban communities of this type. Until the time when such a new airport can be supported presumably as a common venture by several municipalities, the new Pontiac field will serve Birmingham's local needs. For regular long-distance service air travel Detroit's fields are not unduly far away. Meanwhile it would appear wise to set aside the land for a local landing field before it is all subdivided. (Note: A landing Field was dedicated in July, 1929, at approximately the above recommended location.)

Birmingham cannot afford to lose its attractive suburban character through the occupying of the landscape by numerous large advertising signs, whether billboards or not.

II. Park System

As Birmingham becomes more urban the need for parks and other public recreation areas will develop rapidly. During the same period the opportunities to establish such areas will practically disappear. It is therefore essential that Birmingham secure most of its park lands well in advance of building, which means at a very early date indeed, and that wherever acquisition is at the moment impracticable some means be found of preventing buildings and similar expensive improvements within the limits of future parks.

Recreation areas may for convenience be classified under four main types: state parks, landscape parks, local parks, and playgrounds.

STATE PARKS

No large wilderness areas—true state parks—can readily be located within the actual bounds of the Birmingham region, but should be provided by the state not far away and within easy access for the greater Detroit population.

ROUGE VALLEY PARKWAY

On the other hand, Birmingham has within its limits the first real landscape unit other than the flat plain that one meets in coming out from Detroit—the valley of the River Rouge, nearly 60 feet deep in spots, and now for the most part a delightful tangle of natural vegetation. This valley should be preserved and enhanced in attractiveness by being made a park for its entire length north of the present River Rouge Park in Detroit. Takings should be wide enough to have property on the upland as a rule facing the park across a boundary street, and there should be provision for a future scenic park drive which will form a really attractive entrance to Birmingham worthy to herald its charming character, and in itself perhaps the most beautiful feature of the village.

A branch of this park should connect with Quarton Lake and the stream to its north, perhaps only reserving a future park right here until such time as a more intensive development of dwellings supplants the present expensive estates, particularly in Bloomfield Hills. In this way the fine tree growth would be preserved without interfering with the present use of the land. Ultimately this park strip would meet near Long Lake Road the belt parkway designed as a part of the Pontiac plan.

EASTERN INTER-MUNICIPAL PARK

On the east no topographic features serve as a basis for large parks, except several scattered groves of fine trees. On the other hand, this district will stand in even greater need of such recreation facilities than that along the River Rouge, as a more intensive residential development is already beginning and likely to continue, particularly if the Grand Trunk rapid transit is inaugurated. However, the way is at present opened for acquiring a large tract, or a continuous series of tracts, which might be managed as a joint undertaking with other municipalities, this park serving as a separating buffer between them and Birmingham. Where gravel is at present being excavated this might be allowed to continue for a considerable period, as the holes thus produced in the plain will make interesting lakes with sloping shores in an otherwise flat country. The important thing is to get these tracts set aside before platting and sales render it

It is therefore essential that Birmingham secure most of its park lands well in advance of building, which means at a very early date indeed, and that wherever acquisition is at the moment impracticable some means be found of preventing buildings and similar expensive improvement within the limits of future parks.

difficult and expensive to acquire title. If this is not done the eastern part of Birmingham is likely to become as monotonous an unbroken waste of buildings as much of the city of Detroit already is. A possible parkway connection between this eastern park and the River Rouge both north and south of the village has already been mentioned.

GOLF COURSES

One element in the program for large parks deserves special mention. The numerous private golf courses of the region afford extensive areas of attractive open landscape besides providing recreation to a portion of the community. History elsewhere has proven, however, that they are apt to be temporary in duration and are likely to be cut up for house lots just when their open space value becomes greatest. Every golf ground now existing in the Birmingham Region should become a permanent part of the park system. This may probably be accomplished by an agreement remitting taxes while they are under private management or by taking an easement against subdividing or building.

LOCAL PARKS

Within the village there is need of providing additional local parks particularly in those sections where lots are small. Suitable locations for these are now available to serve every section not sufficiently near any of the proposed large parks. Unless they are taken quickly these sites, or any sites at all close by, are likely to be lost.

PLAYGROUNDS

Organized recreation requires playgrounds. The precise locations of these cannot be determined in advance of acquisition, as they usually have to be carved out of the subdivided areas suited for building. Fortunately the problem of school and play-



As outlying sections develop, new schools and playgrounds—with an area of five to ten acres each—must be located centrally to each district to be served.

ground is simplified in Birmingham by being under a single School District. All except one of the newer schools have sufficient space for playground adjoining, with corresponding effectiveness in service. The Adams School playground is small and separated from the school by a fairly important street, which is now closed to traffic when the ground is in use. A much larger site can at present be obtained to the northeast and might be connected with the school by pedestrian subways beneath Adams Avenue. One of these playgrounds, or a special site, should be large enough to accommodate a high school athletic field.

As outlying sections develop, new schools and playgrounds—with an area of five to ten acres each—must be located centrally to each district to be served. Elsewhere the tendency is developing to consider section and quarter-section highways as the boundaries of neighborhoods, with a school near the center of each quarter-section. Whether this distribution will meet school requirements in Birmingham depends somewhat on the type of school plant. It would make an ideal system of distribution for playgrounds. Seven such playground sites are proposed and the general locations indicated on the plan.

III. Zoning *

DESIRABILITY

Birmingham is a residential community. To keep it so, zoning is essential. It is a high class residential community. Zoning is even more vitally needed for it to retain and enhance this superior quality. Industry in general has no place within the village limits. If an industrial belt is eventually due to arise joining the industrial areas of Detroit with those of Pontiac, it should be entirely to the east of Birmingham.

INDUSTRIAL NEEDS

On the other hand, small local industries, serving chiefly Birmingham's needs itself, must be given space, as in every community of similar size. A commercial district along the new Grand Trunk Railway and a smaller area near the present Grand Trunk south of E. Maple Road will provide ample room for all such industries, warehousing, coal, lumber and building material storage, and the like. Any industry employing more than, say, five operatives or using more than a small specified number of horsepower should be required by the zoning ordinance to seek from the Board of Review a special permit after a public hearing relative to its effect on the welfare of the village.

BUSINESS NEEDS

All business should be highly localized, with the principal area along Woodward Avenue and the new Grand Trunk Superhighway, and including enough side streets to make ample provision for the needs for a number of years ahead. Outside this main business center only such small local business centers should be provided as may, with the expected lot development, stand a fair chance of sufficient patronage to be successful. Six such centers are proposed on the tentative zoning plan submitted.

Should intensive development later indicate the feasibility and desirability of additional local business areas they should be created at that future time.

*NOTE: A preliminary zoning study map is on file in the Municipal Hall and may be consulted at any time.

One part of the general scheme, the zoning plan, may and should be adopted at an early date, so that private activity may not be out of harmony with the needs of the community as a whole.

RESIDENTIAL NEEDS

The remainder of the village should be permanently residential. When a substantial portion of all the building lots in the village are taken up there will be a demand for a considerable number of apartments. Ample open spaces around such suburban apartments as these should be made the rule. They should be localized chiefly near the village center, where high grade apartments may be successful. In most outlying sections they should be permitted in local business areas only, where an attractive type of rambling terrace with a few stores will be a distinct addition to the neighborhood.

TWO FAMILY APARTMENTS

In Birmingham two-family or duplex houses need not be specially provided for. New two-family houses have no place in the extensive recent subdivisions nor in the earlier cottage developments, except perhaps in the same area as is proposed to be thrown open to apartments of all types. The conversion of single-family dwelling to accommodate two-families should likewise be restricted to these apartment house areas.

OPEN DEVELOPMENT PRESERVATION

The major portion of the village will be for single-family detached dwellings and the usual accompanying buildings such as churches and schools. Fairly large yards on all sides of each building and a somewhat generous minimum lot area and lot width may be insisted upon; but for much of the village private restrictions will still be very important to establish and maintain the degree of openness of development which recent plats



Much of the Village is now laid out in a charming manner designed to give each block and in lesser degree each lot some individuality of its own.

anticipate. It is recommended that Birmingham should not at first try any radical departure in zoning practice from those already proven effective and legal elsewhere. At some future time, after zoning is longer established in Michigan, one or more municipalities including perhaps Detroit itself, provided it is then zoned, may well test out the extent to which zoning may go in replacing and backing up private restrictions with the police power so-called of the community.

IMMEDIATE NEED

No time should be lost in putting zoning into effect, now that its general scheme has been related to the comprehensive village plan. On the basis of the present or a similar tentative plan an ordinance should be drawn up and hearings held prior to the adoption of a "final" plan and ordinance. Such plan itself, it should be remembered, is in no sense crystallized, but by the state law may be changed after suitable procedure to meet new requirements.



IV. Public Functions

CIVIC CENTER

Birmingham has just completed an excellent civic center, with administrative offices, central police and fire departments under one roof. Beyond a block destined for park treatment lies the new library and the central High School. The proposed development of Merrill Street for a cross-town thoroughfare, as outlined elsewhere in this report, will materially enhance the accessibility and prominence of this group. Likewise the closing of Martin Street west of Chester Street and the rounding out of the school tract by acquiring all land west to Southfield Avenue as a part of this improvement will greatly increase the effective area and serviceability of this site.

The present attractiveness and dignity of the new village center may be materially enhanced if future private building on each side facing it is in keeping. While no absolute control may be practical much may be done in the way of assistance and persuasion in getting harmonious buildings as they are built from time to time. Moreover, it is the natural location for various quasi-public edifices, such as churches, clubs and other community buildings, which may more readily be brought into harmony with the municipal buildings than might be the case with a row of small stores for example. Ultimately the village itself will require more floor space for its offices, but it can scarcely be expected to acquire any more land now for such relatively remote needs.

ADDITIONAL CIVIC BUILDINGS

In addition to the civic center certain public administrative buildings will need to be placed so as to meet more local needs or to be near other special facilities. Thus, with the development of Woodward Superhighway and of a larger population to the east, another fire station will eventually be needed near E. Maple Road. The village will also require a modern warehouse and storage yard for construction supplies and the



There should be provision for a future scenic park drive which will form a really attractive entrance to Birmingham worthy to herald its charming character, and in itself perhaps the most beautiful feature of the Village.



like, undoubtedly to be located with spur track facilities from the new Grand Trunk Railway. The precise sites for such buildings cannot advantageously be fixed long in advance of their acquisition.

SCHOOL SITES

The present school system serves the village well and is keeping abreast of its needs. New sites of adequate size are already being acquired in advance of the time of building. This policy should be continued and developed. Whether the school district will eventually approximate the standard of one school to each quarter-section or not it is now too early in its history to state. The advantages in accessibility, safety and community spirit engendered by such a plan are obvious, yet these may be offset by undue operating costs in given instances. The plan presented indicates the general locations of playgrounds, normally as adjuncts of schools, as already discussed. It is none too soon to determine which of these, if not all, are likely eventually to carry a school, and to secure them adequate in size for such combined use.

Whether the School District should continue an independent governmental body with an area larger than that of the village or not is an administrative governmental problem which this plan cannot determine.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The plan must pay due regard to the inter-relation of various public utilities with its other components. As these are all virtually special forms of circulation systems it is natural that they should be closely bound up with the plan of the highway system. Their capacities, however, will depend chiefly on the zoning and the expected densities of population.

SEWERAGE

The sewerage system—now proposed to be hereafter of the combined storm water drainage and sanitary sewage type—requires larger and larger outlets as the village grows, with interceptors along the few shallow valleys and storm relief through the natural channels. It is therefore a factor of considerable economy to link its planning up with the park system plan for preserving these open valley courses in public ownership. A sewerage plan is already contemplated for caring for the several drainage areas of the village and its vicinity.

WATER SUPPLY

The water supply is at present adequate and planned to accommodate a considerably larger population. Should it eventually prove incapable of being increased enough to meet the needs of a large community, Detroit's own ample supply from Lake St. Clair may then be tapped, so that this problem appears to be settled.

OTHER UTILITIES

Other Utilities such as gas and electricity may readily be expanded as the village grows. Location for supply lines for all these utilities will almost invariably be in the street or alleys or on back yard easements, so that they do not constitute a special problem.

Such signs as are frequently found on business streets projecting five or even ten feet out over the sidewalk soon defeat their own end by obscuring one another, besides destroying whatever beauty the business facade may have and constituting a potential danger to pedestrians.

V. Private Property

In any community, equally important with the proper provision of means of circulation and public services is the use of the remaining property in private hands. Birmingham particularly should safeguard this use to assure the high quality and general attractiveness of the village in the future. This may be done both by direct regulation and by indirect means.

BUILDING CODE

The negative control of zoning on the nature of use and the location and bulk of building has already been dealt with in this report. Similar in method, the building code controls the type of construction, factors of fire safety, sanitation and the like. The code enacted six years ago should soon be revamped or replaced by a code more effective to control building in communities of ten to twenty thousand on the border of a great metropolis.

HOUSING CODE

The housing code, which pays special attention to conditions around multiple and other rented dwellings, is in Michigan a state-wide law binding upon every portion of it. This code should be treated as a part of the building code in enforcing its provisions, which fortunately now require reasonably high standards of construction and maintenance. To secure the adequate enforcement of the three codes—building, housing and zoning—the new full time building inspector is a long step ahead.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL

Fully as great benefits to Birmingham will, however, arise entirely outside the present exercise of the police power so-called, through education and moral suasion as to proper architectural treatment of all structures. Today on most of the better grade subdivisions able architects are engaged to design dwellings, churches, clubs and other buildings, though sometimes their sense of fitness of the scheme with the neighborhood has to be sub-ordinated to the owner's wishes. In business buildings particularly, on the other hand, there is the greatest range between the well designed building fitting its site and either the ugly strictly utilitarian or the blatant type so often erected. Taste in these things is rising gradually. It may be stimulated indirectly by education and more directly by example. One well-designed building goes far to raise the standard of an entire neighborhood.

A further step should be taken in a progressive community such as Birmingham. Whenever a building is proposed to be erected unsuited to its site it will be worth while to sit down with the designer and owner and suggest how to improve the design. Elsewhere this is successfully done by committees of architects, by fine arts commissions, or by the planning commission themselves. The total number of new buildings or extensive alterations involving the outside appearance is not so great for any one period but that some group can examine every design and thus sort out those where improvement needs to be sought. In the large city of Washington, D. C., three architects sit once a week, one retiring each week and a new one coming in, thus assuring continuity of effort without unduly burdening any individual citizen with this civic duty.

CO-ORDINATION

All work of a public character should, of course, be zealously studied to see that it fits in with the general scheme of the village plan. By such methods the tone of the village may be kept up and the plan justify itself to its fullest capacity.

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EXISTING PARKS

EXISTING PLAY GROUNDS

EXISTING SCHOOL GROUNDS

GENERAL VILLAGE PLAN

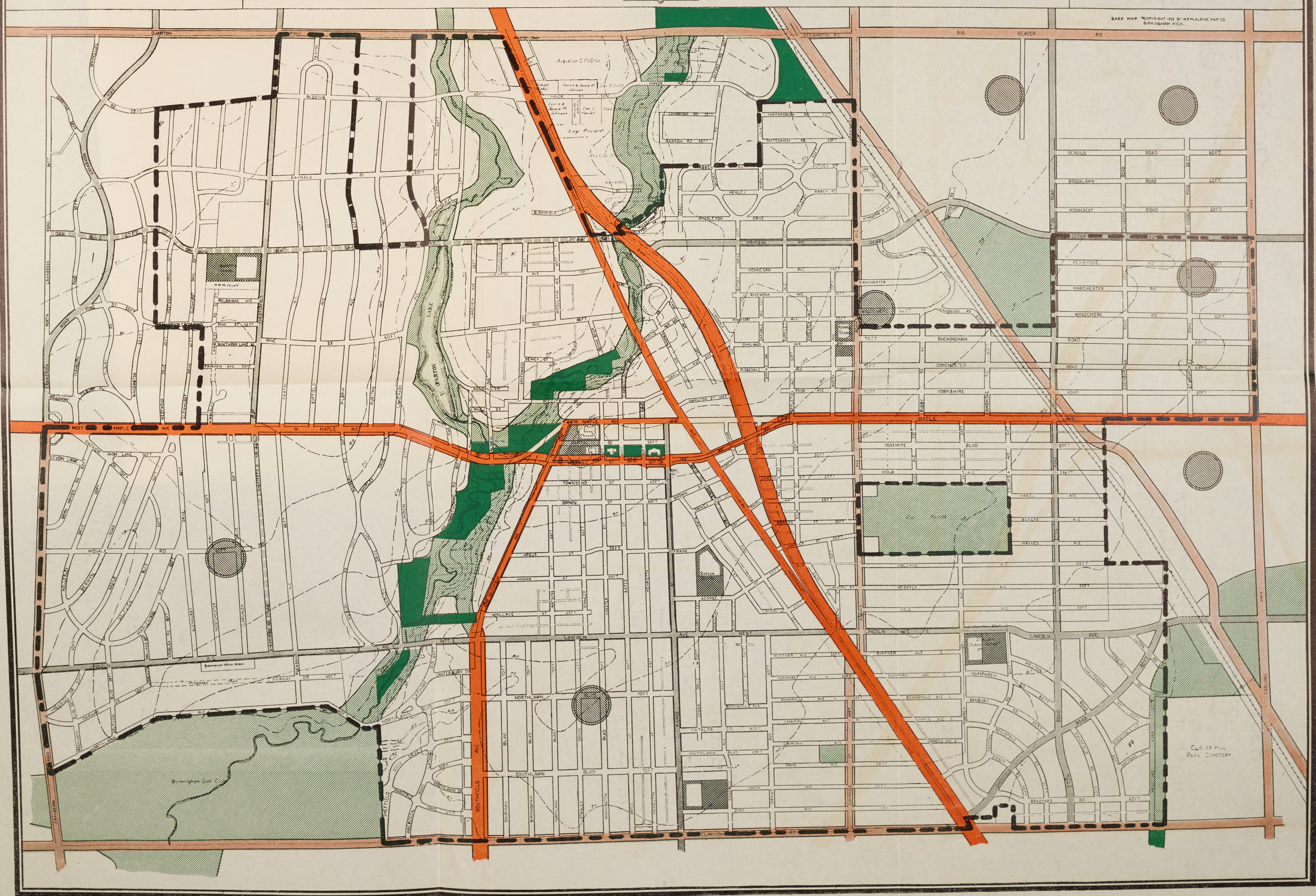
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VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION

SCALE OF FEET
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 ARTHUR C. COMEY CITY PLANNER
 JUNE 1929

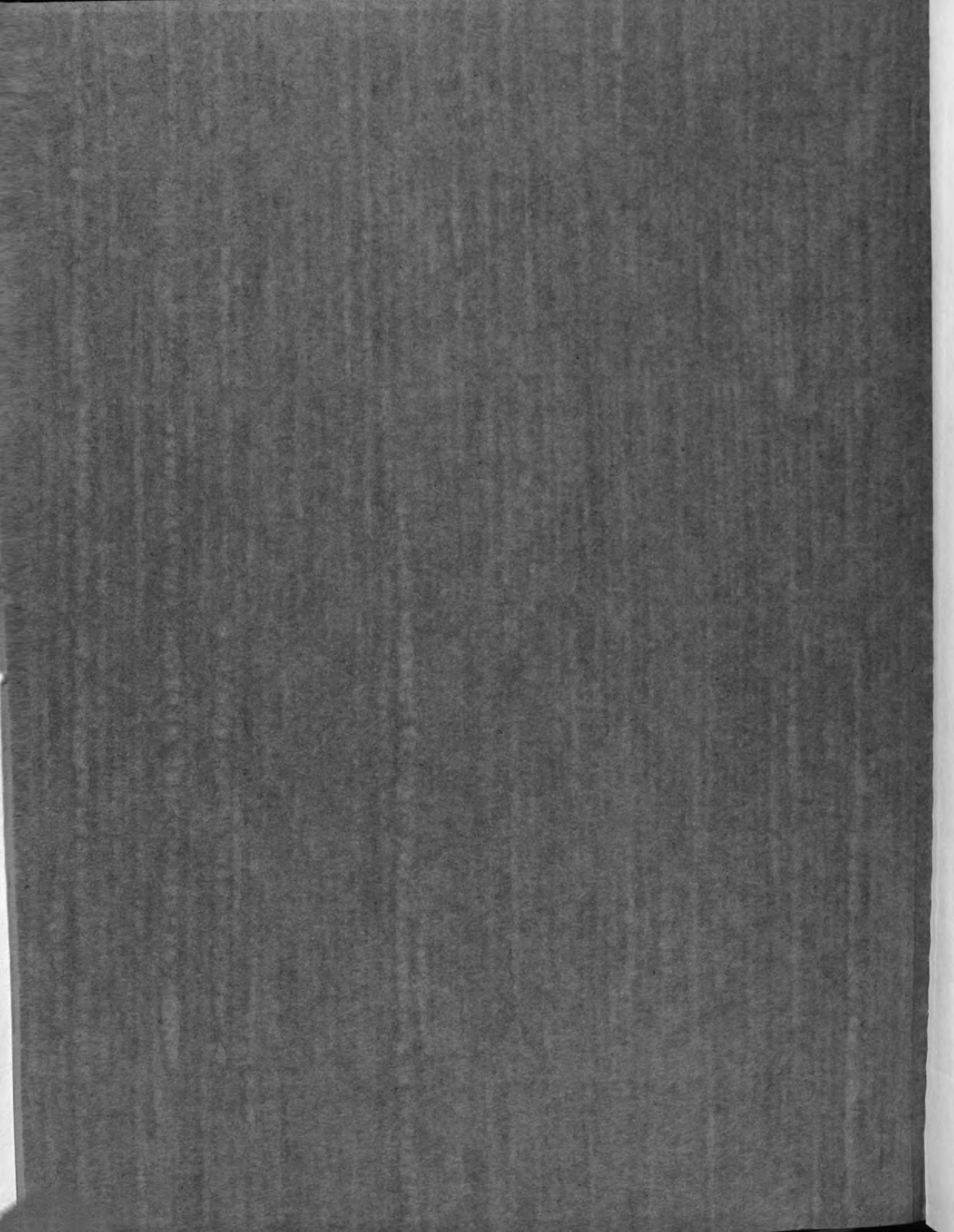
LEGEND

- SUPER-HIGHWAYS 150'-204'
- SPECIAL MAJOR ROUTES 66'-100'
- SECTION LINE HIGHWAYS ETC. 120'
- QUARTER SECTION HIGHWAYS ETC. 80'-86'
- SPECIAL HIGHWAYS 60'-70'
- PROPOSED PARKS & PARKWAYS
- GENERAL LOCATION OF PROPOSED PLAY GROUNDS



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