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PLANNING IN HARTFORD

1907 - 1942

By

Gordon R. Bell

Walter H. Blucher • Planning Consultant • Detroit, Michigan

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A study of planning activities in Hartford, Connecticut from the creation of the first official planning agency in the United States in 1907, to 1942.

By

Gordon R. Bell

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Walter H. Blucher
Planning Consultant
Detroit, Michigan
April 1964

PREFACE

"When we were born, somebody who preceded us built the house into which we were born. They built schools and churches, also hospitals. They cleared the fields and built roads. Cities were built, streets and sidewalks were laid out. Teachers and preachers had been trained. We were born into a civilized community with governments established, and courts of justice. We enjoy fire and police protection, parks and playgrounds. All of this and more too, was our inheritance for which we did nothing. Our ancestors collectively put more into this world than they took out, and we are the beneficiaries. Had they adopted the principle that the world owed them a living, we should be living in a very primitive civilization today. In view of our inheritance, it seems that we owe it to ourselves to help others and to leave something worthwhile to those who come after."

(Quotation from Dr. John M. Gries in "Slums and Housing" by James W. Ford, 1936. P. 459.)

FOREWORD

The study of the Hartford Commission on the City Plan is another example of the Governmental Research Institute's job of assisting public officials in bettering public work. This government function, the Planning Commission, established in 1907, is relatively a new field of local government, yet questions on the feasibility and usefulness of this planning service creates much confusion of thought. The city officials have been aware of this difficulty, but they do not have the time to study and analyze this branch of municipal administration. The Board of Finance in January 1937, stated that "this plan commission should receive an adequate appropriation or it should be abolished." The local Housing Authority in October 1941, recommended that the present Hartford City Plan Commission should have a more adequate staff and better defined powers if it was to function more effectively. Other public and semi-public groups of citizens who run, or help to run, the City of Hartford are not well enough acquainted with the job of the City Plan Commission to know much about it. Now that the Commission on the City Plan has hired a consultant to re-study zoning, formulate plans for the development of the North Meadows, and to further the comprehensive program to guide the city's future growth, the "public eye" is focussed on the Plan Commission.

On March 26, 1942 the Hartford Commission on the City Plan observed its 35th birthday. This report is mainly a study of the work of this agency. It should prove interesting and useful to not only the present City Plan Commission and other agencies engaged in planning, but to citizens of Hartford who would like to know more about this planning body. The object of this report is to determine whether or not the Hartford Plan Commission has done an efficient job within the limits imposed on it by the laws, government, and administration of the city. It will also show that there is real need for better defined powers, more public understanding of the Commission's work, and the development of a better and broader knowledge and appreciation on the Commission's part of the technique of city planning. Briefly, this review will attempt to measure the quality of the City Plan Commission's work rather than to determine whether or not the City of Hartford is well planned.

The report is divided into three parts. The first division will show what the nature and scope of city planning is supposed to be. This will be followed by an historical review of the activities of the city planning agency as well as the work of other agencies which have influenced, since 1907, the development of the city. There has been no attempt to compile a complete digest, but only to present the significant facts. The final section of this report is a careful and most merciless analysis of the author's opinions and conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

NATURE AND SCOPE OF CITY PLANNING

Value and Need Recognized

In its simplest concept, "planning" has been defined as the measure of today's effort in the light of tomorrow's needs. As a tool of individual advancement and of private enterprise, planning is very old; but long-range planning as a designated principle of governmental operation is fairly new. The words "city planning" represent a phrase much more used than defined. It differs from casual community betterment which is the natural and uncoordinated improvement of existing facilities. Most authorities on city planning are quick to point out that neither the need nor the practice is of recent origin. Practically every part, every facility, both old and modern, are the result of one kind of planning -- the simple kind which considered only the thing immediately in prospect. What has been lacking has been the comprehensive outlook and the coordinated fitting together required to make all the elements of a complex social mechanism function in concert. The definition of city planning has been stated by one author as "the coordinated improvement of local facilities with the projected outlines of those required for future growth." The extent to which city planning should go into detail is governed largely by practical considerations which are usually stated to be as follows:

1. It should be concerned with the territory occupied or to be occupied in any community, and with prospective physical alterations in that territory and the objects upon it, in so far as such alterations can wisely be controlled or influenced by concerted action in the interest of the community as a social unit.
2. No prospective physical alteration is so small, so localized, or so specialized in technique as to be excluded merely for that reason from the scope of city planning, provided that it can wisely and effectively be controlled in the common interest.
3. In theory, there are no limitations to the extent of coordination desirable among the diverse planning activities which shape the physical growth of the community or to the desirability of estimating future contingencies and taking account of them in planning; but practically there are decided limitations upon the amount of time and effort which can be withdrawn from the vital business of getting things done for the sake of study, and planning what to do and how best to do it.
4. The classes of specific planning problems which are most distinctively matters of city planning are:

- a. Those which lie so much outside of the fields effectively covered by existing specialized planning agencies that the community is likely to suffer from their neglect. Such specialized fields include, for example, sewerage, water supply, parks, and rapid transit.
 - b. Those in which a close coordination of planning in separate fields of technical work is likely to secure advantages commensurate with the effort of obtaining such coordination.
 - c. Those in which the permanent interests of the community justify the framing of plans for specific improvements in such a manner as to meet not merely the immediate objects of the improvements but also the contingencies of a remoter future, or community needs which are only indirectly connected with those objects.
5. Merely to deal with the problems of the above classes as they arise in the course of community growth is city planning of an opportunist sort. But constructive city planning requires also that many such problems, long before they become acute, shall be anticipated and considered under the impulse of imagination applied toward the attainment of the larger social objectives of the community.
 6. Just as city planning must unite the points of view of many technical specialists in approaching its problems and must balance a regard for immediate expediency with a farsighted outlook to the future, so it must appreciate at their full importance and must adequately harmonize in every one of its problems the requirements of convenience, healthfulness and efficiency in operation, of orderly and beautiful appearance, and of economic ability to meet the costs.

Most authorities agree that the principles and policies, rather than the details of execution, must be the basis of planning. They also agree that the application of planning requires that there be no fixed crystallization, but such flexibility that a periodic review in the light of current needs and imports will permit a constant reshaping. They stress the point that "city planning" should be a continuing municipal function, and not a somewhat theoretical picture of the future, nor a single job to be done at a given time. Some authorities further describe it as the science of what the city is, how it operates physically, and where it is going.

Should Be Every Citizen's Business

The primary objective of planning for a community is to secure progress in the elimination of what is not good for its development, and in the creation of those values in our environment that are uniformly desired. The intelligent control of the destiny of our cities is of direct personal interest to every citizen. It has to do with the betterment of the place where he lives, the place where he works, the roads he uses to go from one to the other, the utilities which serve these places, the means for the educational and cultural training of his children, and the opportunities for recreation during his leisure hours. However, it is up to the conscious and prolonged effort of the people for these things to approach the ideal. This is the reason that most city planners feel that the fate of the city is in the hands of its citizens. In the absence of "organized foresight," the citizens are certain to suffer constant inconvenience and additional expenditures in the correction of such evils.

Intelligent Direction of City's Growth Important

Because the city is daily dealing with things that fall in the realm of city planning which greatly affect the form and character of the city, it becomes necessary that there be some agency that should handle this planning function. It is stressed by some planning authorities that the making and promulgating of a city plan by a planning commission is comparable to the making or issuing of health regulations by a health board. Just as the Council considers the recommendations of the Finance Boards, so should the Council consider that city planning is a highly technical and specialized field. However, it is stressed that the function of a planning commission, composed of public spirited citizens who are willing to divert, unremunerated, a part of their time from regular occupations, is to reflect the point of view of the layman and of the community; and if this staff agency -- the planning commission -- should possess specialized information and knowledge qualifying it to render sound and intelligent opinions, it should have the personnel, budget, and facilities that would give its decisions authority.

Assurance of intelligent planning also involves various directional, or regulatory, tools which include those that serve as guides to good practice in development and construction, and those which serve to effectuate planning or to furnish protection from adverse influences. Zoning, the best known of these planning tools, has been called the instrument for giving effect to that part of the comprehensive city plan which is concerned with the private uses of, and private developments on, privately owned land, as distinguished from that part which is concerned with public uses and facilities. Thus the city may exercise in two ways, governmental ownership and government regulation, in the attainment of unity in city construction, which is the aim of city planning.

City Plan Compels Attention by Its Evident Usefulness

It then becomes self-evident that the City Planning Commission shall have a rather definite plan of this better future community in all of its principal features if it is to do its job effectively. Just as a set of plans and specifications are needed in the construction of a building, no one guide as a street map, a zoning ordinance and map, etc., can serve alone to be a comprehensive plan of the city's social, physical, and economic structure. Most of these authorities in the city planning field now describe this tool as a "master plan." Properly prepared, such a plan is hoped to act as a "sign post." Other planning experts describe it as an expression of the will of the community as to how it intends to use its natural resources and to develop the physical area under its control. The warning is made that this so-called "master plan" ought not to be considered as a definite picture of the city as it might appear at some specific date, but rather it should be presented in the form of a series of maps and charts showing progress towards a more efficient and more convenient framework. The experts, however, disagree as to whether or not this plan should have official status. Some of them feel that a "master plan," to be binding, must be adopted, or accredited, while others claim that the "master plan" should have no inherent authority and only should be regarded as the means by which the Planning Commission prepares for the changes and additions it proposes for the permanent and official City Map. For they claim that if it is desired to amend it, laws will require public hearings, and the master plan becomes something different than the plastic instrument that it should be. These authorities recommend that the Commission, and not the plan, should be the adviser of the legislative body and the various departments. Nearly all present day planning authorities claim a master plan would determine the most desirable pattern for the development of the city, and through various controls, effectuate this plan as natural changes occur throughout the years. Moreover, most of the experts agree that the master plan should indicate public improvements capable of realization within the next five or ten years; further improvements that should be considered for construction during a subsequent period of years, and still a further series of proposals which might be carried out in 50 years or more, resulting in a physical structure which should in all ways be adequate for the development of the city. However, they advise that every step in this process should be the result of careful study and reflection on the part of the Commission and its staff, as well as other agencies of the city government.

Successful Planning Administration Depends on Many Factors

The availability of a master plan is thus identified as one of the prerequisites of effective city planning; one of the indispensable instruments for successful planning administration. But it is cited repeatedly that it is not a self-effectual instrument, i.e., of and by itself it cannot produce substantial results. Some tools or processes for the direction and control of private developments and the use of private property are necessary such as zoning codes, building codes, subdivision regulations, etc. Equally important as another major part of the master plan is that control which deals with public properties

and improvements. Facilities as streets, parks, playgrounds, and such public buildings as schools, libraries, fire and police stations, are commonly known as municipal public works, or capital improvements. Besides making it mandatory that all proposed plans of each such improvement should be referred to the Plan Commission, the city planning authorities stress that the part of the master plan dealing with public improvements can be made much more effective and can be materially facilitated by the continual, systematic programming of capital improvements. This admission that the schedule of public works will depend on funds available which can be determined and budgeted in the same manner as current expenditures is fairly recent. It makes the Planning Commission consider not only what is needed, but what can be afforded. The purpose of a plan is thought of not to encourage more spending and development of improvements prematurely, but rather to serve as a guide to insure that any and all development, when, as, and if it takes place, will proceed in an economical and orderly manner. Thus, today, good city planning depends that in order for the physical plan to be effective, two things must be done: first, a working program must be devised; and second, a long-term financial plan must be prepared. Sometimes this so-called financial plan, called for the first year of a capital budget, is spoken of as the financial and time schedule for the carrying out of that part of the master plan involving public improvements.

But the important thing to remember is that sound, practical plans may just as well not be prepared at all unless something is going to be done about them. It is just as practical to hire an architect to plan a home you do not intend to build, as to hire a planner to prepare a plan which is not carried out. Over and over again, the plea is made in city planning textbooks that any plans, like any tools, must be worked in order to produce results. Unless continually kept alive and up-to-date, also refined and adjusted to new conditions and needs, city plans become out of tune with realities and requirements. Successful planning administration requires an official, permanent, active, planning agency, adequately financed, and having a competent technical staff or technical assistance. It requires such laws and ordinances as are needed to give the plan official status and to insure full consideration of the planning agency's recommendations. The friendly attitude and willing cooperation of all public officials and wide public support are also essential. The planning function cannot be effectively carried out by just the City Planning Commission. It must be recognized as a legislative and administrative function that must be intimately integrated with the other functions of government.

The object of this introduction will have been fully served if these pages have made clear that the important thing in city planning is the will to cooperate, and that cooperation is impossible without awareness of purposes. The "one for all and all for one" motto must be the goal of all city departments. It is hoped that the reader will realize that the true function of the planning agency is that of a central impartial agency for coordinating the efforts of the others. One authority on planning has compared it to the human body in which each organ has its particular use in its normal place, and the circulatory system supplies the life blood which interconnects the various organs and enables each one to function normally and efficiently. Common sense should demand that the planning activities of all agencies affecting the city should be correlated.

PART II

Hartford First to Make Planning Commission a Section of Its Government

Hartford, Connecticut today is recognized as the pioneer in the city planning field as it had the first permanent City Plan Commission in the United States in 1907. Other cities before this time had created planning commissions for the purpose of preparing a city plan and when this was done, ceased to exist. Thus, the question has remained unanswered as to why Hartford made its official commission permanent from the start. Was this enterprise inaugurated at first by a private committee? Was Hartford's Commission organized to make a city plan? What induced the Hartford citizens to create this commission as a section of their city government? Why wasn't this new activity assigned to some existing department? Besides these historical questions there are others asked today about the Hartford Plan Commission. Has this planning agency been successful in Hartford? Has this planning body done an efficient job within the limits imposed on it by the laws, government, and administration of the city? What have been its good qualities? What have been its shortcomings? What kind of activities have the Hartford Planning Commissions carried on during this 35-year period? What benefits has the City of Hartford obtained through this planning agency? Does this agency need to be reorganized? Can this agency be abolished?

The answers to some of these questions are found in the records of the City Plan Commission's minutes. From May 17, 1907 to date, this agency has had more than 500 meetings. The author has analyzed the Commission's records so that it is possible to tell with dates and figures many of the important facts of the history and organization of Hartford's planning body. The reader is cautioned that this division of the report is to be considered a review and not a general index of the proceedings.

Some Planning Controls in Force Already

The Commission on the City Plan in Hartford was not created in 1907 to correct any serious neglect of the city's past. In many respects Hartford was considered a "built" city by its 100,000 inhabitants. No one of its early residents - its history dated back to 1635 -- ever expected this phenomenal growth. In 1907 this lack of foresight was apparent throughout Hartford, the capitol city of Connecticut. But no one criticized this lack of orderly development which was evidenced particularly by its many jogging, dead-end, narrow streets. Large sums of money had been spent on public improvements, and the citizens realized that much more construction and reconstruction would take place. These 1907 people did not expect their city to remain static, nor did they expect Hartford would expand to the size of New York or Boston. Through its power of eminent domain, taking land for a public use at a fair price, the city had established official building lines, or "set backs," for property as

early as 1865, and thus the foreshaping of future streets was in effect. Since 1890 the building code, which was an expression of the police power, was a demonstration of the community's right to regulate structures in the public interest. One particular section of this code allowed industries in residential sections only if approved by the Building Supervisor and 75 per cent of the property owners in these neighborhoods. Private property also had self-imposed "deed restrictions" which outlined the character and location of buildings to be erected, and cited the objectionable uses that were not allowed. These so-called "planning tools" served as guides to good practice in development and construction as well as serving to effectuate planning, or in furnishing protection from adverse influences.

Art Society Recommends Central Reviewing

On January 1, 1907 a recommendation was made by the President of the Municipal Art Society that Hartford should establish a commission to act as a clearing house for all city plans. The exact words of this man's suggestions were as follows:

"There are many schemes, yet on account of the great number they combat one another. Each scheme has its supporters calling for immediate execution. The result is deadlock. If there was a commission to which a plan, approved by the Council, could be referred for further consideration and recommendation as to the time when such a plan could economically be carried out, ideas of value might be saved, and impractical ideas eliminated. Such a commission could not only lay out the city's time and money to advantage, but could execute such schemes, as the East Side Improvement, not within the province of any commission as presently constituted.

A tentative map of the city's future growth, made under expert advice, would also be part of the work of such a commission, and the naming of a location - not the layout of new streets, parks, or public squares. In other words, a commission to consider and weigh and to remember - for councils differ radically each year and easily forget; to aid in building up Hartford in an orderly fashion, to sift the good from the bad, the necessary from the impractical, and generally to make the resources count to the uttermost.

Such a commission could be composed of members of the council, citizens, and heads of the street and park boards, and department of engineering; would have advisory power only except where the council ordered execution of the work, but would span the great gulf between one council and its successors in works of general character."

Charter Act Establishes Plan Commission in 1907

Evidently the feasibility and usefulness of this proposed governmental function was recognized, for the city administration in the latter part of January, asked the State Assembly to approve of the creation of a "Commission on the City Plan." The bill was attached as a rider to the act which reorganized the Department of Engineering. The newspapers gave little publicity to either of these two changes in the existing framework of Hartford's government. The General Assembly approved of the adoption of the act setting up the Commission on the City Plan on March 26, 1907. This "first" commission was largely "ex-officio." Its members were the Mayor, the president of the Board of Street Commissioners, the president of the Board of Park Commissioners, the City Engineer, a member of the Board of Alderman, a member of the Common Council -- the two latter appointed for one year terms by their respective boards-- and two citizens, neither of whom could hold any other municipal office, and who were appointed by the Mayor for two and three year terms respectively. (Three years thereafter) The Commission served without pay, but it was empowered to employ experts, and its expenses were to be paid. The law required that "all questions concerning the location of any public building, esplanade, boulevard, parkway, street, highway, square, or park, shall be referred to the Commission by the Common Council for consideration and report before final action was taken on such location." The Commission could make, or cause to be made, a map or maps of Hartford or any portion thereof, to show these proposed locations or to show any changes deemed advisable in the present location of any public building, streets, grades and lines, square or park. Thus, in this manner, the Commission may give advice and make reports. Various other matters might be referred to it also. The Common Council could designate to the Plan Commission the construction or carrying out of any public work not expressly within the province of other boards; while the city of Hartford, acting through the commission or otherwise, could have the power to take more land for a public purpose than was actually needed for the construction of a contemplated public improvement (better known as the legal right of "excess condemnation") (In the appendix of this report these powers are quoted in detail.)

First Business Was to Consider Hiring an Expert

With this legislation designating its composition and defining its duties, the Commission on the City Plan became an organic part of the city administration. By law the Mayor was named the presiding officer while, through organization procedure, the City Engineer was named the planners' secretary. The secretary's main duty was to keep a written record of the commission's activities. The first business on May 17, 1907 of this newly-formed organization was to appoint three of its members "to investigate and report on the advisability of employing an expert, or experts, to assist the Commission in the preparation of a comprehensive plan and report on the future development of the City of Hartford." This sub-committee was composed of the City Engineer, the Board of Alderman's representative, and one of the citizen members. It might be noted that this citizen member was an ex-mayor of Hartford. Four days later the

whole Plan Commission took a trip to New York for the purpose of studying that city's general layout. Other examples of the Commission's first year activities were as follows: On July 10th the other citizen member was appointed to represent the Plan Commission at a joint meeting of the Park and Street Commissions who were studying the needs for additions to the park system. On October 26th the Commission instructed the secretary to report to the Common Council that the Plan Commission had recommended that the Capital Avenue Extension be laid out 58 feet in width from Sisson Avenue to Prospect Avenue. In November, the principal meeting centered around the sending of another communication to the Council requesting that the Commission should approve of all street layouts before they were recorded in the Town Clerk's office. On January 21, 1908 an application was made to the Board of Finance for \$200.00 expenses for the fiscal year starting April 1, 1908. This was not granted. On March 17th the Commission requested the Engineering Department to prepare a special scheme of development for a special district layout. For the first year ending March 31, 1908 the Plan Commission submitted an annual report of its activities to the Mayor and Council. In it was cited that this organization had held eight regular meetings and ten special sessions. The Commission reviewed their activities by saying:

"The Commission has endeavored to organize its work so as not to interfere with, or encroach upon, the valuable work being done by other city commissions. It has felt that during the first year of its work it was best to proceed slowly and cautiously so as to gain the confidence of the public, without which it could hope to accomplish but little of real value to the City of Hartford. No attempt has been made to take advantage of the broad powers conferred upon the Commission by the charter creating it."

Experts Hired to Make City Plan for Commission

In April, 1908 the membership of the Plan Commission was slightly altered. The Common Council selected a new representative to be a Planner; there was a change in the presidency of the Park Board, and a different Mayor had been elected. On October 20th the sub-committee appointed at the first meeting in 1907, announced that it favored the hiring of the New York City architectural firm of Carrère and Hastings. Mr. Carrère was well known in Hartford as he had been the recent consultant for the State Armory Commission. This Committee, in making known this report, stated that it could have reported earlier on this matter but there had been no pressing need for this expert advice. The Board of Finance in January, 1909 appropriated \$3,000.00 to the Plan Commission. The experts contract called for \$2,500.00 to make a preliminary city plan and an additional amount if the Commission desired more detailed plans. The second annual report of the Plan Commission's activities for the year ending

March 31, 1909 was devoted to special problems that this body had asked the professional city planners to study. The Commission in listing 43 suggestions, described them as "problems which the people of Hartford have for years been discussing or will be called upon to solve as the city grows and develops into greater Hartford." An examination of these considerations shows them to represent a very full and comprehensive program. They included, for example, such things as these:

1. The treatment of the grounds surrounding City Hall to give a proper base, or setting, for the old Bullfinch building.
2. The selection of a suitable site for a new City Hall.
6. The preparation of a general plan for the future development of the State Armory and State Library grounds to harmonize with Bushnell Park
9. The extension of Bushnell Park to Main Street.
10. The control of the banks of Park River from the Connecticut River to the city line.
18. Best location for new railroad station.
26. Plan for widening Farmington Avenue from Asylum Street to Prospect Avenue.
33. A general plan for the layout of all undeveloped areas, and a determination of the location and width of streets (new) across these areas to best connect with the present street system and to prevent objectionable subdivisions.
35. The advisability of limiting the height of buildings on all streets surrounding Bushnell Park so as to preserve a suitable setting, or framing, for this priceless treasure.
36. The advisability of limiting the height of buildings throughout the city, the limit to vary in different sections according to the use of property, or in proportion to the street widths.
38. A plan for the improvement of housing conditions so as to prevent intensive congestion, and reduce unnecessary deaths from preventable diseases.
39. A plan for best regulating objectionable billboard advertising, the smoke nuisance, and unnecessary street noises.
42. The extension of Ann Street southerly from Asylum Street to Pearl Street.
43. The advisability of dividing the city into zones for different uses and with possibly different restrictions regarding height of building, and the percentage of area which can be built upon, etc., following the practice which is being introduced in several German cities.

Carrère and Hastings did little work on the Hartford plan during 1909 as they were completing plans for other communities. Besides this, the City Engineer was granted a leave of absence and had gone to Europe during the summer. During 1909 two important changes had affected the Plan Commission. On March 30th the Superintendent of Parks was named the ninth member of the Plan Commission. At the December 17, 1909 meeting, the Park Superintendent submitted a report on the diking of the Connecticut River. He stated: "This river is the greatest single natural asset that Hartford has, yet the least used. It should be rediscovered and become the factor in our city life that it is waiting to be. All the lands possible along its shores should be taken for public uses and developed as needed." He predicted that if this diking was done making this meadow land available for development, Hartford might easily become a city of half a million people.

Commission Gets New Power Over Street Layout

In 1909 the State Legislature also approved of the new power of the Plan Commission which it had requested in 1907. This law required that all maps or plans of any land in the City of Hartford showing any proposed or projected streets, or any extensions or changes in them, shall not be received, filed, or recorded in the Town Clerk's office unless such map or plan shall bear the endorsement of the Commission on the City Plan to the effect that every proposed or projected extension of, or change in, the established layout of existing streets or highways set forth upon such map or plan has been approved by said Commission. (15 State Law 661) The Commission's third annual report contains the City Engineer's comments on this new requirement which were as follows:

"Hartford, like many American cities, has suffered from the destructive work of outside real estate speculators who have purchased areas within the city limits and subdivided them with little or no reference to the layout of the adjoining city streets or the customary or proper size of building lots."

The City Engineer stated further "These owners are reluctant to carry out any plans against the Commission's wishes." Two other statements made by the City Engineer in this report seem worthy enough to be mentioned. The first was "The Commission should first of all be a representative body which the other commissions and the citizens at large would have absolute confidence in and respect for, and secondly, that it should be as far as possible removed from any and all political influence."

Special Articles Published in Annual Reports

In April, 1910 \$3,000.00 was again appropriated to the Plan Commission to take care of the \$2,500.00 contract for the professional planners, for the Commission only expended \$200.00 of its \$3,000.00 allotment of 1909. In

May, 1910 the City Engineer read a paper at a National Planning Convention in which he cited the progress of the Hartford Planning Commission. He recommended that besides the "already fine Charter provisions, that this agency should include the duties as now performed by various art commissions in American cities, and its (planning) personnel should include possibly a painter, an architect, and a sculptor." The Hartford Art Society (which originally had suggested the idea of the City Planning Agency) from time to time placed matters in the hands of the Plan Commission. In 1910 their joint problem was the further promotion of Bushnell Park. This private group made a presentation of an ornamental drinking fountain to the City. In 1911 they sent a communication to the Plan agency requesting the planners to favor the passage of an ordinance limiting the height of buildings in Hartford. The Plan Commission made inquiries of the practice in other American cities and tabulated the results. The Council did not take any action on this proposal. In 1911 the Plan Commission desired to publish a report written by the City Engineer. At the February meeting the Corporation Counsel advised the Commission that this detailed report on Public Comfort Stations was strictly propaganda, and that the place of such studies was in the agency's annual reports. The Commission's secretary (City Engineer) in justifying this monograph in the fourth yearly report stated:

"It is the intention to include a similar report on some live municipal function in each year's report in order that the reports may not only be more interesting to the public, but also that a permanent record may be made of the best practice in each city of handling the numerous and vexatious problems which are continually arising."

City Plan Finished in 1911

The Council, in 1911, allowed the Plan Commission a \$1,000.00 budget. Of this amount the Commission spent \$713.00, of which the greater portion was used to print several hundred copies of the Carrère and Hastings Plan. This report had been submitted to the Commission on the City Plan on February 15, 1911. In the foreword of this report, the City Engineer stated that "there was a great need of an intelligent, comprehensive City Plan as a guide to future developments and improvements," and "that this report which is destined to have a beneficent and far-reaching influence on this growing community, would also stand as a model in City Planning for American cities." The experts themselves noted that a city must be considered as a great machine having a most intricate organism and a most complex function to perform. It must be so well planned and put together and run that as an engine it shall produce the maximum of efficiency in every direction, with the least expense and friction. Another interesting comment was that "city planning was a most vital problem, not only because cities were unscientifically planned and were unscientifically administered, but because of the tremendous expansion of our

cities, owing to the spread of knowledge and civilization and the consequent desire of every citizen for the advantages and attractions of urban life in preference to the hardships and loneliness of rural habitation." The experts mentioned 50 years as a reasonable limit for which their plans might be conceived. They made no prophecy as to the extent of growth in area or in population of the City of Hartford. They recommended that to make the physical plan effective, a long-term financial plan also be prepared on parallel lines with the working program. The 91 page report of the professional planners urged that a board of experts be established and that all technical matters connected with the development of the city should be referred to this board for study and for a report. At first it was suggested such a board could be composed of the City Engineer, a consulting architect, and a city statistician (who would head a proposed Bureau of Statistics). This suggestion was advocated in Hartford since the people, by referendum, decided on many improvements. The experts stated their recommendation in this manner:

"The mere discussion of a contemplated improvement through the press or by citizens, without correct information, develops prejudice and encourages local feeling as against the interest of the community at large and is apt to narrow and distort the whole point of view, which would hardly be the case if the discussion were preceded by an authoritative statement of the Board of Experts based on statistics and correct scientific principles and knowledge."

The 1911 Commission on the City Plan made no comment on this proposal, nor on any of the other improvements and modifications. The professional planners stated that "Hartford possessed many of the best features of an efficient, well-organized, and well-ordered city plan, but that it needed some corrections to make it one of the best planned and, in time, one of the most attractive cities in the country." One suggestion made was that the city could develop a civic center by connecting Hartford's two monumental groups - the State Buildings in Bushnell Park and the various group of public buildings on Main Street - by a dignified mall, or parkway. The experts stated that through the city's power of excess condemnation this improvement would pay for itself, or possibly the State would be willing to bear the expense. London and Paris were cited as examples for this type of central layout. Another recommendation was that the two blocks bounded by Union Place and by Church, High, and Asylum Streets be condemned and added to the space occupied by the Railroad Station. Asylum Street was suggested to be widened in either of two ways; first, by setting back the building line on one or both sides of the street, preferably the south side, or secondly, to move the street line to the present building line and carrying the sidewalks under arcades. Another scheme cited by this plan was to create radial and circular boulevards. These, the experts stated, "would not only solve the cross-town problem, but will act as fire stops and, at the same time, unify the Park System." Besides this inner and outer boulevard, the plan called for a Park River Boulevard and a Connecticut River Boulevard. This system of boulevards, according to this report, "will go

far towards correcting a cramped feeling due to a uniformed system of standard streets." It was also stated by these experts that "the most important element in laying out a general scheme of improvement and street extension is the establishment of the main arteries of traffic." They claimed Hartford's present street system offered numerous opportunities of connecting existing streets to form obviously necessary through-streets. The experts not only agreed with the proposition by the Superintendent of Parks (a member of the Plan Commission) that the Hartford side of the Connecticut River should be improved, but the east side too. Other problems that the Plan Commission had asked the experts to study were included in this report either by direct recommendations or included in other suggestions offered.

Commission Fails to Approve Expert's Proposal

The Plan Commission never discussed the comprehensive plan as a unit. Some of the proposed maps were loaned to other communities or to Hartford agencies. These exhibitionary requests were sanctioned by the Commissioners. The City Engineer, Mr. Frederick L. Ford, resigned in 1911, and was succeeded by Mr. Roscoe Clark. In the fifth annual report for the year ending March 31, 1912 this new Commissioner as secretary for the Commission had this to say about the Carrère and Hastings Plan:

"However idealistic these plans seem, whatever difficulties may interfere with carrying them out in detail, however strongly they may be objected to, they yet illustrate the important principles of city planning and afford us a broader and clearer vision of what our city needs."

It was further stated in this report "that plans for the development of large tracts of land in the northern and southern sections of the city have been prepared along lines suggested by this report, and these results are worth more to Hartford than the expense of procuring the report." The Engineering Department also prepared a proposed arrangement of streets of some land west of Blue Hills Avenue.

This fifth annual report of the Commission's activities contained for the second time a special report. A special committee composed of the City Engineer, the Superintendent of Parks, and an outside member, the Superintendent of Streets, had made a report on the Park River. The professional planners, Carrère and Hastings, previously had described this secondary river as "a muddy stream polluted by refuse." Many citizens had expressed a similar opinion that something be done about this problem in not so polite terms. The idea proposed by the planning agency of covering the river was not rejected because of the high cost of construction or the possibility of the danger of floods, but because this river "skirting" Bushnell Park had scenic values that would be destroyed. Since the two representatives of the Park Board, the president and the superintendent, were so emphatic that the river

should not be covered but left alone, the report was turned over to the Park Commission. There is no record that the Park Commission did anything about this report.

The Plan Commission concluded this fifth annual report with this acknowledgment:

"Thus far, the work of the Commission has been wholly concerned with routine matters referred to it by the Common Council. It is apparent, however, to close students of municipal growth that such a Commission has opportunity to take the initiative in construction work by ascertaining the City's needs along various general lines of benefit to its inhabitants such as sanitation, economics, transportation, circulation of traffic, etc."

The Plan Commission made the statement that it was their intention to consider these matters and make recommendations and reports to the Council from time to time.

Summary Reports Discontinued in 1913.

From April, 1912 to April, 1913 the Plan Commission held 18 regular and special meetings. The Council appropriated \$1,200.00 to the Plan Commission for a special plan on the Hucksters Market made by the Engineering Department, of which all but \$31.03 was used. The minutes of the City Plan agency contains little information as to why this plan was handled in this manner. The sixth annual report did not contain any explanation either. This report was discontinued after 1913, but there is no comment in the Commission's minutes that foretold of this new policy of stopping these summary reports. The Commission's budget was reduced to \$500.00 in April, 1913 but here again no statement was recorded in regard to this cut. One significant fact noticed in 1913 was that the City Plan Commission discussed at its meeting for the first time the construction details. At the request of the City Engineer, the Plan Commission notified the Council that it favored the use of vitrolite rather than marble for the construction of the \$22,000.00 Public Comfort Station.

Public Attends Meetings in 1914 and 1915

During the 1913-1914 period the Commission only expended \$160.00 of its \$500.00 allotment. The next year in April, 1914 the Plan Commission's budget was reduced to \$300.00. In 1914 the Commission on the City Plan became the "Hearers" for the proposed depot. The old Railroad Station had been destroyed by fire and a public hearing was called to consider its replacement. The minutes for that year are full of quotations made at these meetings in regard to the various public opinions. The majority of them were expressions that the Railroad Company should build a large station in Hartford, and it should not just replace the former one. In this year the attendance by the Commissioners

was noticeably excellent. The Commission did not make any report or submit any plan to the Council concerning this new depot. At no time did they submit for reconsideration the suggestions made in the Carrère and Hastings Plan in regard to an improved railroad station. Whatever action the city made, there was no follow-up comment made in the minutes of the Plan Commission later.

In the January 19, 1915 meeting, the Plan Commission approved of the annexation of the property owned by the Blue Hills Improvement Society. Over 50 members of this neighborhood attended the Commission's meeting and requested the Plan Commission to favor their request so that this subdivision might become a part of Hartford and enjoy the benefits and necessities that the town of Bloomfield could not supply.

In April, 1915 the Council gave the Commission \$300.00 for its annual expenses, and a special allotment of \$2,500.00 which was labeled for the East Side Improvement. (It took a careful search to find out just what this money was to be used to do.) The Commission turned back over \$2,100.00, using the remainder to build a fence near the Bulkeley Bridge. (These facts were obtained by the cost ledgers kept by the City Engineering Department for the Commission, and not in the minutes of the Commission.) The minutes for most of the period from 1915 to 1918 contain little evidence that would indicate that the City Plan Commission did anything but the business referred to it by the Common Council. Some regular meetings were postponed because not even a quorum was present. Most of the former budget had been spent in sending the City Engineer to the National Planning Conferences. However, in 1917 the City Engineer recommended that this annual trip to the convention be dropped. In 1918 and 1919 the Commission spent one-tenth of its annual \$200.00 appropriation. In 1917 the Chamber of Commerce requested the Plan Commission to advise the Council on the need of erecting signs advertising the city.

In 1917 Meadows Development Chief Problem

There was one noticeable matter that was considered the Commission's concern that was apparent in 1917. At the August 28th meeting that year, the City Engineer requested the planning agency to consider the construction of dikes and a boulevard along the Connecticut River. At the November meeting the City Engineer suggested that the River Meadows should be developed around a carefully thought out plan. He recommended that the city should consider condemning the whole area so that this part of the city could be planned systematically. On December 17th the Commission authorized the appraisal of this meadow land at a cost not to exceed \$100.00. The local appraisers told the 1918 Plan Commission that even though the present value of the "meadow land" had only little value, the construction of dikes would give this property a high valuation, and that under no circumstances should the city sell this property that might be invaluable for future usage.

In the Fall of 1919, the Council turned over 92 acres in the South Meadows that had been used by the Street Department as a burial ground for city horses, to the newly formed Aviation Committee. There is no mention of this transaction by the Plan Commission. This tract, alongside of the river, was quickly converted into a flying field. In November, 1920, four days after the five-member Aviation Commission was approved by the State Legislature, the Chamber of Commerce requested the Common Council to establish a special committee to study the development of the North and South Meadows. The Mayor discussed this proposal with the Plan Commission at this time. He stated that space must be left in this area to provide for the construction of a sewage filtration plant. The Commission also heard a talk at this meeting given by a representative of the Aerial Camera Corporation. A special offer of \$1,000.00 to map this area by aerial photography was rejected by the Mayor because of lack of funds. There is no record stating any of the Commission's comments as to the establishment of the Hartford Meadows Development Committee, a special citizen board appointed by the Mayor on May 3, 1921.

Several Requests Considered

On December 22, 1919 the Council asked the Plan Commission to investigate the possibilities of a downtown subway for Hartford. The next time this subject was mentioned was at the November 15, 1921 plan meeting. At this time, a Trinity College professor presented his plan for a subway which was to run under Asylum Street from the Railroad Station to Main Street. This professor (whose name was Dadourian) felt that the Plan Commission was making a mistake by not recommending that his plan be adopted.

At the Plan Commission's September 22, 1922 meeting, the suggestion was made that part of Bushnell Park be used for a public parking station. One of the Commission members, who was the Superintendent of Parks, made a report in which he stated that the city should provide space for the parking of 2,000 cars for every 100,000 people. He recommended that the city should buy two 3-acre tracts near Main Street, and not use the park land. The proposal was tabled for further study but was never considered again.

Since 1918 the Mayor had assumed the role of spokesman for the Commission. Whereas previously the City Engineer, as secretary to the Planners, introduced the business, the Mayor in 1918 took more interest in planning matters than any of his predecessors. This officer not only presented the requests of the Common Council, but was looked upon as the instigator of general planning matters. Several times the Mayor cited the need for better attendance. Finally, at his suggestion, the Commission on March 22, 1921 voted that regular meetings would be held on the third Tuesday of each month. Sometimes the majority of the Commission would approve of an action but would table it because the Mayor was not present. An example of this happened at the March meeting in 1923 when the request was made by a private society (Charter Oak Delphian) that the 10-year old Carrère and Hastings Plan be revised by

another professional planner.

Zoning Proposed in 1923

A few months later, the Mayor suggested that the Plan Commission should consider a zoning ordinance for Hartford. Briefly, zoning was the regulating of the use of buildings, structures and land, and the height and space about buildings by means of dividing the city into various districts, or zones. On July 11, 1923 the Plan Commission appointed a committee of its members to study the possibilities. Almost a year later, in June, at the invitation of the Mayor, the Assistant Corporation Counsel presented a brief review of zoning in other American cities to the Commission on the City Plan. The Mayor also spoke at this meeting and stated "the city should take steps towards the proper guiding of its development along the lines laid down by this zoning principle." He recommended that steps be taken to educate the public on this new field, or plan. The Mayor of that year, Mayor Stevens, was the chief promoter of zoning. In November, 1924 the Mayor paid a leading New York City zoning expert \$250.00 for three days of consultation. In April, 1924 the Plan Commission's budget was increased to \$500.00, which was ten times the 1923 appropriation. The Mayor requested the other Plan Commissioners to cooperate with the Zoning Commission. No explanation was made by what the Mayor meant as to this Zoning Commission.

Zoning Becomes Main Interest in 1925

On January 25, 1925 the Plan Commission had a tentative contract with Herbert Swan, a New York City expert on zoning and city planning. This professional planner promised the Plan Commission that for \$9,000.00 he would complete, within four months from the date he was hired, the Hartford Zoning Ordinance. He agreed to assume entire responsibility for the technical work; make a complete city-wide survey of the present uses of property; personally educate and inform the public on the need for zoning; answer all questions at public hearings; and make any corrections or modifications within a two-year period. Swan, in February, told the Plan Commission that he would make, for an additional \$5,000.00, a report on the Traffic and Thoroughfare plans for Hartford. He further stated that both reports were to be a 30 to 50 year forecast.

At the beginning of 1925 the Council had requested the State Legislature to change the composition of the Commission on the City Plan. The new law called for the Mayor, who presided, and six electors of the city, none of whom could hold any other office in the city. This law prevented any of the other members of the city administration -- either salaried employees or (citizen) commissioners of other agencies -- from holding office on this Commission. There is no reason stated in the minutes of the Plan Commission as to the purpose of this new law governing membership. This amendment was adopted on March 3rd, but the new Board of Commissioners were not sworn in until May 22, 1922. In order for the Mayor to appoint two commissioners each

year, this (revised) Commission had terms varying from one to three years. One of the three year term members was named chairman of the Commission. The City Engineer was retained as secretary to this organization. At the first official meeting on June 2, 1925 the resolution tabled in March, 1923 calling for an expert to revise the Carrère and Hastings Plan, was reconsidered. The Corporation Counsel announced at this meeting that an interim, or temporary, law was in effect. Meanwhile, the State Legislature had not approved as yet the Zoning Procedure Act. This was approved June 19th. At this time the procedure, powers, and purposes of the zoning ordinance preparation were outlined. One provision provided that there was to be a zoning commission, which might be the City Plan Commission, to recommend the location of the boundaries of the original districts and the regulations to be enforced therein. The City Plan Commission just assumed this duty. In April, 1925 the City Council had allotted \$500.00 to them for expenses and \$20,000.00 to cover the expert's costs. Swan's contract for the Zoning and Traffic reports was approved on July 17, 1925. The Plan Commission had to receive special permission from the Board of Contract and Supply for this \$14,000.00 contract on July 9th. The Plan Commission instructed the City Engineer to obtain a set of Sanborn fire insurance maps for the expert. On July 30th the City Engineer stated that much extra work had been done, and was to be done, by his department. The Commission approved of the employing of a stenographer in the Engineer's office to take the minutes of the meetings (\$4.00 per session) but tabled the motion which called for the paying of a clerk. On August 27th Swan gave a short, informal talk on the zoning problems. On September 17th he presented a draft of the proposed regulations which the Commission was advised to know before considering the boundaries of the districts. A week later, the Secretary brought up the question as to whether the Zoning Commission was to be considered as a separate organization or as a division of the City Plan Commission. On October 1st the members of the Plan Commission were sworn in as official members of the Zoning Commission, and the ruling was made that two sets of notes should be kept. Later in December the Plan Commission voted that special meetings were to be held on Tuesday evenings for the hearings on the applications.

Swan and the City Plan Commission only had one disagreement regarding the text of the ordinance. Swan felt that Hartford could have "a more sensible street plan" by changing the old practice of establishing building lines through the city's power of eminent domain to that of the police power -- i.e., as a division of the Zoning Act. The City Engineer stated that it would take an extensive field study to ascertain the present building lines or "set-backs." The Commission backed the City Engineer's opinion so that this section establishing building lines (set-backs) or front yards was eliminated from the expert's proposed zoning code.

On January 11, 1926 the City Plan Commission turned the proposed ordinance over to the Standing Committee on Zoning of the Common Council. This body unanimously commended the Plan Commission for "its fair, just, and non-partisan attitude in the preparation of the zoning assignment." The Council adopted the Zoning Ordinance on February 8, 1926.

Expert's Population Predictions Most Optimistic

Both of Swan's reports -- the Zoning Study and the Traffic and Thoroughfare Plan -- were based on his predictions that the future population would be a continuation of the past growth. For example, the population in 1860 was 10,000; 100,000 in 1910; in 1920 an estimate of 140,000. This prophecy is quoted in the Traffic Report (page 9) as follows:

The present population (1926) is estimated at	165,000
In 1933 is estimated at	210,000
In 1940 is estimated at	250,000
In 1950 is estimated at	310,000
In 1960 is estimated at	350,000
In 1980 is estimated at	410,000

The population of the towns immediately adjacent to Hartford was estimated to jump from the 1920 estimate of 35,239 to 63,430 in 1940, and to 105,000 in 1980. The 1926 estimate of the number of automobiles per person was one to every 6.5 people. Swan figured that by 1940 it would be one automobile to every three persons.

Note: It might be noted that these estimates of future growth made by the Consultant for the City Plan Commission had a direct effect on the Zoning Plan as intensive developments, particularly business and apartments, were forecasted. Its purpose in the Traffic Plan was indirect, as it was used as an argument for improvements needed for the predicted increase in traffic.

The City Plan Commission made no attempt to question their consultant's estimates. The Commission had a few joint meetings with their consultant but for the greater part, the expert was given a free hand in the Zoning and Traffic Plans.

Bad Traffic Conditions are Result of Bad Street Plan

Swan, in his report to the Commission on the City Plan, presented his picture of the existing traffic problem. He stated: "Maladjustments in the street plan are directly reflected in traffic conditions throughout the city." He recommended that since the high valuations on Asylum Street and Pearl Street prevented any drastic widening, the city at once should consider building a new proposed parkway from Asylum Street to Hudson Street which would become the approach to a new proposed Connecticut River Bridge at the foot of Wyllys Street. This improvement suggested also that the Park River should be shifted or put into a conduit. It was implied that the scenic value of the river through Bushnell Park should give way to this vital traffic necessity. (In 1911 the Commission on the City Plan had, as had been stated, considered

a similar plan.) It also might be noted that in 1923 the ~~Council~~ had instructed the ~~Street Commission~~ to have definite plans for the improvement of the Park River. This resolution was referred to the City Engineer, who made a report on December 19, 1923, recommending that the river be covered from Hudson to Prospect Streets. A recommendation was made by Swan that the city take steps to acquire the property before it was enhanced in value by the improvement. Another fundamental part of the plan was to establish several parallel traffic routes to relieve the congestion on Main Street. Farmington and Asylum Avenues were both suggested to be widened to a width of 100 feet. The south side of Asylum Street from Main Street to High Street should be widened, Swan also stated, despite the payment of the building damage. In regard to dikes, the report noted that a dike should be built from the Colt Company Dike to the Weathersfield Cove just as soon as there may be sufficient demand for industrial development in the Meadows to justify the initial expenditure.

Council Doesn't Adopt Commission's City Plan

This report was submitted and accepted by the City Planning Commission in April, 1926. On May 16th, ten days before the plan was released to the public, the Corporation Counsel who had been invited to enlighten the Plan Commission on its powers, stated that the legal authority of the Commission made its duties advisory, and not administrative. A few days later, the Plan Commission had a joint meeting with the Traffic Committee of the Police Board. At this session the two boards discussed little details such as the re-routing of trolleys, the pros and cons of traffic signals, etc. On June 14th the Plan Commission received word that the Swan Plan had been received and accepted by the Common Council. On October 11th the Council allotted \$2,000.00 to the Commission to publish 2,000 copies of the report. When these were distributed in January, 1927 the Council requested the newspapers to describe the plan as the "proposed plan of the Commission on the City Plan's consultant." However, at the Commission's meetings in 1926 and 1927, the planners preferred to call it the Street Plan, or the Second City Plan of Hartford. One of the commissioners suggested that the Council should adopt it as an official city map. On June 28, 1927 the Corporation Counsel sent a ruling to the Plan Commission that the Swan Plan should be kept in the background and only used when the occasion arose; that the Plan Commission should only report what the Common Council requested it to review. After this, the Plan Commission never considered the plan as a unit.

The closing of the Park River was the favorite topic in 1927; but no action was ever taken by the Commission. Growing out of a discussion on traffic problems with a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, the Plan Commission had approved of the extension of Ann Street across Bushnell Park. (One of the ideas proposed by Swan to relieve the congestion of through traffic.) On December 27, 1927 a joint meeting with the Park Board ended in complete disagreement between these two agencies. The Park Board felt that the park land should not be spoiled by crosscuts.

In April, 1928 the Council had appropriated \$500.00 to the Commission which was a raise of \$200.00 from the previous year. At the June 14th meeting, a communication was received from the Mayor transmitting a letter from the Building Supervisor regarding the tightening up or amending of certain sections of the Zoning Ordinance. A committee was composed of the City Planners, some representatives of the Building Department, and the Zoning Board of Appeals to study this matter. This joint committee submitted its report which the Council adopted on January 31, 1929.

Other Agencies Activities Affected City Planning

During 1928 and 1929 several important activities affecting city planning in Hartford had taken place. It might be stated that the information for these happenings were obtained through other sources and were not apparent from anything that the City Plan Commission had done. The Hartford flying field which, when created in 1919, had been considered a fad or frill, had developed by 1928 to be a recognized municipal service. The State in 1923 had constructed some buildings to house a squadron of National Guard flyers, and in 1929 the State had built a \$30,000.00 headquarters to house the State Aeronautics Department. Private commercial interests also had established flying schools. In 1929 the City of Hartford appropriated \$396,091.00 to purchase additional land, which increased its acreage to 419 (its present size). Previously, in November, 1927 a sudden severe storm caused the river to rise to 30 feet and flood not only the aviation field in the South Meadows, but property in the Windsor Street section. The City Plan Commission did not pay any attention to this flood damage. However, the aviation authorities agitated for dike protection which climaxed in the City Council's action in appropriating \$1 million on April 3, 1928 "for the constructing a dike along the west bank of the Connecticut River from Wawarme Avenue southerly to the city line, together with necessary draining regulating devices, including a pumping station." This Clark dike, named after the City Engineer, gave this section of the city flood protection of 32.5 feet. In 1929 the Charter was amended abolishing the Hartford Meadows Commission and transferring the powers on dikes to the Council and the Street Board. This amendment also approved the additional expense of not over \$500,000.00, without the reference to the voters for flood control. (Old Charter Sections No. 107 and No. 108 - 20 State Law 782 1,2,3.)

Regional Planning Commission Established in 1929

In January, 1929 the General Assembly established the charter of the Metropolitan District. The original membership was made up of the City of Hartford and the towns of Bloomfield, Newington (did not include two small water companies, privately owned) Wethersfield, and Windsor. It was hoped that other communities situated within this one natural watershed and community of interest would be added to the scope of the District. West Hartford and East Hartford weren't made members at their own request. The first Journal noted: "The problems of water, sewerage, and through highways, together with regional planning as distinct from local planning can best be served by semi-local

corporations which we have called metropolitan districts," (underlining is mine...) Quoting further from this 1930 report - "These districts must include at least one large city surrounded by towns whose destinies must lie with the mother city." The District Board was composed of 20 members and was to be nonpartisan. The actual operation was through the Water Bureau and the Bureau of Public Works, with an advisory commission on regional planning studying and advising and fitting each actual operation into one great regional plan. This Regional Planning Commission was to be composed of the manager of the Public Works Bureau (which was to be, at first, the Hartford City Engineer), the manager of the Water Bureau, two members of the District Board, and two electors of the district, neither of whom shall hold any other office in the district government, who shall be appointed by the District Board for two years. This regional agency had the same powers as the Hartford Commission on the City Plan. The first major business of this organization (February 3, 1930) was a discussion over the possibility of hiring an expert to assist in the physical questions involved in regional planning, and especially in the consideration of the physical questions connected with the transfer of public works functions. One of the commissioners suggested Mr. Swan, the City Planning Commission's consultant in 1926, as a possible professional planner since he was familiar with the planning of Hartford, Wethersfield, and Bloomfield. It might be noted that Swan, in the Traffic Report, had recommended that Hartford should ask for legislative powers in the regional planning of thoroughfares. At this meeting were representatives of the Common Council, and the Editor of the Hartford Times. Mr. Swan attended a Regional Planning Commission meeting in June, 1926 to discuss this thoroughfare problem. Mr. Swan was not engaged as an expert, however, the Randolph Company of Toledo, was engaged to make a precise survey of the District which would furnish the control for detailed maps. The Regional Planning Commission was given an appropriation of \$15,000.00 on January 1, 1931.

The work of this Regional Planning Commission is a study in itself. This information has been mentioned only to show that this organization was established, and that planning of a regional nature has affected the City of Hartford. The City Plan Commission in December, 1928 received a communication from this organization asking for cooperation. An analysis of this regional planning commission's work will be made in the summary of this report.

Finance Board Notes Evils of Lack of Planning

The Board of Finance's message to the Council in February, 1929 showed that this organization had given some serious thought to the city planning problems. Here they stated their opinion as follows:

"Ten years have passed since the close of the World War. The City of Hartford faces the effects of this war in that improvements which would normally have been undertaken in the past have been postponed. The situation is a serious one and challenges the best

economic thought of the community. We have heard the viewpoint of the manufacturers; we are aware of the increasing number of foreclosures."

The finance consultants condemning the City for following the line of least resistance as far as its growth was concerned, felt that as a result the City was suffering, for they also cited these requests:

"We must have school buildings and more of them; better roads must be built; expenditures are justified in public health service and hospitalization; an ample supply of pure water must be provided for; police protection, fire protection, garbage collection, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, libraries and other works of peace are increasing more rapidly than is the growth of the population."

The Commission on the City Plan made no attempt to get on the "band wagon" and support this planning and development program that the Finance Board considered essential. Nor did the Finance Board suggest that the City Planning Commission should make any proposed plan to help carry out these designs. During that year (1929) conferences were held by the Plan Commission and the Committee of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the enclosing of the Park River between Prospect and Hudson Streets, and making general suggestions to improve the conditions in the east side of the city wherein real estate values were declining. No definite action resulted from these discussions.

1930 Commission Considers New Program

In December, 1929 the City Plan Commission membership was practically new as the Mayor had made four new appointments. The other two commissioners had only been in office since June, 1929. This action was due to a general law that had been passed changing the time of appointment from June 1st to the third Tuesday in December (20 S.L. 1028 or Old Charter No. 149). This new organization passed a resolution that meetings were to be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:45 p.m. The main business in the first three months of 1930 was the attempt to work out a definite program of activity. At a special meeting on March 11th, Mr. Flavel Shurtleff, Secretary of the National Conference on City Planning, gave the Plan Commission an instructive talk on methods to make the Hartford agency more active. The president of the Commission was named a committee of one to contact other city planning commissions to learn of their progress and programs. As part of this new program, the Plan Commission started to study the Columbia Gardens Development tract located in the South Meadows. This subdivision contained many dwellings which were termed by the press as unfit for housing. The Council of Social Agencies were contacted by the Plan Commission to correct the problems. The Council informed the Plan Commission that the condition was not caused by social problems alone, but was due to unsanitary conditions.

At another time the Plan Commission had a joint meeting with the Park Board. The Park Board turned down the Commission's suggestion of condemning the subdivision and using it for an addition to Colt Park. The Plan Commission dropped this problem, and started a study of the so-called "Diners." The Plan Commission voted that these "Diners" should be treated by the Board of Appeals similar to the method used in determining the location of gas stations. The Corporation Counsel blocked the passage of this ordinance by claiming that such a classification was discrimination against one type of restaurant.

In 1931 the special business of the Plan Commission was insignificant. The Commission's definite intentions of activity was forgotten. There was no repeating of the 1930 platform calling for an active program and a broad outlook. The 1931 minutes were very brief. There was a record that the Commission sent a communication to the Council recommending that the proposed Post Office site be zoned Business No. 2, rather than Light Industrial, but there was no comment on the result.

The Commission's \$400.00 (1931) budget was reduced to an even \$100.00 in April, 1932. This drastic curtailment was apparent in all departments. At the February meeting a proposed Engineering Department plan showing a possible arrangement of streets in the South Meadows was studied. In March the Plan Commission was notified that the State Bridge Commission was interested in constructing a new bridge over the Connecticut River on the south part of Hartford. In May, the Plan Commission reviewed the bridge plans and notified the State Commission that the plans were considered incomplete since they did not include street changes and readjustments that would be necessary in Hartford. In September, the Hartford Hospital petitioned the Plan Commission to change the approach of the bridge from Charter Oak Avenue further south to Wawarme Avenue. The necessary communication was forwarded to the State agency and this change was approved.

Engineering Department Gives Special Assistance

On February 21, 1933 the Plan Commission had a group photograph made for a publicity stunt. The Deputy City Engineer who for 20 years had attended the Plan Commission's meetings, presented to the Commission three sketches. One of them indicated the extent of the frontage of the Connecticut River owned by the City; another showed the extent and location of all parking stations in Hartford; while the third was a map of the city on which had been indicated all the streets which had been accepted, widened, or extended after consideration by the Commission. In March, the City Plan Commission held a joint meeting with the Regional Planning Commission (of the Metropolitan District). These two planning bodies discussed such problems as sewerage disposal, the precise survey for the District maps, highway and sewer layouts in Wethersfield, and the Vine Street extension. The South Meadows was also on the agenda, but it was felt that since so much of this area was the concern of the Aviation Commission that this matter should be left in its "hands." In

April, 1933 the City Plan Commission's budget was reduced to \$50.00, which was just enough to buy the badges for the new members - usually two a year. Since 1927 all Plan Commissioners were presented badges to identify themselves. The Plan Commission expenditures for 1931 and 1932 had averaged less than \$100.00. The Commission made no earnest effort to secure more of a budget. The Engineering Department furnished the Commission with not only some of its personnel on a part-time basis, but various maps. No attempt was ever made to assess the Commission for these services. However, in the case of the Commission on Regional Planning, direct charges were transferred to the Metropolitan District.

In 1934 zoning constituted the main business of the Plan Commission. At the January meeting a private society termed "The Friends of Hartford" petitioned the City Plan Commission to oppose a gas station on Farmington Avenue and Marshall Street. In March one of the commissioners drew up a resolution requesting that the City Plan Commission be given more power over zoning changes. A sub-committee was appointed to contact the Corporation Counsel. The newspapers spoke of the Plan Commission as one of the protectors of zoning. However, the Commission could only send communications to the Council. In January of this year the Commission went on record as favoring the survey on slum clearance. No mention was made in the Commission's records as to this action by the Mayor in establishing this citizen's committee, merely that the survey be sponsored. The Health Board had endorsed it previously. In 1935 the Mayor had the F.E.R.A. (forerunner to the W.P.A.) make a traffic study. No record of even a rubber stamp approval was made of this activity.

Present Supervisor, as Commissioner, Gives Advice

In 1935 the Commission's present supervisor, Herbert Gibson, was made a Plan Commissioner. He had been the architectural consultant to the Slum Clearance Committee. At the June meeting of the Plan Commission, Mr. Gibson submitted a brief general review of the Plan Commission's history. He suggested that a private local firm should be hired to make a \$3,500.00 plan for Hartford. He also criticized the Plan Commission by saying:

"As a result of prolonged inactivity, we find ourselves today not only suffering from political atrophy (lack of growth) but apparently shorn of the ability to use those powers specifically granted to this body in the Charter of Hartford."

He also spoke of the need for better zoning, and cited the advantages of a city plan.

In 1935 City Given the Right to Have Capital Budget

In January, 1936 the Plan Commission submitted a prepared schedule of what it considered as necessary improvements. The Commission's recommended

program include the following:

1. A new bridge	\$3,500,000.00
2. Shore Drive - extended north and south as through highway	3,000,000.00
3. State Street widening and Parkway	2,000,000.00
4. Hooker Memorial - at intersection of State Street and Shore Drive	1,500,000.00
5. New approach to Airport	1,000,000.00
6. Municipal Airport - special plan for development needed	750,000.00
7. Incinerator - cited as modern method for refuse disposal	<u>300,000.00</u>
Total of Proposed Working Program	\$12,050,000.00

The reason the Commission prepared this list of improvements was that in 1935 the State Legislature in a special act (Chapter 535) gave the city permission to have a capital expense budget. This law did not give the Plan Commission any power to submit any program as the power was delegated to the Board of Finance and to the Common Council. The Board of Finance was also authorized to make the various city departments submit annually the estimates of the needs of their departments in the nature of capital expenditures, and the costs thereof, for the ensuing ten years. Provision was also made for an annual levy of a tax not less than one mill nor more than one and one-half mills for the establishment of a capital expenditure and major improvement reserve. In January, 1936, Gibson was named president of the Plan Commission. In commenting upon this list of planning needs he stated at this time:

"It is obvious that such a long-term program requires the co-operation of other departments whose activities in a city-wide program are of doubtful value unless they are performed with a definite relationship to each other, and with the ultimate aim - the City Plan."

This suggestion for a city plan was repeated at several meetings in 1936 by Mr. Gibson. Sometimes he spoke of it as a general key control, but more often as a "Master Plan." He stated that a city plan should be an expression of the will of the community as to how it intended to use its natural resources and to develop the physical area of Hartford. He did not mention ways or means for its production. The Plan Commission's request for a \$4,000.00 appropriation to prepare these studies as a basis of a master plan was denied. The Commission's president was the main supporter. Sketches of the State Street widening were suggested to the Commission by a local architectural firm, but no definite action was ever taken.

Serious Flood in 1936 Leads to Dike Construction

In March, 1936 Hartford suffered from the worst flood in the city's history. The Council created the Hartford Disaster Emergency Committee of which the Mayor was to act as chairman, and the Chamber of Commerce was to act for the Committee as the distribution agency. This Committee's main work was the preparation of a bulletin showing the manner in which any future emergency was to be handled. In April, 1936 the Mayor, upon a resolution of the Council, appointed 11 members who, with himself, were known as the Flood Investigation and Improvement Commission. Because this flood had been caused by the sudden melting of snow in Vermont and New Hampshire (the headwaters of the Connecticut River) the federal government's War Department (Bureau of Rivers) agreed to furnish flood control protection by building reservoirs in these other states as well as dikes along the Connecticut River. The City Plan Commission made no comment on the creation of these two new advisory boards.

Disagreements Over Technical Advice and Assistance

In December, 1936 Gibson, in an annual report to the Plan Commission, suggested that this agency needed a full-time executive secretary, although the detailed work plans, drawings, etc., would be continued to be done by the Engineering Department. The need for an additional Connecticut River bridge was also discussed at this time. The Board of Finance authorized, as of April, 1937 the \$4,000.00 appropriation. In granting this money the Board stated: "It was felt that either this Commission should receive an adequate appropriation or it should be abolished." Other than approving of the hiring of the City Engineer's secretary to keep a set of minutes (\$5.00 per meeting) the Commission did not come to any definite decision as to how this allotment was to be used. Gibson wanted to hire a local firm as consultant to the Planning Board; another commissioner favored an outside expert; while the City Engineer felt that his department should be the recipient of any additional funds.

In February the Commission's president made the statement that "a great deal of what we would like to do is endorsed by the Flood Commission." In April the Commission gave some attention to the business of becoming a better coordinating board. It ordered the City Engineer to send formal communications to several agencies which it considered as possible aids in the planning procedure. Gibson, its president, was the author of most of these recommendations. He stated that the Board of Education should submit to the Plan Commission its immediate and future school building program; that city property should not be sold until the Plan Commission had an opportunity to study its future possibilities; that the city should abandon the practice of leasing property without a 90 day recapture clause, and that the Street Commission should notify them of any contemplated plan to widen or extend any streets. The Commission also requested the Zoning Board to notify them ahead of time of any proposed adjustment rather than to send them a post card of their action. In May the Mayor requested that the state law forbidding the appointment of

any plan commissioner holding an elective or appointive office in the city government should be removed as he felt that the appointment of a Park Commissioner as a member of the Planning Commission was desirable. This was approved by the Legislature on June 8th. The reviewing of the plans made by the Engineering Department for the flood control work was the chief business of the Plan Commission during 1937. At one meeting, the City Engineer stated that the Army plans for adequate flood protection of the Park River called for a 45 foot dike. He presented plans to the Commission that this river should be put in an underground conduit which should be constructed straight across the Bushnell Park area. After March 28, 1937 when the State Legislature, through a special act, established the Flood Commission, the Commission on the City Plan did not have anything directly to do with the flood control business. This newer agency was given permission to spend \$5 million and was authorized to employ a necessary staff which included its own executive-secretary.

In September, Gibson, the Plan Commission's prexy, again voiced his opinion that the planning agency should have an executive-secretary, or director. He advanced himself as a candidate for this position. The City Engineer, Mr. Ross (Mr. Clark had died during the summer) said that if the Commission had any available money (\$3,800.00 unexpended) that the Engineering Department could obtain better benefits than by any other method. The commissioners listened to the opinions expressed, but never took any definite action. At the November 16th meeting the Commission announced that its president, Mr. Gibson, was going to resign and that they were naming him part-time supervisor at a salary of \$1,200.00 a year, effective January 1st. At the December meeting, Gibson read a 10-page report in which he reviewed the Commission's past record in regard to city plans, as well as remarking that a revision of the zoning ordinance was urgently needed. At the first meeting of the Commission in January, 1938 the planners voted to pay the \$150.00 a month salary of one of the junior engineers of the Engineering Department who would be assigned to them for special work. In April the Commission's budget was reduced to \$3,000.00, but no comment was made on this cut from the year before. At most of the meetings both the City Engineer and the Supervisor gave advice to the planning agency. At the September 28th meeting the City Engineer presented a Vacant Lot Survey which his department had made. Although much interest was expressed by the fact that Hartford had much available land besides that of the Meadows, no action was taken. The public interest was turned to the flood control work, as in September the Connecticut River again threatened to flood the east side of the city. By sandbagging the Colt Dike to equal the height of the reconstructed Clark Dike, this south portion of the city was saved from damage which the city suffered in 1936. The City Planning Commission kept itself aware of the progress of the work of the Flood Commission, as the City Engineer kept them informed as to the various plans and construction work. In December, 1938 it noted "The Flood Control improvements will reclaim over 1,000 acres of undeveloped land besides improving a similar area now covered with obsolete and cheap structures."

In 1939 State Agrees to Build New Bridge and Highway

In February, 1939 the Supervisor suggested that a general key plan which would tie in all the plans of the various city agencies should be prepared. The Commission, at this meeting were told by the Supervisor that the W.P.A. might be willing to provide funds for this undertaking. However, the City Engineer stated that his department, with an additional appropriation, could perhaps do a better job. Several of the commissioners thought such a control map had merit, but the proposition was soon forgotten. At the same time the State Highway Commission informed the City Plan Commission that the State was considering plans to build not only a new bridge, but also an arterial highway. The State authorities assured the City Plan agency that all the necessary bridge approaches would be provided.

In April, 1939 the Engineering Department prepared for the Building Inspection Department an up-to-date zoning map. This map was discussed at one meeting of the Plan Commission. In May, the Mayor informed the Commission that he favored having the Plan Commission review all requests for changes in the zoning boundaries and make recommendations concerning these changes. When the law was approved by the State on May 26th, the Commission was to make these reports to the Standing Committee on Zoning of the Council. In June, 1939 the Commission was asked to consider the approval of a site desired by the Housing Authority for a low rent housing project. In September the Commission announced that it didn't have much time to consider this location, but that the site was 100 per cent protected against any floods. In November, the executive-secretary of the Housing Authority attended the Commission's meeting. He explained that his Board had already approved of four possible locations, and not all the sites would be in slum areas; that his Board only selected these sites after they were found to meet with essential requirements such as accessibility to employment, entertainment, and shopping centers, and to education and recreational facilities.

At the Commission's special meeting on November 21, 1939 the City Engineer reported that he had held a joint meeting with the representatives from the Bridge Commission, the Flood Commission, and the State Highway Commissioner, to coordinate the city and State plans. In January, 1940 the Commission on the City Plan drew up a resolution that their zoning boundary recommendations should be sent to the Council directly after the public hearing by the Standing Committee. In 1940 the Board of Finance cut the Commission's budget to \$1,900.00, but no comment was made by the Plan Commission; no comment was made of the Real Property Inventory and Low Rent Housing Survey which was completed in February, 1940 by the Housing Authority. Nor did the Commission make any comment on the Traffic Commission which had been established by the Legislature in May 25, 1939 and had employed an executive-secretary. The Commission's supervisor in February, 1940 only remarked "whatever steps taken by the Traffic Commission, the Flood Commission, or the Street Board, final action should not be taken without knowledge and approval of the City Plan Commission."

1940 Engineering Report Cites Need for Plan Commission

Some discussion was carried on at the Plan Commission's April, 1940 meeting in regard to the report made by the Engineering Department on their history. In this report it was stated that from January 1, 1938 to March, 1940, 69 considerations, not including zone requests or public housing approvals, had been placed before the Plan Commission. This report noted that city planning was an important part of the Engineering Department's work. It also stated that the City Plan Commission had many important purposes and aims which, briefly stated, were as follows:

1. To so guide new development that the community grows in an orderly fashion.
2. To study present conditions, developing new plans (when necessary) for remedial action to take care of situations which have arisen because of lack of adequate planning in years past, or because of changing or unforeseen circumstances.
3. To forestall, when possible, undesirable changes or undue deterioration of sections of the municipality.

This Engineering report noted that the City Plan Commission, in accomplishing these ends, must consider traffic and thoroughfare plans, the protection of property by zoning, etc.

The Commission's supervisor, in August, 1940, presented to the Commission his proposal for replanning Hartford's Historical Square. The sum of \$300,000.00, held in trust by the State Sculpture Commission, was to be used to build a sculptural fountain in back of the Old State House. This beautification development was to be one of the features of the plan which Gibson previously had advocated in 1935 to improve Hartford's State Street and Riverfront. In the summer of 1940 the Federal Government considered taking over the city's airport - Brainard Field - to be used by the Army as a national air base. Some discussion was made at the Plan Commission's meetings in regard to creating a city airport in the North Meadows. After much deliberation, the Army decided instead to build this base at Windsor Locks.

Housing Authority Makes Review of Hartford Planning

The Hartford Housing Authority completed a report on City Planning in December, 1940. The executive-secretary of this organization discussed this study with the City Plan Commission several times in the first five months of 1941. (This review was later revised and submitted to the Mayor on October 22, 1941 entitled "Planning For Hartford's Future.") In this respect the Hartford Housing Authority stated: "The City Plan Commission now stands as a kind of half-hearted gesture by the people of Hartford in behalf of the principles of City Planning." This study also noted that without a unified control that governs and coordinates the relationship among the many physical facilities of the city,

without plans, powers, and methods of procedure for controlling and directing changes in Hartford's physical structure, the development of the city will be haphazard. This report suggested the outstanding needs and objectives of Hartford planning to be:

1. An official City Plan.
2. A capital program and a capital budget.
3. Adequate and better defined powers of the Commission on the City Plan.
4. A closer and more responsible relationship of the Commission on the City Plan as a consultative and reference agency with the Common Council.
5. Adequate funds and staff for the Commission on the City Plan.

Space does not permit a further explanation of these points as outlined in this study. The Housing Authority's executive-secretary felt that since the Authority was owner of over \$9 million worth of property, and was manager of approximately 1,900 public dwelling units, the Authority was not departing from its own special field of activity when it undertook to analyze the place of city planning in municipal administration.

Plans Made for a Capital Improvement Budget

Although the suggestion of the Capital Budget - which is defined as a plan for the financing of a desired program of capital improvements, usually for a period of five to ten years - was recommended by the Housing Report as an effective instrument of citizen control, some steps had already been taken. In 1935, as has been mentioned, the State had given the city the right to have such a budget and the City Plan Commission had made a list of the city's needs. However, nothing other than this had been done. In May, 1941 a consultant of the National Resources Board asked the Plan Commission to consider the programming of capital improvements as a part of its regular duties. At the June meeting this consultant informed the planners that it wasn't a question of what was needed, but what can be afforded. The Plan Commission assigned its supervisor the task of formulating a program of capital improvements. In order to facilitate compilation of such a list, requests were made to all the city agencies to submit statements of the capital improvements which, in their opinions, would be needed within the next six years. In September, 1941 the supervisor announced to the Commission that some of the agencies had been lax in returning these suggestions and it would take some time to make any tentative proposal. The 1942-1943 budget has established one of the 32 mills (tax rate) or \$380,000.00 as a capital improvement reserve. The City Plan Commission did not have much to do with the establishment of this credit reserve.

In 1941 Zoning Problems Lead to Hiring Experts

The majority of the Plan Commission's activity in 1941 centered around zoning. In April one of the Council members (Lillian Malley) requested the planners to revise the zoning ordinance to bring it more in line with what was likely to happen. In May, the Commission adopted a resolution stating that they would oppose any relaxation of restrictions in the highest residential zones known as "A" districts. In September the Commission advised the Council that there was an urgent need for this revision of not only the text of the ordinance, but the zoning map. Some thought was given to making a new classification between the "B," which allows 18 families to an acre, and the "C" zones, which allow as many as 140 families to an acre. Requests for zone changes to build some apartment houses on Asylum Avenue prompted this suggestion. In their meetings the Commission stressed the interrelationship of zoning and other governmental problems. The case of the large, one-family house on spacious lots from which owners were demanding reduced assessments and changes in zoning, was an example. The Commission realized that spot zoning arrangements for such dwellings or total exemption from the zoning ordinance was the wrong way to handle this problem. By October 1941 the Plan Commission was saying that zoning was only one part of the comprehensive planning of the city. Both the Commission's supervisor and the Housing Authority's secretary told the Commission the need for an over-all plan for the future development of the city. At the October 21st meeting the Deputy City Engineer stated: "In a way, the city has a master plan although it has never been compiled in any single document or formal set of maps." He explained further that "Official maps are dated and, like the blueprint for a building, are valueless unless put to use." The Commission's supervisor remarked that just as many guides are needed for the construction of a building; the city needs a highway plan, regulations governing subdivisions, the zoning plan and ordinance, the establishment of policies and standards, etc., for their social, physical, and economic structure. The Commission devoted many 1941 meetings to discussing the preparation of this guide, or guides. The City Engineer proposed to the Commission that with some special help by his department a professional planner could be hired on a per-diem basis. He felt that this combined method was much cheaper and better than having an outside expert make the whole plan, or having the plans prepared without any outside assistance. He stated that the costs of having an expert do all the work would be exorbitant and that the Engineering Department had a vast amount of data which would be redone. That the plan was not working from the beginning, but bringing plans up-to-date he felt would give support to the undertaking. In November, the Commission started interviewing professional city planners. The City Engineer stated that \$5,000.00 was enough to cover outside help on both a master plan and rezoning, providing additional funds were given to the Engineering Department.

The Council in the 1942-43 budget, approved of giving \$6,000.00 to the City Plan Commission and \$5,000.00 to the City Engineer's office for a survey upon which may be based recommendations for zone changes. The meetings in January 1942 were mostly in regard to future planning for the North Meadows. The City Engineer admitted that before any plans could be final, the question as to whether

to use it for residential or industrial purposes must be decided. A local engineering firm submitted a plan at the January 20th session which proposed to build homes for 5,000 families. A field trip was made by the Plan Commission on the 30th to look over the land in this 600 acre tract. During the next three months interviews and communications were discussed with five city planning experts. On May 14th the Commission announced that it had selected Mr. Flavel Shurtleff as legal consultant, and Mr. Frederick Johnson Adams as city planning consultant, to re-study zoning and other phases of its city planning program. These experts were each to receive \$50.00 a day for any work done in Hartford, and \$25.00 a day for work done in their own offices, with a maximum of \$500.00 for expenses. Swan, who had been the consultant to the Commission in 1926, requested \$100.00 a day, plus expenses. Work has already been started on making a land use inventory of Hartford. At the Commission's last meeting in June, 1941 it has discussed with these advisors its plans to bring the city's zoning ordinance up-to-date; the preparation of plans for the development of land, particularly in the North Meadows which is now made useable by the completion of the Connecticut River dikes; and the comprehensive program to guide the future growth and development of Hartford. It remains until sometime next winter for the experts to complete these plans.

PART III

SUMMARY

Although a distinct revival of interest in city planning has taken place the last year in Hartford which should produce definite accomplishments, the Commission on the City Plan can not be called a real "live wire" planning agency. Although this agency has been a permanent arm of local government for over 35 years, Hartford planning has never attained its full stature and usefulness. At the outset, it should be stated in all fairness to the Hartford Planning Commissions that a great amount of patient and laborious effort has been spent. If this report seems to stress deficiencies and ailments rather than good qualities - of which the Hartford Planning Commission has many - it is because constructive criticism is the dynamic means of paving the way for civic improvement, which is presumably the goal of all city planning.

As soon as citizens of Hartford realize that their government is a big business, expending annually over \$14 million, they will realize that an adequate planning agency, with proper authority and knowledge, should be functioning. For it is just as important for the city planning agency to judiciously reshape the city by systematic development and redevelopment in accordance with forward looking and intelligent plans as it is for research departments to study and plan improvements for large corporations. The real question is not whether we should have a planning agency, but how we can make city planning continuous, positive, aggressive, and comprehensive.

Commission Needs More Extensive Powers

There is no doubt that the City Planning Commission in Hartford has not been successful to the extent that it was anticipated when it was first created in 1907. The very name of the planning agency, "The Commission on the City Plan," indicated that this special commission was to be more interested with planning for the future growth, rather than in being concerned about the evils of the city's past development. In most respects, this commission was established to act as a clearing house for the planning activities of the other departments. The advocates felt that the Council was usually so busy with the day-to-day affairs of community government that they could exert but little control over long-range objectives or the interplay of public and private activities. They had advocated a permanent, official Planning Commission to bridge the gap between current operation and long-term administration. They did not set up a temporary organization, as other cities had done, for the express purpose of preparing a city plan. Through its powers, however, it was given the right to make any map of the city itself, or any portion thereof. It was given the further privilege of hiring experts. In addition to this power the Council was required, by law, (the City Planning Act) to refer all questions concerning the location of any public building, esplanade, boulevard, parkway, street, highway, square,

or park, to the Commission for its consideration and report before final action was taken on such location. This report the Commission is given the right and the duty to submit, but the Council can, by a majority vote, disregard it if it sees fit. It might be noted that these powers were made strictly advisory since, in 1907, it was thought that if the city planning authorities were given any more power, and therefore responsibility, the city's business would be confused and delayed. Some cities, such as Cincinnati, Ohio have made the plan commission's powers broader by providing that if the City Council does not follow the advice of the commission, a two-third's vote of the Council is required in order to disregard or overrule it. Such a requirement provides for stability in the recommendations of the Plan Commission without unduly dividing authority. If the Council of Hartford would give this additional power to the present Commission, city planning administration would receive a much needed "shot in the arm." Because the Council in Hartford has 20 members compared to nine in Cincinnati, the Council here should overrule by a recorded vote of not less than three-quarters of its entire membership. This three-quarters vote is now necessary in Hartford if zoning changes are opposed by 20 per cent of the property owners whose property is near, adjacent, or across from the requested zone change. This requirement, effective under the Zoning Ordinance of 1926, has been in no sense an encroachment on the legislative power of the governing body. Thus, this new requirement would not be as drastic as it might appear to be. The drafters of the Standard City Planning Act of 1928 (prepared by the Advisory Committee on City Planning and Zoning of the U.S. Department of Commerce) give an excellent explanation of the need for, and justification of, this required provision. The following quotations taken from the footnotes of this act:

"Such a provision militates against hasty action, when a bare quorum might be present; and will also necessitate full discussion and the members going on record where important action is to be taken."

"Numerous matters are constantly before the Council for decision. Some of them may represent a departure from or violation of the city plan. Others may represent matters upon which the city plan contains no light, but which involve a major planning problem. As Council proceeds from week to week with its work, pressed by all sorts of pressures to pass this, that, or the other measure, there is great danger that the city plan may come to be ignored or given rather casual attention. The requirement appears reasonable and adequate, and has worked well where it has been adopted. It provides that in the case of any improvement in which the planning problem is involved, the opinion of the planning commission must first be asked. If the planning commission approves, the Council will be free to proceed with whatever affirmative vote is required by the general law governing it. If the commission disapproves, there naturally

ensues a reconsideration, with probably a full discussion between Council and Commission. Council retains the power it should have, namely, the power to decide in the end; but in order that this decision may be after full consideration of the planning problem and of the relation of the proposed improvement to other city developments, the requirement of a two-thirds (or three-fourths) of Council is reasonable and justified."

There are countless cases in the City Planning Commission's history of Hartford during the last 35 years where if this three-quarters vote had been necessary for overruling the Commission's recommendations, more effective city planning would have resulted. In recent years there has been one request for a zoning change which the property owners have not objected to, and which have been passed by only a majority of the Council which happened to be present, although the Plan Commission has opposed. This requirement should apply to any amendment to the zoning ordinance as well as any location and extent of all public works; acceptance or vacation of all streets; the extension, location, or size of utility structures; and the acquisition and disposal of public properties.

Since 1909 the City Plan Commission has administered rather than advised over street layout control. Section 133 of the Old Charter provides that all maps or plans of any land within the city showing any proposed or projected streets, or any changes thereof, shall bear the endorsement of the City Plan Commission before being recorded in the office of the Town Clerk. This law has a tendency to discourage the irresponsible subdivider. The public must realize that many land developers are interested in realizing as much money as possible, and without any platting control the subdivider may plat his property as he chooses. Since the activities of these land dividers shape the future community and condition, in considerable measure, the quality of the living and working condition of its inhabitants, the city's (Hartford) control must extend further than just the assuming of responsibility for passing on the merits of subdivisions in regard to street layout. It is true that the City Plan Commission has many times recommended dimensions of lots and blocks, intersection grades, set-back lines, and higher zoning classifications. Although not a serious problem since nearly all the land in Hartford is developed by now, not including the Meadows, which would need special treatment. The City Plan Commission should sometime consider printing a statement of basic principles and detailed recommendations. (Possibly the Regional Planning Commission might be the agency to publish such a pamphlet.)

The original City Planning Act included two powers which, even if they have never been used, may prove extremely useful in the future. One of them provided that if the Council wished, it could refer to the Planning Commission the construction, or carrying out, of any public work not expressly within the province of other Commissions and Boards. The original intentions for this assignment were closely tied up with the other privilege. This section of the

City Planning Act provided that the City of Hartford, acting through this Commission, or otherwise, could condemn and hold more land than was actually needed for the construction of any contemplated public improvement so as to preserve the view, appearance, light, air, and usefulness of such public works. This so-called "incidental" condemnation, legally known as "Excess Condemnation" besides safeguarding the usefulness and value of the main improvement (an essential city planning advantage) also would give the city a chance to profit by the increase in land values that any public improvement made. In 1907 when the City Planning Commission was created, there was much talk of constructing dikes along the river and developing both the North and South Meadows. The North Meadows was advanced as an ideal location for a new manufacturing district. The advocates of city planning were cautious in phrasing these two powers since such matters had a legislative side, and questions of policy with relation to them were decided by the Council. Many times during the first five years, the City Planning Commission implied that it was not taking advantage of these "broad" powers given to it.

Public Support Lacking

In those early years the Commission used its annual reports as a medium of expressing its intentions, as well as its accomplishments. The publication of such annual formal reports was very desirable, and in many respects, the Commission suffered when they were discontinued in 1914. As stated in the Introduction of this report, planning is very dependent on widespread public interest and understanding. It is the lack of this public support in Hartford that has weakened the work of the City Planning Commission.

Advisory Powers Have Failed

The review of the history of the Plan Commission has shown many times that the Mayor or the Council created additional committees and commissions instead of entrusting studies to the Planning agency. Sometimes private agencies, such as the local Chamber of Commerce have requested the legislative body to establish new agencies in order to solve a problem. This was the case in 1919 when a body of citizens were selected to develop further some of the preliminary findings and recommendations of the City Plan Commission. The City Plan Commission did not concern itself at all with the work of this Meadow Development agency. A similar lack of cooperation was apparent several other times during the City Plan Commission's history. In some cases special commissions were formed, or public improvements were made, which the City Plan Commission chose to ignore. For instance, the Aviation Commission has had little dealings with the planning agency. Traffic and parking problems have been treated mostly by special agencies. The City of Hartford in 1939, created an interdepartmental Traffic Commission which, in turn, has hired a full-time executive-secretary. The City Plan Commission did have a Traffic and Thoroughfare Plan made by a consultant in 1926. His proposed plan, which was approved by the Planning Commission, included a basic study of the thoroughfare system, and developed a traffic plan in relation

to the future city plan as a necessary element in an attack on the entire traffic problem. This plan, which has been described already in the body of this report, did not represent an impossible, idealistic vision, but was to be accomplished in the normal course of growth over a period of years. This 15 year plan outlined a sequence of developments in the order of their importance. The Plan Commission's consultant recommended the fitting of all physical improvements into a comprehensive plan not only to produce the greatest economic return and social convenience from each project, but also to gradually build up a better street system. In many respects, the consultant presented plans that had been advocated for many years by the City Engineering Department. Compared to the Carrère and Hastings Plan also made for the Plan Commission in 1911, the Traffic and Thoroughfare Plan did not involve the expenditure of funds much greater than those normally spent in physical improvements. The consultant pointed out in the conclusion of this report that some of the improvements depended on outlays by such private parties as the Railroad and Connecticut Companies, while others needed favorable action of various state agencies. Besides the City Plan Commission, the consultant stated in this report, the responsibility for carrying out the program devolved upon the Mayor, the Common Council, the Street Commission and the Police Commission. It is surprising that this Traffic Plan, upon its completion, was regarded by the majority of the local agencies as something foreign and strange. For the Plan Commission that had recommended hiring this expert to make the plan in addition to the zoning ordinance, was mostly composed of members of other city agencies. On examining the recommendations of this plan today, it can be seen that some of its features have been carried out by the city. Yet the plan as a whole did not receive the cooperation of other agencies. Before the report was publicly presented, the Plan Commission had one joint meeting with the Traffic Committee of the Police Commission. But these two groups proceeded to haggle over petty matters instead of considering the plan in its entirety. These organizations had two different points of view. The Planner saw the street system as constituting not only the city's principal traffic circulatory system, but as the framework of the city. The Commission visualized the plan as a long-range solution of the city's traffic and transportation problems, in harmony with all other features of the city's desirable development; whereas the Police Commission then in 1926 (and the present Traffic Commission) were more interested in trying to make the best possible use of the existing street facilities. The Mayor and the Council did not take any stand in regard to the Commission's proposed solution. When the Commission was demanding publicly that some official action be taken in regard to their recommendations, the Corporation Counsel "put them in their place" by ruling that the city planning powers were strictly advisory. In a few months the Commission itself gave up the fight to convince the city officials and the public that its ideas were the best. In numerous other cases there has existed a vagueness as to the limits and responsibility of the Plan Commission. Several times the Park Board has rejected the Commission's recommendations. In most of the locations picked for various public improvements the Plan Commission has acted as a rubber stamp. By that it has not been consulted until the plans

were already determined by other agencies. If Hartford had adopted any city plan, it is doubtful that with its present powers the Commission's recommendations would have been followed. Sometimes the argument is made that if the city planning agency cannot convince the public and the officials of the city that its ideas are the best, there must be something wrong with the ideas. If Hartford's 35 years of planning history means anything, it should be realized that advisory powers are not enough and that only by making the obligation rest with finding a better solution to the Commission's recommendation can any stability be given to any plan as a whole; but in order that city planning here in Hartford can be appreciated as a highly specialized and highly technical matter, and that the preparation of a plan that is worth anything can be developed, it requires the concentrated effort of a selected group of exceptionally intelligent and experienced citizens aided by the best technical advice. So that besides realizing that the Commission here should have more extensive powers, it should also give some consideration as to its organization.

Composition of Plan Commission Has Varied

It will be seen from this historical review that the composition of the Commission on the City Plan has been "checkered." At the beginning, six of the eight members were designated city officials. Two of them were to be the heads of the Street and Park Boards. Two were to be representatives from the legislative side, plus the Mayor and the City Engineer. The other two Plan Commissioners who could not have any other city position, were appointed for terms by the Mayor. Later in 1909 another salaried official, the Superintendent of the Park Board was designated a member. He was not named like the others because of his job alone, but because of his great interest in city planning matters. Thus, for 16 years the Commission on the City Plan had seven out of its nine members who had other positions in the Hartford administration. It was thought that such a provision would tend to prevent obstructions due to jealousy, take care of overlapping, and make available what was sometimes really expert knowledge. This viewpoint of having the Plan Commission made up mostly of responsible city officials was changed March 3, 1925. The new Plan Commission was to be strictly an outside agency, as it was composed of the Mayor and six electors who could not hold any other public office. It was supposedly thought in 1925 when this change was made that the interest of the community in planning matters from a community standpoint could best be served by so-called outsiders who are free from local prejudice, preconception, and interest, and who are able to see the problem with fresh eyes. Two electors were to be appointed for three year terms so that a certain amount of continuity was certain. It was supposedly thought that the Plan Commission was entitled to the advice and assistance of the city officials, and there was little need in including them as members. The Mayor in 1925 was said to have realized that these designated officials were too busy with what they regarded as regular duties and thus picked a Board that would have as their specific duty that of city planning. In all fairness - to attendance records - it might be noted that the City Engineer and the Superintendent of Parks had been the mainstays

of the Plan Commission during this 16 year period.

On June 8, 1937 the phrase "none of whom shall hold any other city office" was removed so that the present composition does not prevent other members of the city administration from being Plan Commissioners. (None of the present Commissioners are salaried officials. The six planners include three lawyers, a banker, an insurance worker, and a mortician.) At present, two of the Plan Commissioners are also members of the Park Commission, one of whom is the president. The City Engineer is still retained as the non-voting secretary. The Mayor is supposed to be, according to the Charter, the presiding officer of the Plan Commission. At the present time, his name is not included on the official Plan Commission stationery as a member. An investigation was made as to the last time that any Mayor has presided at a Plan Commission meeting. It was found that no Mayor has attended a meeting since June 19, 1925, at which time the zoning contract was proposed.

There are some general city rules that have applied since 1929 to the City Plan Commission:

- (1) The Mayor appoints two electors of the City of Hartford a year within ten days after the first Tuesday in December.
- (2) No member of the Common Council shall be a commissioner.
- (3) The appointment of the members of the Commission shall be divided between the two major political parties.

Tendency Now to Have Salaried Officers as Plan Commissioners

There appears to be a tendency in other city plan commissions now to have both city officials and lay members. The reason is that both the immediate and the more far reaching points of view are represented. Any city plan must, according to planning experts, be sufficiently general to unify the city in its growth, sufficiently ideal to provide for progress, sufficiently prophetic to provide for the future, but the ideals must be capable of practical fulfillment and closely related to the city as it is. There appears to be no definite rule as to the best number. The number varies from three paid commissioners in New York City, to fifteen unpaid members in certain Pennsylvania cities. Cincinnati had ten members, of which three were salaried officials. During the last year this has been changed to five citizen members, a council member, and the City Manager. Topeka, Kansas has nine citizen members and five non-voting city officials. Schenectady, New York has nine members of which four are city officials; Rochester and Buffalo, New York have five member boards composed of three non-office holders appointed for three year terms, and two other city officials whose terms end with the term of the Mayor selecting them. Hartford might give some thought to having some salaried officials as members of its present City Plan Commission. It would be suggested that the Mayor be free to name these members for three year terms as individuals, and not because they hold designated city offices. Perhaps the membership could be increased to nine members for the Commission on the City

Plan. The suggestion also is made that no more than four members could be members holding other positions in the city government. This would prevent the City Plan Commission from being all city officials.

The plea is made that the composition be increased at once. With a larger Commission here, the Planners could consider breaking down its work into various committees. Cities like Schenectady, New York and Topeka, Kansas have used this procedure to advantage in getting the planners together for special operations. It would be especially advantageous to set up a special committee now to work out the details for the revision of the zoning ordinance. Other committees might be on Regional Planning, Traffic and Thoroughfare, and Publicity.

Full-Time Staff is Badly Needed

Eventually, the present Commission on the City Plan will have to decide whether or not city planning here is a full-time job for a planning staff. Even with the proposed powers, the Hartford planning agency can not be an effective force. This point has already been brought to the Commission's attention by the Housing Authority's recent report. The function of a planning commission is to reflect the point of view of the citizen, or office holder. These commissioners can only spend part of their time from regular occupations to consider these planning matters. This commission should not have to function in lieu of the technical planner, either in respect to a subdivision plat, or to a larger planning consideration. Like any other staff agency, it should have the personnel to advise it. It has not been recognized as an essential function in the administrative affairs of the city for there has never been any full-time executive direction of its affairs.

It is true that the City Engineer, as secretary to the Hartford Plan Commission has been, from its beginning, the chief consultant. The City Engineer has a well organized staff; and he has been the adviser to not only the Plan Commission but to the other departments of the city. This office has served as the coordinator on all city matters concerning the new dikes, state highway and bridge. It would not be suitable to make the City Engineer the head of the staff of the Planning Commission because this officer is already overburdened in the engineering matters arising in the many fields under his jurisdiction. On the other hand, the Planning staff and the office of the City Engineer should not be separate. If they are separate there will be constant clashing as to the functions of the two bodies. If the City Engineer was on the City Plan Commission he still could continue as an expert engineering adviser.

Since 1938 the Commission has hired a part-time consultant. This man acts more as a commissioner than a technician. He is hired now at a salary of \$1,200.00 a year, at the Commission's discretion. He has contributed a great deal to the Commission, however, since his authority is negative and his duties more of matters he considers important, he has no fixed responsibility.

Because of the frequent disagreements with the City Engineer there is little integration of ideas between these two men. In many ways, this supervisor has been a victim of circumstantial evidence. In 1937 there was some consideration for the Plan Commission to hire an executive-secretary. The part-time supervisor put in his bid for the job. At this same time the City Engineer expressed his opinion that the Engineering Department was the agency that should be given the funds. It was only natural that both consultants should feel as they did. This problem again presented itself when the Plan Commission was considering the hiring of an expert to revise zoning, and other plans, just recently.

Plan Commission to Hire Part-Time Expert

At present, the Commission is now faced with various methods of revising its plans. If it had hired a professional planner to do the entire job independently, or with limited consultation with the Commission, the cost would have been unpredictable since it would depend upon the extent of the plan made. In many respects this was the way used for the first city plan - hiring of Carrère and Hastings in 1909 to make an independent study. It was thus decided by the present Plan Commission that the better way was to only hire an expert on a part-time basis, while the bulk of the work would be done by the Engineering Department staff. In this way the Commission can utilize the vast amount of data which has been accumulated over a period of years by the previous commissions. It is more a bringing up-to-date the present maps and plans. At the same time, the assistance of the qualified hired planner gives the finished product some authority and special advice that might not be the case if the work was done without outside aid.

The Engineering Department has set aside \$5,000.00 of its budget for special work for these revisions of zoning and other planning problems. The Plan Commission also has \$6,000.00 earmarked for this same purpose which will be for the expenses of the professional planner. This report must be made to be put to use, and not to be the third plan to be "shelved."

City Planning and Public Opinion

Whether or not as tax payers we like it, the City of Hartford is going to continue to spend large sums of money for public work projects through the various existing administrative authorities, out of city taxes. The capital budget that is being set up is a matter of good financing. Hartford should have set up one before this year; for equally important is the fact that the city should have a program for these capital expenditures the same as it has a budget for current operating expenses. This will be more important in the post-war planning period when it comes. Beyond the mere quantity of plans necessary to feed the program mill, is the question of quality of projects, of their inherent needfulness and timeliness. This future program should be the duty of the Plan Commission. In the absence of a comprehensive city plan showing every needed improvement in physical and service relationship to all others, the city can not program its

public works for even one year, much less five or ten years, with any assurance that first things are placed first or with any certainty that some vitally needed projects are not being crowded out by others of less immediacy.

This seems like a very opportune time for the Plan Commission to re-adjust its position in the city structure. The present planning agency should now "sell" its future program to the citizens of Hartford. It must make the average citizen see the economy in planning in general, and that every specific question of the city's physical growth should be decided from the standpoint of city planning. It must make an all-out effort to make the citizen understand planning purposes so that he will demand its use. At present, the public understanding of city planning is, to a large extent, negative in nature. The Commission has assumed a "rubber stamp" value to the other Boards. There must be a change of conception of city planning from everybody's business to a matter for specialization.

The general trend of development in the past for the various Hartford units, in spite of the presence of the Plan Commission, has followed mostly the obvious and most simple line of extension irrespective of any possible correlation among the other features. The recent agreements on the construction of dikes, bridge, and the highway are the exception. The present Commission on the City Plan should include in its immediate program the preparation of a tentatively approved city plan. The plan, sometimes called a "master key" will serve as the basis for the analysis of any new improvement suggested for the attention of the Plan Commission. From time to time the plan will be modified and improved as added facts become available. Any plan worthy of due consideration must be subject to change, and a plan accepted on this basis will, in time, become a true scale for the measurement of new propositions incident to the ultimate betterment and welfare of the inhabitants of Hartford.

Such a plan can't be matured on order. The important objective of the present planning agency should be to get this program under way, as suggested. The Commission would benefit if more "ex-officio" representatives of the city government were added to their organization. It would also benefit if its powers and duties were worded in the manner used in Cincinnati, Ohio. For these laws bestow authority on no one outside the Planning Commission, and this body must be asked for a report on any proposed improvement before it is undertaken. However, if the City Council does not follow the advice of the Commission, a three-fourths (it is two-thirds in Cincinnati, but here the Council has nine members) vote of the Hartford Council (15 out of 20) should be required to disregard or over-rule it. In this way, Hartford can look forward to establishing a "master key plan" even if this term is not used in the State statute. These proposed extensive powers, if adopted, would lead to the recognition of city planning as a highly specialized and technical matter, since it would make Hartford planning continuous, positive, aggressive, and comprehensive (the ultimate intention for any good city planning agency). However, if the city plan is to be worth anything, it needs not only the concentrated effort of the

Plan Commission but also the best technical advice. The average planning agency meeting once a month has neither the time nor the experience to render sound and intelligent opinions unless it is backed up by carefully worked out studies. It needs full-time executive direction. It needs an executive-secretary just as much as other staff agencies, as the Traffic Commission. Because the Planning Commission, to be effective, must be an intelligent co-relating agency; anything having a bearing on the city plan will be referred to it. Besides that, it will have to have detailed plans, and not just general suggestions to offer the city administration. It would be false economy for the city not to have a capable, full-time staff for the planning work. This report has tried to stress that the city planning division should be a vital necessity of the city government.

In the future, improvements should be planned as the result of careful surveys and detailed analyses, and after a full consideration of all contributory factors bearing on the case. The City of Hartford in 1907, when the Commission on the City Plan was established, had large undeveloped areas. City planning for the first 20 years was the application of farsighted methods of control and development through the provision of new arteries, of methods of districting or zoning, of allocations of areas for parks, school sites, playgrounds, etc. City planners thought of the future population of the city as two or three times its present numbers, and some of the plans advanced were developed with that hope in mind. New improvements were undertaken on faith, or only when the need had become so pressing that economic losses were acutely felt. However, in the future, city planning will be of a different type -- that of the correction. However, with the new powers suggested, the destinies of future city planning programs are in the hands of the Commission on City Plan. Possibly this title might be changed to the City Planning Commission so that the inference would not be on the word city plan. Both this phrase and the newer expression, "master plan," imply some kind of a dated map. As long as the plan agency is given this power indirectly, the same idea will be accomplished. It is hoped that this present agency will arouse and cultivate public interest in their work. Repeatedly throughout this report, the City of Hartford has been spoken of as a living thing which depends on all of its parts working together. Let us hope that the review of the activities of the Hartford Plan Commission for the next 35 years will show the city's many divisions as co-partners in a common task -- better city planning.