

1911

Bangor City Plan: The Burned District

Warren H. Manning

Follow this and additional works at: https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books_pubs

Recommended Citation

Manning, Warren H., "Bangor City Plan: The Burned District" (1911). *Books and Publications*. 191.
https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books_pubs/191

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections at Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. It has been accepted for inclusion in Books and Publications by an authorized administrator of Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. For more information, please contact ccoombs@bpl.lib.me.us.

BANGOR CITY PLAN

THE BURNED DISTRICT

BY

WARREN H. MANNING, Boston, Mass.

AND

THE CIVIC IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

BANGOR, MAINE

P. H. COOMBS, Chairman

J. P. FRAWLEY, Treasurer

F. E. BRAGG, Secretary



To Hon. Charles W. Mullen, Mayor,
and Citizens of Bangor

Your Committee on Civic Improvement, appointed by the Mayor in accordance with a vote of the citizens of Bangor at a mass meeting held May 2, 1911, begs to submit the following report: This report combines the study which your Committee has made, and that made by Mr. Warren H. Manning, Landscape Designer, of Boston, who was retained by your Committee to advise them in the work.

Realizing the need of haste on account of our short building season, your Committee has confined its study entirely to the burned district, but hopes to be able to make reports on the outlying territory from time to time in the near future.

We have tried in this report to recommend only what we considered absolutely necessary to be done at the present time by the City, looking to the future. While we have suggested plans to beautify the City, we have, at the same time tried to make no recommendations that would not in the near future repay the City many fold for the immediate outlay recommended.

Any location for a central fire station, other than that suggested in our report, would not in any way conflict with our recommendations for civic improvement, provided it was not placed on property which we have suggested for other purposes.

We most earnestly request that no one part of our recommendations be condemned until you have made a study of the entire plan, and realize the importance of each particular suggestion in relation to the whole plan.

WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT IMMEDIATELY NECESSARY FOR THE CITY TO PURCHASE ANY OTHER PROPERTY, RECOMMENDED IN OUR REPORT, THAN THAT LOCATED IN THE BURNED DISTRICT.

WE DO CONSIDER IT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT ACTION BE TAKEN AT ONCE TO CONTROL SUCH PROPERTY AS MAY BE NECESSARY IN THE BURNED DISTRICT, AS SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY WILL PROBABLY NEVER COME AGAIN.

We do not suggest any expenditures in this burned district beyond the City's present legal financial ability, and the Mayor will announce a plan to take care of this expenditure if the City adopts our recommendations.

P. H. COOMBS
J. P. FRAWLEY
F. C. BRAGG

Committee on Civic Improvement.

BANGOR CITY PLAN

THE BURNED DISTRICT

May 22, 1911.

RADIAL STREETS and STREET TERMINALS give Bangor its greatest *city plan* distinction.

The PENOBSCOT and KENDUSKEAG Valleys are the city's greatest NATURAL features.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) *Continue* Main Street over *Central* Street and a *new street* on easy grades through the burned district to Market Street.

(2) *Transfer car lines* from Center and Cumberland Streets to the westerly side of this *new Main Street*.

(3) *Narrow* the steep part of *Center Street* and *discontinue Prospect Street*.

(4) *Bridge the Kenduskeag* from Washington Street through the burned district to Independent Street or to Water Street to give a direct passage to the station from the west side and relieve congestion on Exchange Street and State Street bridge.

(5) Establish a *dam* at the new bridge to hold water at a fixed level in a Kenduskeag Basin, to be held for circulation of air to city center, fire protection and recreation.

(6) *Acquire* the old Post Office and Norembege Hall sites for Norembege Mall, a *public resting* and walking place, and to protect against *fire spread*.

(7) *Establish* for *business frontage* and *waterside promenade* on the *Kenduskeag Basin*, a forty foot passage on the east, and a twenty foot walk on the west bank from the railroad to Franklin Street.

(8) *Acquire* all land between county and city property on the westerly side of Franklin Street, and straighten the easterly side of the street.

(9) *Establish Library* and *High School* north of Harlow Street, reserving the area between Harlow, Franklin, and the Kenduskeag for *Playgrounds* and *future school extension*.

(10) *Establish the Fire Station* at its old site or at the corner of Somerset and Park Streets.

The land acquirements recommended above are only such as seem absolutely essential to meet future needs in a conservative estimate of the city's growth and welfare.

THE LOCATION AND PLAN OF BANGOR

This city lies at the only point so near the center of Maine to which laden ships can come direct from the sea. It is the intersecting, the exchange point of important railroad lines.

The plan of no American city is better devised for a central distributing point than is that of Bangor. From or near its business center, sixteen roads lead to a state wide territory in all directions.

The weak point in this wheel of roads is at the hub which was planned to meet the conditions of a hundred years ago.

It is certain that the fertile outlying territory will increase its output.

It is certain that auto vehicles will come into general use that can come to the city in a day from 60 miles away more easily and as quickly as can a horse-drawn vehicle with less than half the load from 20 miles. In the 20 mile radius are 804,236 acres; in the 60 mile radius 7,238,246 acres.

These traffic streams will soon so congest the present city center as to compel its removal and the depreciation of values or the broadening of streets at great cost. Any resident who can remember Bangor street conditions fifty or even twenty-five years ago, can give testimony as to this.

Every recommendation that is made herein will lead to an immediate increase in values or to the saving of heavy future expense.

If the recommendations are adopted and worked out well *in detail*, the city will gain a reputation for progressiveness that will draw new business enterprises. The perfection of detail will add the kind of attractiveness to the city that will lead those who have acquired a competence elsewhere and want to pass their days in a beautiful city with musical and educational advantages, to settle in Bangor. Boston, Minneapolis, Detroit, Chicago, Harrisburg, Pa., and Mad-

ison, Wis., and other cities, have found it pays to spend money for public recreation facilities and for pleasure drives alone. These recommendations for Bangor couple the recreation facilities with commercial advancement of the city's centre. To secure perfection in detail, you must have the highest skill in designers, the kind of skill that was secured by your ancestors, as is made evident by the older churches and houses, and by Broadway Mall. You cannot afford to do less.

Unless Bangor wakes up to its opportunities, it will be commonplace as a whole in spite of its many attractive incidents, except for the distinctions that nature has given. If these distinctions are not brought into your city's plan attractively and conveniently, they will help you little. If they are, you can make your city one of the most beautiful in the world, and this well within your means.

Act liberally as you may in the present emergency, you will still fall short of meeting future, even near future needs. You have made Bangor well known as a musical center. Why not make it better known as a center of city and country beauty and of good city planning?

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) *Continue* Main Street over *Central* Street and a *new street* on easy grades through the burned district to Market Street.

Main Street gives access on an easy grade to the westerly section of the city, and on this street are the highest values and rentals. On the easterly side there are on each principal street, sections near the city with over ten per cent grades over which teamsters can only draw about half the load they can on Main Street to the west.

It is proposed to extend Main Street from West Market Square on an easy grade to Market Street by broadening Central Street and carrying a new street of the same width and on a five per cent grade from Center Street and Harlow Street through the burned district to Market Street. From Market Street existing streets can be broadened and a few extensions made that will properly connect to the city center on easy grades, all the big radial roads in the northeast, north, and northwest city segments.

Merging Central Street into Main Street, will extend Main Street values and rentals, and obliterate a name that is confused with Center Street and Center Street Avenue.

(2) *Transfer car lines from Center and Cumberland Streets to the westerly side of this new Main Street.*

This transfer will cut out the portions of two lines that are as dangerous as any in the city on account of steep and icy slopes and bad curves, especially from Cumberland into Harlow Street where there have been accidents in spite of special guards and precautions on the part of the company. It will cut out the Cumberland-Center Street car crossing. It will save time to all citizens using the lines, and give them a safe and attractive approach to the city by the Library and proposed High School lot.

It will remove many cars from Harlow Street where it passes between the school-library and playground lots, thus making it less dangerous to children.

It is recommended that the car tracks be placed on the westerly side of the new Main Street from East Market Square to Market Street to give a freer carriage way on the easterly side where business blocks may be. On the south side here will be the open ground of school and library lots.

(3) *Narrow the steep part of Center Street and discontinue Prospect Street.*

The new Main Street and existing Park Street will give frontage to lots on the steep part of Center Street, and it may well be narrowed to serve the backs of lots and give direct passage to fire apparatus if it be at Park and Somerset Streets. The new street will give frontage that will permit the discontinuance of Prospect Street which is on an impracticable grade.

(4) *Bridge the Kenduskeag from Washington Street through the burned district to Independent Street or to Water Street to give a direct passage to the station from the West side and relieve congestion on Exchange Street and State Street bridge.*

The city has been unfair to itself in not providing a bridge at this point. The legitimate growth of the west side has been held back and the business of every merchant and customer in the business center has been interfered with by congestion.

The takings for this bridge and its connecting street should be so made that there will be the same full view of the station in looking from either Haymarket or Pickering Squares that there now is from Haymarket Square through Independent Street over the area opened up by the fire. If the opening is at Water Street, the station will also be seen from Main Street and there will be an opportunity to form a fine terminal opposite Water on Main Street to be seen from the railroad station. The importance of such street terminals in Bangor's city plan will be particularly referred to later.

(5) Establish a *dam* at the new bridge to hold water at a fixed level in a Kenduskeag Basin, to be held for circulation of air to city center, fire protection and recreation.

This, of course, must be done without destroying water powers up stream, for the city plan should conserve, not destroy its business opportunities.

No American city can show a more attractive water basin in the heart of its business district or a more serviceable one than would thus be established with its border promenade, its attractive store frontages hereafter recommended. The basin is quite large enough for many competitive water and ice sports. With the water side promenades, with store and roof balconies that should be provided in the construction of buildings, there would be a place for a multitude of spectators. Festivals could be established here to draw such crowds as go to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras. You have in the summer travel to Maine resorts, a liberal and appreciative audience that could be drawn upon.

You should consider, too, the development of river shore homes that are beginning with the summer camp and will end in the all the year home as elsewhere. From such homes, motor boats for water or for ice may give access from the river side home over its surface up to this business center harbor. Ways can be made in the dam to lock or draw the boats in at small cost. Similar basins

have been made on the Mystic River at Medford, Mass., and on a larger scale in the Charles River Basin between Boston and Cambridge, and in Germany in the Alster basin at Hamburg. Visitors to Venice will recognize the beauty of such water basins.

(6) *Acquire* the old Post Office and Norembega Hall sites for Norembega Mall, a *public resting* and walking place and to protect against *fire* spread.

This is regarded as very important, for the artificial island here narrows the stream channel and tends to dam up flood water and force it on to business property. The broadening of the channels is recommended in the next paragraph. With this in the city's possession, it opens the way for further channel broadening or for street extension in the future at reasonable cost. Until such an emergency arises, it will be of great value as a resting place and agreeable passage in the heart of the city. Remember that for a large share of your people whom come and go to business daily, this water basin view will be the most refreshing incident of the day. Bear in mind, too, that the air drawing through this Kenduskeag Basin from the river valley will make it one of the most refreshing spots in the city on hot days. It is this kind of beauty that will represent dollar values to the city.

(7) *Establish* for *business frontage* and *waterside promenade* on the *Kenduskeag Basin*, a forty foot passage on the east, and a twenty foot walk on the west bank from the railroad to Franklin Street.

A road and two walks aggregating forty feet on the easterly bank and a twenty foot walk on the westerly bank of the stream, are provided from Franklin Street to the railroad to give access to new store frontages facing the stream and a promenade along all the water's edge. This would include the widening of the narrow water passages on either side of the Post Office and Norembega Hall sites, and a part of the sidewalk promenades would overhang the water.

In the construction of water side retaining walls in the place of the present unsightly log cribwork on the lines proposed, they should

be brought up to approximately the grade of Exchange and Broad Streets.

There will be an opportunity in the construction of the shore walks and the new store frontages to secure an architectural distinction along this water passage at low cost to each individual if each will continue a string course at the same height and of the same material, and establish at regular intervals like groups of pilasters or light posts at entrances or on wall spaces throughout the length of either side from street to street. Other details of the building, above and below the string course, must meet the special requirements of each owner. Supplementing such unifying architectural features would be the lines of lights, and vines growing in pockets of soil trained to the buildings at regular intervals in such a way as to give an attractive drapery of foliage without interfering with the light of store windows.

(8) Acquire all land between county and city property on the westerly side of Franklin Street, and straighten the easterly side of the street.

It is important that this land be acquired to protect the interest of the city and the county. Either administration, and especially the city, is certain to need room for future buildings near the City Hall. Furthermore, the view of the City Hall tower down the Kenduskeag, which is destined to be the most important and attractive pleasure walk and drive passage into the country from the city, will be cut off. This property, extending as it does to the water's edge, cuts off the opportunity to establish such a walk and drive along the stream at the water's edge from Franklin Street to connect with the proposed store frontage walk and road along the Kenduskeag.

It is necessary, too, if adequate room be provided for a playground and future school center, to acquire the strips from the Kenduskeag to Harlow Street. Here, again, the acquirement of this land is necessary to provide for walk or drive along the Stream shore and direct access from the playground lot to the fixed level water basin that would be established by a dam. This water basin is quite as essential a feature of a fully equipped playground as will be the land.

The crooked easterly side of Franklin Street should be made to coincide with the front of blocks now standing at Hammond Street, to where the new line intersects the line extending south from Harlow Street, and at this intersection point a line should pass at right angles with the one from Harlow Street to the Kenduskeag shore passage. This last line will give an opportunity to broaden the Kenduskeag at a narrow point when it may be necessary to rebuild the bridge.

(9) *Establish Library and High School north of Harlow Street, reserving the area between Harlow, Franklin and the Kenduskeag for playgrounds and future school extension.*

A library and school site which should include all the triangle between Spring Street, the Main Street extension, and Harlow Street, will be an ideal one. With the playground opening to the Kenduskeag and the promenades along its borders through the business center to the river, it will be very accessible and it will be one side of a civic center of which the City Hall and County buildings will form the opposite side.

It is important in the study of library and high school that they harmonize architecturally; that they have the same set back from Harlow Street, not less than 50 ft., and that they have about the same base line. The school should be about 150 ft. from the corner of the new Main Street and Harlow Street, and the buildings should be considered and designed with reference to possible future extensions on the westerly and southerly side of the proposed playground. These extensions should be so made that the diagonal view to and from library and City Hall shall not be blocked as these are regarded as the civic center terminals. It would be desirable if such a man as Professor Chandler could act in a consulting capacity regarding such architectural problems.

The inter-relation between library and schools for mental and moral training, and playgrounds for physical training, is coming to be so intimate that they ought to be closely associated. In Chicago, New York, and other cities, the libraries supply schools and playgrounds with books and some times instructors. A part of the playgrounds are directed by the school authorities and are coming

to be more and more a part of their equipment. There is also closer co-operation between park, school, library and museum authorities, the museum in New York, for example, supplying schools with natural history collections for study.

In recommending the acquirement of land here, the probability of a school center is considered. To such a center pupils will be brought from all parts of the city by trolley as they are now brought by vehicles to school centers in many of the country districts of the middle west. The obvious advantages of less cost and better results in buildings, equipment, oversight, maintenance, will lead to this centralizing of school buildings. In Boston a move to have such a school center at the public parks is under consideration, and the street railway authorities are considering the question of transporting students thereto. The logical extension of such a center would be up the easterly bank of the Kenduskeag along Harlow Street, and on the opposite side of the Stream on the upper level in place of the City Barns to serve this upland district; the City Barns to go to some less cramped quarters than they now occupy, perhaps at the City Farm.

(10) *Establish the Fire Station* at its old site or at the corner of Somerset and Park Streets.

Land on East Market Square is so valuable for commerce that the inclusion of non-taxable property should be avoided if practicable.

A fire station on a crowded city square with a level or uphill start from the house and several sharp corners to turn into the business district, has its disadvantages.

It would be well to consider a site from which the run will be down hill direct to the business center, such as is offered at the corner of Somerset and Park Streets.

TAX FREE LANDS

Tax free land that is specially well fitted for business purposes should be used for such purposes. Therefore, if church lots in the business center can be made business property, it will be for the city's interest. Park land holdings that are not of service to the

public may properly be added to business property, provided that the money secured therefrom is used for the acquirement of land or other public conveniences that will be of greater permanent service to the public.

Reserved spaces in the city business center should be in the nature of squares to primarily facilitate the movement of vehicles, the recreation service to be a secondary consideration.

In the plan outlined, the Kenduskeag Valley will provide adequately for the city's central open air recreation space. Here conditions do not permit the ready establishment of business. Here an acre of shore controls several acres of open water.

Public grounds extensions should go up this valley to include the splendid wooded bluffs with connections to such an existing reservation as Summit Park, or up such a valley as passes through the Prentice Estate to Broadway Park. Such reservations in residential sections will add enough to the value of adjacent property that is suitable for buildings to justify owners in making a gift of the lands more suitable for reservations than for buildings. Furthermore, it should be remembered that gifts of land will be a more lasting memorial than any artificial structures can be, and that land let alone grows in beauty each year.

THE CITY PLAN

This plan of the burned district should lead to a carefully studied city plan in which will be considered

Water side roads and reservations, not only up the Kenduskeag, but up and down the Penobscot.

Up the river at places, the road forms a fine riverside drive. The railroad is at the shore, then the electric road, then the highway overlooking the trains which are in places below its level. In other places the highway may be carried directly along the shore, thus giving the public direct access to the water. The opposite wooded bluffs should also be secured for public reservations, the owners placing such land before it is stripped, in the hands of a board of trustees who would hold it for the benefit of the public. Very little, if any, expense is required in the holding of such reservations. It is of equal, if not greater importance, that such riverside drives and reservations be extended along shore down river, for it is here

that the greatest number of summer camps is being established, and they are always the forerunner of all the year homes as soon as the transportation facilities which they invite are established.

STREET TERMINALS

One of Bangor's greatest city plan distinctions is the advantage offered by its street terminals, also the opportunities that its irregular street plan gives for others.

Notable terminals are

The station tower through Exchange Street.

The station as opened to view by the fire from Haymarket Square through Independent Street.

The City Hall tower up Hammond Street with the Hammond Street church spire beyond.

The City Hall and tower from Harlow Street up Franklin Street.

The Baptist Church at the head of Cross Street as seen from Main Street.

The very notable Broadway Mall with Copeland Hill beyond Brewer as its visual terminus.

The stand pipe, one of Bangor's most distinctive features which forms a terminus to several streets and is a conspicuous object from all the country around and from which is a notable panorama of city and country.

There are great opportunities in the rebuilding of the city to design for the lots that terminate the street vistas, buildings that have some architectural feature that will be effective at a distance as one approaches it rapidly on car or auto through the street. This in general means simple wall spaces with such features as columned or pilastered porticos at least two stories high, or a tall and graceful tower. Little decorative details spotted all over or at the cornice of a building will count for little on such sites.

The city streets, as attractive as they are with the fine old trees, can be greatly improved. These trees have been well cared for and trimmed. It would be desirable to have a street tree plan as a part of the City Plan, upon which existing trees and their conditions are indicated, as well as proposed new trees. In such a plan, however, the Elm and Maple should not be exclusively used, for a

fatal enemy will ruin the beauty of the city, as Cambridge, Mass., and its Harvard yard are now ruined by the action of the leopard moth borers following elm beetle and then brown tail larva. The brown tail will soon be at Bangor. One kind of tree should be confined to one street, but there are many streets and many varieties that will be suitable.

Streets can also be given distinction by the co-operative use of flowering shrubs and vines on private estates. One can be made a Lilac street, another Crimson Rambler Rose, another Hydrangea, etc.

Such work organized by a central committee that will secure the united action of all city associations, can be executed under their direction by helping each individual owner to do his part at small cost.

STREET GRADES

It is now practicable in all the burned district to establish more uniform and better street grades, and this will need to be done before the construction of buildings is undertaken, for architects and builders must know finished grade lines before they can plan and build. It would probably be advisable to increase the height of Center and Franklin Street bridges to keep them above flood level, and also help grades on either side.

SEWERS

At this time, too, sewer extensions and enlargements should be considered, for there must ultimately be an intercepting sewer on each side of the Kenduskeag.

This report represents the views of your committee and the writer, for without the knowledge of local conditions and the valuable suggestions made by the committee in our conference, this report could not have been made an adequate one.

It must not be assumed that the work of your committee is completed with the presentation of this report. It is only begun. No business man quits after fixing upon the general policies of under-

takings. The success of these policies depends absolutely upon the working out of the details. One of the most important of these details is a complete assessors and contour plan which the city has never had. I must say personally that the absence of such a plan, both in this study and in a previous study of the library site, delayed and hampered the presentation of a report, although your city engineer gave me full access to his data and the heartiest co-operation.

I want to say decidedly, and this without the instruction of the committee, that your city engineer at this time ought to be given instantly ample funds and assistance. If at this period he should not be able to put his knowledge on permanent record before ruins are cleared, the expense of making up records at a later date and the litigation and delays that would grow out of incomplete records, would cost citizens and the city an extravagant sum as compared with the cost of the work done now under Mr. Coombs' personal direction.

Respectfully submitted,

WARREN H. MANNING.

To the Civic Improvement Committee,
Bangor, Maine.

P. H. COOMBS, C. E., CHAIRMAN.

J. P. FRAWLEY, TREASURER.

F. E. BRAGG, SECRETARY.

For Reference

Not to be taken

from this list