POST-WAR PLANNING OF CITIES

October 12, 1943
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The great total war in which we are engaged has now almost stopped the development of our cities. It has given us a period to stop and think, to take an inventory, to see where our cities are, and, most important of all, to chart a course for the future. Cities live for many decades, some for many centuries. This war will be no more than an incident in the lives of our cities unless we use the unparalleled opportunity it has given us to prepare for the future confidently, aggressively, and with the broadest vision of which we are capable. And this must be far more than a list of projects upon which the Federal Government can launch another WPA program.

We must first determine the objective of our planning. Webster defines planning as "a proposed method of action or procedure." It is the instrument by means of which we get somewhere. Consequently, before we can discuss the "planning," we must carefully specify the objective. What kind of a city do we want to build? What are we to plan for the post-war period?

The objective of planning is the construction of a good city. Stated in the most simple terms, I believe that the objective of our post-war planning must be the construction of good cities. By a good city I mean:
(1) A city in which all the great scientific and technical advances of our civilization, advances in everything from building construction to mosquito control, are used to the fullest extent for the benefit of every citizen;

(2) A city that is well arranged upon its site, with its residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and its transportation channels, all harmoniously inter-related;

(3) A city in which business and industry can be conducted expeditiously, pleasantly, and profitably;

(4) A city with good residential neighborhoods for everyone—neighborhoods designed for the raising of fine citizens, neighborhoods that are spacious, attractive, private, safe and stable—neighborhoods with plenty of park area and large school grounds;

(5) A city so efficiently disposed that the essential municipal services and facilities can be provided at a minimum tax cost.

The city of today

Assuming that this is what we all want, what of the city of today? How does it stack up against our objective?

The major features of the average American city of today are about as follows:

The center of the typical city is the business district, a congested and crowded area, where values are less, in many cases, than they were two decades ago. Surrounding
these are the slums, areas of rundown buildings and poor living conditions, the bottomless hole down which we pour so much municipal revenue and receive too little return. Even more serious than the slums is the larger area of residential property on the down grade that surrounds them. This is the widely discussed "blighted area." It will all be a slum area soon if our palliatives for it never go beyond the discussion stage. Beyond the blight lie the newer residential areas. We find some of them far out into the country in the form of scattered subdivisions and scattered individual homes. Many of these outlying areas lack even the minimum public services usually deemed essential, such as street paving, sewers, and water, and fire and police protection. Some of them are areas of shacks—the rural slums. Also in the outlying areas are the tremendous war industries that have given the city an entirely new pattern of employment location. Twining through all this are the transportation channels—the railroads and the highways, often interfering with each other, too often congested, inadequate, or poorly located with respect to adjoining property uses. Scattered along the main highways are almost all the newer commercial enterprises. Along the railroads are found the major industrial areas.
I believe that this presents a generally fair picture of the existing city. A few moments ago I listed five attributes of a good city. How far are our present cities from possessing these?

Great scientific and technical advances of our civilization are not reflected in our cities. For example, look how far behind the development of the automobile is the development of the street system and parking areas the automobile requires! Look, too, at how far behind our building codes in large cities are in permitting full use of new construction methods.

There could be many improvements made in the arrangements of our cities on their sites. Our commercial and industrial areas and railroads are often badly and sometimes almost hopelessly intermingled with our residential areas. Our highways are seldom well designed, well arranged, or in the best location.

The present arrangement and development of our cities and the resulting congestion and delay handicap the most efficient operation of the businesses and industries that are the economic backbone of the cities.

The most deplorable feature of the present cities, however, are their residential neighborhoods. Far too many of them are poor places in which to live, and worse places in which to raise our future generations.
And, finally, our cities are disposed over the land in so haphazard and aimless a fashion, population is scattered so far out into the country, that it is most difficult to provide the entire urban community with sewer and water mains, police and fire protection, schools, and minimum standards of urban facilities, without either an exorbitant expense or a serious reduction in quality. Basic defects in the urban structure have caused increased taxes without compensating benefits.

Why are our cities such unsatisfactory places in which to live and work? It seems to me that there are three main reasons:

First: Our cities are the result of the most rapid period of urbanization known to recorded history. During this period of rapid growth, there was virtually no conscious direction of their pattern; large parts were poorly built and badly arranged. A legacy of square mile after square mile of developed city, functionally and structurally obsolete, wherein few citizens would prefer to live or work if it could be avoided, has been handed to us.

Second: Instead of doing something about these problems, we have run away from them. The automobile, the easiest form of individual transportation ever devised, was
given to us just in time to make this seem to be a particularly inviting solution. We are just beginning to fully understand the effects of the universal use of the automobile. It has brought many benefits. It has, for example, permitted a more open type of suburban living, added opportunities for recreation, and brought new forms of business and employment. It has also brought numerous problems, the greatest of which has been the marked shift of population from the central areas of cities to the suburbs. This has impaired the tax base of many large cities, and another decade of decentralization may bring economic paralysis to some of them. We have neither enlarged city limits sufficiently, nor developed new forms of local government corresponding with the enlarged area of urbanization.

Third: Our cities have been built by minorities. In too many cases, city policies and plans have been the footballs of well organized and vehement pressure groups seeking a special privilege. Too often these special privileges have resulted in detriment to the city. There has been too little consideration of the welfare of the community as a whole. Too little thought has been given to the large, dormant group of citizens who never appear before the city council with "an axe to grind." It gains us nothing to attempt to assign the responsibility for this condition. We have sacrificed community welfare for narrow individual or group interests.
Can we build good cities?

The war has made us all appreciate this democracy in which we live, despite its shortcomings. The fact that it has never produced a satisfactory city may be one of them. However, we need but to look abroad to see that the advantages far outweigh the faults, including this one. I believe, for one, however, that our democracy can build a city which is a good place in which to live and work for every citizen. With 55 per cent of our population living in cities, I believe that we are going to have to do so if our democracy is to survive. I believe, further, that it is the responsibility of those of us who are public officials to see that we start building good cities now.

What should be done? How can we build a good city?

We in Dallas have recently started a program that we believe to contain the answer. This program can be broken down into three steps, as follows:

We in Dallas felt that the first step that should be taken to build a good city was the preparation of a complete, realistic, up-to-date master city plan, embracing the entire urban area of the city, such a plan to be based upon a careful analysis of the present city structure, and not just another impractical, chimerical "pretty picture." We felt the preparation of this master city plan to be a most important business. We accordingly considered long
before determining how to proceed. We realized that we had a great reservoir of talent and experience among our city officials and in our city plan commission and its staff. We felt, though, that we all knew the city too well—that we "could not see the woods for the trees"—that we needed an outside person with wide experience in making city plans and with a more detached point of view. Consequently, we decided to have the new master plan made by our City Plan Commission and its staff, but to have this done under the direction of an "outside" consultant who had adequate knowledge and experience to help us do the best possible job. The preparation of this plan is now well under way, and this method of procedure is working very well.

You may be interested in the composition of our planning program and our master city plan.

There are three basic considerations that will be the foundation of our plan and the guide for all forms of development of every nature. These are:

1. The future population of the whole Dallas community.

2. The pattern of distribution of this urban population.

3. The pattern of land use.

To start the planning of Dallas we had to first make a determination of the future size of the city. We felt that we should look ahead for about 25 years in order to
avoid the extremes of visionary impracticability on the one hand, and shortsightedness and expediency on the other.

Looking ahead realistically we felt that we could not expect a population growth of much more than 50 per cent during the next 25 years. Qualified demographers have predicted a stable population of 155,000,000 for the nation, to be reached about 1970, an increase of only 15 per cent over our present national population. While our large cities, including Dallas, have grown faster than the nation as a whole, it would be senseless to plan the city on an expectation that the past gains of 100 to 200 per cent would be repeated. We must be realistic about the future size of our cities.

If Dallas is to grow about 50 per cent in the next 25 years, where should the new population be located in order to bring the greatest benefit to the community? The answer to this question is the second basic planning consideration. We have many vacant lots that could absorb much of this population. Shall we use these lots; shall we subdivide more suburban land; or shall we rebuild obsolete areas and gain back some of the population they have lost? If past practices are followed, there will be an enormous further development of suburban property after the war. This is not the way to build the best future city. We are already badly decentralized. It would be the antithesis of sound planning to greatly expand our urban
area. In order to have a well designed, well improved, and well balanced city, we will fix, in our master city plan, a reasonable maximum area of urbanization and a pattern of population density that will be in harmony with reasonable needs for growth and which will permit a good standard of living conditions. The automobile permits an 800 per cent expansion of our urban area; we can expect a population growth of but 50 per cent. We cannot support the large urban area that is possible with this small increase in population. A reasonable balance must be found.

With determinations made of the general size of the city and the land area that should be urbanized, the third basis of our master city plan will be the arrangement of land uses, chiefly residence, commerce, and industry, within the future urban area. This arrangement will become the basis of a new or revised zoning ordinance. We will allow plenty of room in our future urban area for all land uses. The problem will be to reserve the proper locations for each use so that each may have its optimum development without interference with the others.

Residential uses, particularly single-family homes, not only occupy the largest land area, but represent a major portion of the assessed value of any city. The design of the future pattern of land use and of new zoning regulations will give this fact full recognition in order
that our good residence areas may be fully protected, the rehabilitation of our blighted areas encouraged, and the rebuilding of our slums to attract the large sums of private money required for their complete redevelopment.

Following determination of the three basic planning considerations just outlined, our planning program will next turn its attention to the planning of the major physical facilities to serve the future city. There are five in number:

1. **Major streets**: To serve the future city we will plan a system of major streets giving access to our commercial and industrial areas and connections between our various residential neighborhoods. In making this plan we will concentrate on traffic circulation within our city—on parking areas and other measures to relieve downtown congestion, rather than expensive radial superhighways to siphon our population out of our central areas into the suburbs.

2. **Transportation**: This phase of the plan will analyze and propose improvements in our rail, water, and air transportation routes and terminals. Studies will be made of the abandonment of unnecessary railroads, and of grade separations. Of greatest importance in this part of the plan will be the provisions for air ports in sufficient size and number to enable Dallas to be a focal point in the coming air age.
3. **Local Transit:** This war, with its restrictions upon use of the automobile, has forced a wider recognition of the importance of our bus and street car systems. They have always been an important part of the city. But few people can afford to live far from transit service. The master city plan will contain a transit plan properly coordinated with the studies of population and land use. We expect the gradual realization of such a coordinated plan to be of great assistance in the building of a good city.

4. **Parks and Public Schools.** Parks and public schools not only provide for educational and recreational needs, the importance of which is now so universally recognized as to need no discussion, but are the focal points of much of our community and neighborhood life. Lack of open space in our older neighborhoods has been one cause of their depreciation. Our master city plan will provide for neighborhood parks and ample school grounds for all our residential areas, as well as for parkways and the larger parks on the outskirts.

5. **Public Buildings:** Plans for the future development of our public buildings comprise the fifth phase of the planning for physical facilities to serve the future city.
The second step in our program to build a good city is to follow the plan once it has been prepared, the mere preparation solving nothing. Studies of the city administrative policies and practices will be made as a part of the planning program. We will eventually adopt the plan in accordance with a sound legal procedure that will give it an official status and meaning to prevent its being easily ignored or overridden. We will harmonize city ordinances, including, of course, the zoning, and the control of new land subdivision, with the plan and its objectives.

As a part of the planning program we will also work out a capital expenditure program definitely scheduling the improvements to be made under the Master City Plan. In this program we will concentrate on those projects most needed to make the older, more central portions of the city better places in which to live and work.

As the third step in the building of a good city, we propose to rebuild the slums and to rehabilitate our blighted areas. There can be no end to decentralization, there can be no stable values in the entire urban area until the slums are rebuilt and made good places in which to live and raise children. The magnitude of this task and the multitude of problems it poses staggers the imagination. Here we can find plenty of "post-war projects."
Our blighted areas will receive equal attention. They can be salvaged with aggressive action. A major need here is psychological—the restoration of the property owners' confidence in these areas as home neighborhoods.

The exact policy and treatment these areas should receive will be determined in our planning program. As a part of this study, the present housing facilities and their major defects will be analyzed and the extent of our slum and blighted areas determined. The future residential area of Dallas will be divided into neighborhoods, and improvement plans studied on a neighborhood basis. From this study I am confident will come a concrete and definite program gradually to eliminate all slums and all blighted areas from Dallas.

Conclusion

I have attempted to describe the three basic steps by which, I believe, we will build a good city in Dallas. First, to make a real master city plan, a chart to follow. Second, to insure that all improvements, both public and private, follow this chart. Third, to rebuild the slums and rehabilitate the blighted residential areas. In other words, to bring up to standard those parts of the city now containing the poorer living conditions. Our master city plan will delineate our objective; our civic spirit—the enthusiasm, pride, and faith in our city, for which the people of Dallas are noted—will insure our attaining our objective.
Through a process and program such as the one here outlined, I believe that a good city can be built under our democracy. This can only be done, however, if there is a wide public knowledge, understanding, and support of the master city plan and the measures necessary for its realization. Recognizing this, we are taking all possible steps to encourage public participation in, and discussion of, the master city plan during its preparation.

We who live in cities pay but little attention to the small changes that take place from day to day. Even over a period of a year, they don't seem to amount to much. However, their sum total in a decade results in a startling change. If we could return after an absence of a century, we would be amazed at the transformation we would see. Taking the long view, our cities are not static; they are quite flexible. We can make them what we wish, regardless of what they now may be. It's up to us. We can go along as we have, allowing each change to fall pretty much where it pleases and as it pleases, regardless of the consequences, and end with chaos. Or we can guide and control each change in the city, harmonize it with the master city plan, and, in the end, with the expenditure of less money, find that we have built a good city.
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Assuming that this is what we all want, what of the city of today? How does it stack up against our objective? The major features of the average American city of today are about as follows:

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this are the slums, areas of rundown buildings and poor living conditions, the bottomless hole down which we pour so much municipal revenue and receive too little return. Even more serious than the slums is the larger area of residential property on the down grade that surrounds them. This is the widely discussed "blighted area." It will all be a slum area soon if our palliatives for it never go beyond the discussion stage. Beyond the blight lie the newer residential areas. We find some of them far out into the country in the form of scattered subdivisions and scattered individual homes. Many of these outlying areas lack even the minimum public services usually deemed essential, such as street paving, sewers, and water, and fire and police protection. Some of them are areas of shacks—the rural slums. Also in the outlying areas are the tremendous war industries that have given the city an entirely new pattern of employment location. Twining through all this are the transportation channels—the railroads and the highways, often interfering with each other, too often congested, inadequate, or poorly located with respect to adjoining property uses. Scattered along the main highways are almost all the newer commercial enterprises. Along the railroads are found the major industrial areas.
I believe that this presents a generally fair picture of the existing city. A few moments ago I listed five attributes of a good city. How far are our present cities from possessing these?

Great scientific and technical advances of our civilization are not reflected in our cities. For example, look how far behind the development of the automobile is the development of the street system and parking areas the automobile requires! Look, too, at how far behind our building codes in large cities are in permitting full use of new construction methods.

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The present arrangement and development of our cities and the resulting congestion and delay handicap the most efficient operation of the businesses and industries that are the economic backbone of the cities.

The most deplorable feature of the present cities, however, are their residential neighborhoods. Far too many of them are poor places in which to live, and worse places in which to raise our future generations.
And, finally, our cities are disposed over the land in so haphazard and aimless a fashion, population is scattered so far out into the country, that it is most difficult to provide the entire urban community with sewer and water mains, police and fire protection, schools, and minimum standards of urban facilities, without either an exorbitant expense or a serious reduction in quality. Basic defects in the urban structure have caused increased taxes without compensating benefits.

Why are our cities such unsatisfactory places in which to live and work? It seems to me that there are three main reasons:

First: Our cities are the result of the most rapid period of urbanization known to recorded history. During this period of rapid growth, there was virtually no conscious direction of their pattern; large parts were poorly built and badly arranged. A legacy of square mile after square mile of developed city, functionally and structurally obsolete, wherein few citizens would prefer to live or work if it could be avoided, has been handed to us.

Second: Instead of doing something about these problems, we have run away from them. The automobile, the easiest form of individual transportation ever devised, was
given to us just in time to make this seem to be a particularly inviting solution. We are just beginning to fully understand the effects of the universal use of the automobile. It has brought many benefits. It has, for example, permitted a more open type of suburban living, added opportunities for recreation, and brought new forms of business and employment. It has also brought numerous problems, the greatest of which has been the marked shift of population from the central areas of cities to the suburbs. This has impaired the tax base of many large cities, and another decade of decentralization may bring economic paralysis to some of them. We have neither enlarged city limits sufficiently, nor developed new forms of local government corresponding with the enlarged area of urbanization.

Third: Our cities have been built by minorities. In too many cases, city policies and plans have been the footballs of well organized and vehement pressure groups seeking a special privilege. Too often these special privileges have resulted in detriment to the city. There has been too little consideration of the welfare of the community as a whole. Too little thought has been given to the large, dormant group of citizens who never appear before the city council with "an axe to grind." It gains us nothing to attempt to assign the responsibility for this condition. We have sacrificed community welfare for narrow individual or group interests.
The war has made us all appreciate this democracy in which we live, despite its shortcomings. The fact that it has never produced a satisfactory city may be one of them. However, we need but to look abroad to see that the advantages far outweigh the faults, including this one. I believe, for one, however, that our democracy can build a city which is a good place in which to live and work for every citizen. With 56 percent of our population living in cities, I believe that we are going to have to do so if our democracy is to survive. I believe, further, that it is the responsibility of those of us who are public officials to see that we start building good cities now.

What should be done? How can we build a good city?

We in Dallas have recently started a program that we believe to contain the answer. This program can be broken down into three steps, as follows:

A real city plan is the first step

We in Dallas felt that the first step that should be taken to build a good city was the preparation of a complete, realistic, up-to-date master city plan, embracing the entire urban area of the city, such a plan to be based upon a careful analysis of the present city structure, and not just another impractical, chimerical "pretty picture." We felt the preparation of this master city plan to be a most important business. We accordingly considered long
before determining how to proceed. We realized that we had a great reservoir of talent and experience among our city officials and in our city plan commission and its staff. We felt, though, that we all knew the city too well—that we "could not see the woods for the trees"—that we needed an outside person with wide experience in making city plans and with a more detached point of view. Consequently, we decided to have the new master plan made by our City Plan Commission and its staff, but to have this done under the direction of an "outside" consultant who had adequate knowledge and experience to help us do the best possible job. The preparation of this plan is now well under way, and this method of procedure is working very well.

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1. The future population of the whole Dallas community.

2. The pattern of distribution of this urban population.

3. The pattern of land use.

To start the planning of Dallas we had to first make a determination of the future size of the city. We felt that we should look ahead for about 25 years in order to
avoid the extremes of visionary impracticability on the one hand, and shortsightedness and expediency on the other.

Looking ahead realistically we felt that we could not expect a population growth of much more than 50 percent during the next 25 years. Qualified demographers have predicted a stable population of 155,000,000 for the nation, to be reached about 1970, an increase of only 15 percent over our present national population. While our large cities, including Dallas, have grown faster than the nation as a whole, it would be senseless to plan the city on an expectation that the past gains of 100 to 200 percent would be repeated. We must be realistic about the future size of our cities.

If Dallas is to grow about 50 percent in the next 25 years, where should the new population be located in order to bring the greatest benefit to the community? The answer to this question is the second basic planning consideration. We have many vacant lots that could absorb much of this population. Shall we use these lots; shall we subdivide more suburban land; or shall we rebuild obsolete areas and gain back some of the population they have lost? If past practices are followed, there will be an enormous further development of suburban property after the war. This is not the way to build the best future city. We are already badly decentralized. It would be the antithesis of sound planning to greatly expand our urban
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The third basis

With determinations made of the general size of the city and the land area that should be urbanized, the third basis of our master city plan will be the arrangement of land uses, chiefly residence, commerce, and industry, within the future urban area. This arrangement will become the basis of a new or revised zoning ordinance. We will allow plenty of room in our future urban area for all land uses. The problem will be to reserve the proper locations for each use so that each may have its optimum development without interference with the others.

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that our good residence areas may be fully protected, the rehabilitation of our blighted areas encouraged, and the rebuilding of our slums to attract the large sums of private money required for their complete redevelopment.

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The exact policy and treatment these areas should receive will be determined in our planning program. As a part of this study, the present housing facilities and their major defects will be analyzed and the extent of our slum and blighted areas determined. The future residential area of Dallas will be divided into neighborhoods, and improvement plans studied on a neighborhood basis. From this study I am confident will come a concrete and definite program gradually to eliminate all slums and all blighted areas from Dallas.

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