PLANNING AND ZONING IN MISSOURI

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The St. Louis Post-Dispatch on the evening of Thursday last week published an editorial based on an estimate that had been made of United States population growth between now and 1970. Parts of this editorial are of considerable significance here this morning and particularly the following paragraph:

"This table is instructive in several respects. It shows all too clearly that Missouri and all its neighbors - Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky - are expected to grow less than the national average. This is due in large part to the mechanization of farming with the result that relatively fewer men are needed in agriculture. But the metropolitan areas of these states do not need to fall behind in the national procession. New industrial development is being planned every day. Missouri and its neighbors should be obtaining their fair share. An excellent case can be made for using the resource and transportation facilities of the nation's heartland:"
Unfortunately, we can't make much of a case for the way that those of us live in these states, utilize these resources, and this is particularly true in Missouri. I think that we are all convinced that planning is required before we can have effective use of our resources or to use the words of Mr. Carl, the Director of the League, before "our cities are to be orderly progressive and good places to live, make a living and generally prosper".

On the whole, we do quite a lot of planning in our communities in Missouri. For example, there are active planning agencies in St. Louis, St. Louis County and Kansas City. Numerous St. Louis suburbs have very active planning programs. Comprehensive plans have been prepared and have been of considerable assistance in such cities as Kirksville, Mexico, Jefferson City, St. Charles, Springfield, St. Joseph and Cape Girardeau to mention just a few. All of us have seen so many examples of mistakes that could have been avoided; of unnecessary waste and duplication; of losses in amenity and property value because of lack of planning that we are quite convinced of the need and desirability of planning and, consequently, do our best to do as much planning as we can.
Let us look for a moment at the nature of the problem of bringing about a planned development of our communities. When carefully analyzed it becomes apparent that our cities are made up of many small parts. There really aren't very many big things such as expressways, or major airports. Instead there are many individual buildings, most of which are quite small; a very considerable mileage of streets, most of which are quite narrow and insignificant; and many individual sewers, water mains, culverts, etc. Now, the character of the city is determined by the manner in which we put these many small pieces and parts together. When fitted together with care, discernment and some good over-all design they can make a community that is pleasant, efficient and economical. Put together helter-skelter and haphazardly these same pieces make a city characterized by slums, blighted districts, congestion and tax problems.

These many small parts are changed and modified; some disappear and are replaced; others are added. They represent the efforts of countless individuals and numerous private and public corporations extending over a long period of time. What we really mean by planning is some method - or system - whereby we can guide and direct these small parts in such a manner that the over-all result is a good community. This can be done
by the development of a realistic and practical comprehensive city plan; a plan that is not an idle dream or a pretty picture, but a document that is based on the realities of the situation, a plan that is in such detail that it may be applied to the use of every parcel of ground in the city and applied today—not tomorrow—for it is important to keep in mind that we are building the city of the future today! This is our job and not the job of future generations.

A considerable amount of what can best be termed a "bedside manner" is needed in the preparation and carrying out of a city plan. Through public understanding, and through sufficient publicity by the simple power of persuasion the major part of a city plan may be realized. However, such measures, while essential, are not sufficient to do a real job. Our citizenry has never been known to "roll over and play dead" immediately upon the unveiling of a new city plan; nor are our public agencies, such as our school boards and particularly our state highway department, noted for their willingness to cooperate in carrying out a city plan. Unfortunately, if we are to build a good community we are going to have to have some legal powers to persuade both private individuals and the numerous public agencies that are engaged in building our cities to pay heed to and to follow some officially approved scheme or diagram for the most desirable pattern of community development. We are going to need the powers
of persuasion and the "bedside manner" but we are going
to need a big stick too!

This problem has long been recognized. In the early
1920's the Department of Commerce under the leadership
of Herbert Hoover developed model State laws for planning and
zoning. These laws set up methods whereby a city plan
could be prepared, officially adopted, used as the basis
for zoning and subdivision control measures and - most
important of all - become a legal instrument that must
be given careful regard by all public agencies developing
projects within a community. City planning laws with
this general intent have been enacted in approximately
forty states with around half of them following the
State Enabling Act quite closely.

It is well to admit, at this point, that the very
terms "city planning" and "city zoning" represent too
limited a concept. With the common use of the automobile
the line between the city and the country has just about
disappeared. In the future, it will be planning from
the regional, or county, level that will be the most
important so that, actually, to do a good job in community
planning we need laws that permit city planning and zoning in all cities, planning and zoning in all counties
and regional planning laws that will permit groups of
cities, or cities and counties to join together to develop
over-all regional plans.
This is a common problem in the entire United States and a common problem to the eight states that adjoin the State of Missouri. Missouri's record, however, in providing the tools to do an effective job of community planning is probably the poorest of any state in the union, and certainly poorer than any of the eight states that surround us.

In Missouri we have no city/enabling act; we have no regional planning act. The one attempt of the state to do regional planning—the St. Louis H-State Authority—has been constantly ham-strung by the refusal of the Missouri legislature to grant it either money or adequate power, although it has not received any such treatment from Illinois. A second attempt that hasn't gotten nearly as far, to set up a similar authority for the Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas area, received similar treatment at the hands of Missouri. Kansas approved the legislation—Missouri did not.

City zoning is permitted in Missouri. However, for some reason, if a county contains less than 10,000 people the cities within it are not allowed to enact zoning ordinances. County planning and zoning is permitted in six out of the 114 counties. The six counties in which it is allowed are those with the largest population. This is despite the experience of adjacent states such as Illinois and Wisconsin where great advantages have come from county zoning in completely rural counties.
Of the states adjacent to Missouri two of them — Oklahoma and Kentucky — have all of the five necessary enabling acts, i.e. city, county and regional planning and city and county zoning. Four of them — Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Tennessee — have four out of the five acts. Arkansas does a much better job than we do in giving cities adequate local power for planning. The only state that comes close to having as bad a record as we have is the State of Nebraska.

To add insult to injury, Missouri has not set up the necessary mechanics whereby Federal money may be made available for planning and zoning activities on either a regional level or for the city of less than 25,000 population. This has been done in most of the adjacent states, even the State of Nebraska, which is the only one with Missouri in being backward in these matters, has made the necessary provisions for its cities to obtain Federal planning grants.

It is hard to account for the miserable record of Missouri in these matters. It is quite likely that whatever this basic reason may be, it also accounts for the relatively slow growth of the state in relation to the nation as a whole, as has been commented upon several times in the press.
Good planning legislation along the lines that we need has been introduced to the Missouri legislature on numerous occasions. The last example was the recently adjourned session of the legislature which considered a city planning enabling act. This act, House Bill No. 383, did not even emerge from the House Committee. It was sponsored by a local committee of the American Institute of Planners but did not attract enough interest and support from the cities in the state. We also had difficulty in obtaining agreement of all those interested on just what the act contained. But this, however, was only the last of a long series of dismal failures in obtaining good planning legislation from the Missouri legislature.

If we want to be honest I don't know that we can really blame the members of the Missouri legislature for these failures. Frequently, legislation has been worked up at the last minute, introduced much too late, has not had the necessary agreement among the persons interested, and has not had enough attention from the standpoint of educating and interesting the local legislators. The cities of the state, as represented in the Municipal League should be working right now on legislation to correct these inadequacies. We should have agreed upon bills and be talking to our legislators about them. Yet we are not doing this.
Our basic need is good planning legislation for cities, counties and regions, and zoning legislation for cities and counties that will apply to every city and every county in the State of Missouri. This legislation, of course, is permissible. No city and no county needs to utilize it if it doesn't want to. The enactment of this legislation won't produce a miracle; we won't suddenly have greatly improved communities as a result. However, it would give us the tools with which we could make substantial community progress. Until we get these tools we cannot do a really effective planning job in Missouri.