THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND THE CONTRIBUTION
HE COULD MAKE TO THE MISSOURI HIGHWAY PROGRAM

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Statement of the Missouri Association of Landscape Architects to the Missouri State Highway Commission, Thursday, March 5, 1964

We represent the Missouri Association of Landscape Architects, an organization of approximately 50 professional landscape architects in the State of Missouri. Our membership includes virtually all landscape architects practicing professionally within the State.

What A Landscape Architect Is

Landscape Architecture is a fairly small profession, insofar as numbers are concerned. In June, however, our profession commences our Centennial Celebration. Our National Professional Society, The American Society of Landscape Architects, is only 65 years old with slightly over 2,000 members and associates. The landscape architect has been trained in several aspects of civil engineering, including surveying, drainage, roads, earthwork, and the like; in horticulture to gain a familiarity with plant materials; in architecture, and in design. The landscape architect is trained to fit land to human use and enjoyment through an application of fundamental principles originally emanating from these older design sciences and professions.

The landscape architect is much more than a "bush planter". Our basic tools or elements are: land, water, plants, and space. Unfortunately, the term "landscape architect" may be used by anyone. The proposal that we had for a landscape architects registration act in the last legislature did not pass. Many of the
nurserymen, particularly in the metropolitan areas, call themselves "landscape architects"; however, they are not professional landscape architects as we are, and usually do not have the training or experience, nor need they adhere to our strict standards of practice.

The professional landscape architect practices in the same manner as the professional civil engineer or architect. While landscape architects have been placed in charge of substantial projects and have engaged civil engineers and architects, their more usual custom is to find the landscape architect engaged by the civil engineer or architect.

The professional landscape architect has come to be a recognized member of the design team. The American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Institute of Architects and the other major design professions recognize landscape architects as one of their equals. The landscape architect can do things that the engineer cannot do because of his training in horticulture, in land forms, and in site design. He can also do things that the architect cannot do because of a similar difference in his training. However, the landscape architect is the first to recognize that truly satisfactory results come from collaboration among the professions. This has been capably demonstrated over many years in the National Park Service and on such projects as the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Westchester County Parkways.

**Purpose of the Presentation**

We feel that there is a job that the landscape architect should be doing on the Missouri Highways - a job that he is not
doing. We feel that, as a profession, we have a contribution we
could be making in the location of highways, in their general
design, particularly insofar as the fitting of the highway to the
topography is concerned, and in the planting of the highways in
order to blend them into our beautiful Missouri landscape.

Any contribution that the landscape architect would make to
the highway system would be directed toward making the highways
safer, making the highways more economical to build and to main-
tain, and in making them much more pleasant and beautiful on
which to drive. The most recent figures that we have seen on a
national basis indicated that 20 percent of all highway travel is
recreational in nature. Surveys that we have made in metropolitan
areas indicate that pleasure driving is the most popular form of
recreation for present-day Americans. This is particularly impor-
tant in Missouri, we believe, because the use of the beautiful
areas of this state for recreation can become a major state
economic asset.

We note a recent talk made in California by Mr. Rex Whitton,
head of the Bureau of Public Roads, in relation to aesthetics in
highway design. Mr. Whitton makes the point very strongly that
aesthetics have to be "built in", they cannot be applied as a
frosting on the cake. To obtain the real contribution that the
professional landscape architect can make, the landscape architect
should be involved as an integral part of the design team from
the location of the highway through the preliminary engineering,
the construction, and then the planting of the highway.
Existing State Highway Can Be Improved

It is not our intention here this morning to be overly critical, because much of what we might say about the existing development of the Missouri Highway System could be applied to most of the current highway construction in the Middle West. However, these criticisms have been coming not only from landscape architects but from a number of groups with interest in maintaining the amenities of the State and particularly in preserving and protecting the scenic values of Missouri. We note that many of the new highways being built are apparently in conflict with the topography of the ground and appear to unnecessarily destroy scenic values. New highways become a gash in the landscape; the grading is frequently abrupt; it does not blend into the contours of adjacent ground. The grass or bare slopes, unrelieved by any planting, become an artificial and strange appearing element in the landscape. Too many highways appear to have been produced by rigid application of a stereotype design. We feel that the use of professional landscape architects in the highway program would overcome these unsatisfactory elements of the highway development program.

A Planting Program For Missouri Highways

You are, no doubt, familiar with the "Policy on Landscape Development for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways", published by the American Association of State Highway Officials in 1961. There is nothing that we can add to this statement as it outlines very competently the principles and the purposes of planting for the Interstate System. Furthermore, the
principles and standards that it suggests could be applied to other parts of the highway system and not just limited to the Interstate System.

In planting a highway the major purpose is to blend the highway in with the other features of the landscape around it. We would like to see any planting program in this state restricted almost entirely to native plant material. We do not feel that any exotic material should be used at all, and certainly a planting program for a highway, in our opinion, would not be anything on the order of the rose garden that was installed along the highway extending west from Cape Girardeau. In the design of the highway, as much native plant material should be preserved as possible. Where the highway passes groves of trees or native woodland, the woodland should be extended into the right-of-way here and there. Occasionally, there might be planting in the median strip, so long as this was done on a massive basis and where it made a real contribution to safety such as a protection against headlight glare.

We would like to call your attention to the accompanying photographs. In order not to upset any of our American clients, these photographs are of the German highway system. The landscape that they portray, however, is remarkably similar to that in Missouri and they demonstrate far better than words can the really effective results we could obtain in Missouri from the use of landscape planting.

Properly designed and located, planting should save on maintenance rather than add to maintenance cost. Planting should be in very large masses; should consist of both trees and native
shrubs, and should be so located as to minimize, or greatly reduce, the amount of mowing required.

In recent days, the importance of tree planting has been dramatized by the program advocated by the Post-Dispatch for the City of St. Louis. If you have not already been asked, I am certain that you will shortly be asked to plant trees on the St. Louis expressways. We most urgently request that you blend these ribbons of concrete into the urban scene with planting.

We feel very strongly, furthermore, that most residents of Missouri would agree with us that the state is losing considerably by not having trees planted on its new highways. The results of the tree planting program that was carried out in the 1930's are still with us, and we obtain many benefits from this program. It takes a long time for trees to grow and the installation of planting, we believe, should be an integral part of the highway program.

The State of Illinois is undertaking a very considerable amount of landscape planting along its Interstate System. This causes many persons to wonder why Missouri is not doing likewise. While some of us are not very enthusiastic about the program being conducted by the State of Illinois, from the design standpoint, we are pleased to see them doing some planting along the Interstate System and we feel that this will result in many long-range benefits to the traveling public.

We Recommend That -

We would have the following recommendations for your consideration:
1. To obtain full value from the profession of landscape architecture, the landscape architect needs to be in the top design team. He needs to be brought in on the location of the highways and on the preliminary engineering and particularly on the grading elements. A good, top-rate landscape architect, we believe, should be added to the staff of the Missouri Highway Department. We are talking here of an experienced, capable person in the $12,000 to $15,000 a year salary range who can be truly responsible for effective work. We are not talking about a boy just out of school to whom you pay $5,000 to $6,000 a year and who is working on erosion control.

2. We would like very much to see you, if you do nothing else, try some experimental planting along the interstate system. We would like to see you pick out five or ten miles of new highway and either prepare a planting plan by your staff, assuming you have obtained a competent staff, or by having the plans prepared by one of the private consultants within the state. There is a number of private landscape architectural consultants in the State of Missouri and several have had experience in work of this type. We would like to be able to demonstrate to the Highway Commission, to the Department, and to the people of the State that the landscape planting of a highway, if carefully designed and arranged, will not only make the highway much more delightful to drive upon, but that it will materially reduce maintenance cost to the extent that it may even be able to pay for itself. Planting would be extended to the remainder of the system as a result of a successful experiment of this type.
3. We would particularly propose that you plant trees and other appropriate plantings along the urban expressways in Missouri.

Summary

Landscape architecture, as is true of any other profession, will remain as a profession only as long as it operates fully in the public interest. While we are here today very much in the interest of landscape architecture and landscape architects, we truly feel that we are also here because we believe that the landscape architect has a major contribution that he can make to the Missouri Highway System which he is not now making. We believe that by accepting our three recommendations it would be possible to bring about a major improvement in the Missouri Highway System, and to bring about such improvement at a relatively small cost. We urge you to add a competent landscape architect to your staff and to initiate a landscape planting program on the Interstate System and other elements of the State Highway Program.

Thank you very much.