CONTROL OF THE URBAN FORM
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If the city is to be planned, it should be planned as a whole and not in part. If planned as a whole, the first element to be planned should be the form of the urban area - the predetermination of which land is to become urbanized. If a city cannot plan and direct its basic urban form, its very arrangement on the land, can it say that it is planning at all?

This is why planners must so despise "urban sprawl". The helter-skelter dispersion of the urban pattern over the countryside is a daily mockery of the planner's efforts. Nor can this mockery be mitigated by having a computer "predict" the land use pattern, when in truth the community should be "designing" its own land use pattern.

The most dramatic example of a metropolis endeavoring to deal with its basic urban pattern is London with its greenbelt and the satellite cities to accommodate the "spill over". Notably, this plan and program is both a national and local policy. In the United States, we have not even done much theoretical work on this basic problem of urbanization, virtually none from the national standpoint and very little in connection with larger metropolitan areas as a whole. Many city plans have wrestled with the question, notably, the Denver and Washington
plans of recent years and planning literature is full of proposals concerning the problem going back over at least three decades. While many proposals have been made to control and direct the basic pattern of the urban area, these have not been effectively applied on the ground. Very few American cities are actually directing their pattern of urbanization.

Why is the most fundamental planning aspect of the urban area so neglected in practice?

Except for the recent experiments with Statewide zoning in Hawaii, which establishes rather definite urbanization limits, none of our states attempt to solve with this problem on a state level and most of them have made it difficult, if not impossible, for the problem to be dealt with on the local level. The area of urbanization for most cities extends far beyond the corporate limits and is divided among several units of local government with those units least capable of dealing with the problems of new growth - i.e. the townships and counties - being given the greatest responsibility for the pattern and character of the newly emerging parts of the urban area. A problem requiring a unified approach and a consistent, long-range policy for its solution cannot be solved by this multiple responsibility. Multiple responsibility enables a simple "divide and conquer" approach on the part of the land subdividers and land speculators who are naturally adverse to any attempt to control or direct the pattern of urbanization. Tax policies are designed to foster land speculation and unwise urban growth patterns by
placing low assessments on vacant land, providing no relation between the community plan (and its zoning ordinance) and assessments, and penalizing worthwhile urban land developments.

When we consider urban problems we are more likely to: "view with alarm", than to "point with pride". A case in point is the highly successful metropolitan government of Baton Rouge, Louisiana now well into its second decade of operation. Yet the Baton Rouge experience is seldom even referred to in articles on metropolitan governmental problems.

There are cities that are successfully predetermining their urban form, that are preventing urban sprawl. Lincoln, Nebraska is such a city; this is an account of its experience.

The Physical Setting

Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska, located 56 miles southwest of Omaha. While primarily a governmental center with numerous state institutions, the State University and a base of the Strategic Air Command, the city is also a strong retail center, is the site for the home offices of a large number of insurance companies, and has a growing industrial base. Lincoln was late in initiating any community planning activities, the first planning commission having been organized in 1948. A city plan was developed in the period 1948 to 1950. This plan was reviewed, brought up to date and extended to include the entire county in 1960. The 1960 metropolitan population was 155,000. Growth is fairly rapid. The new regional plan looks forward to a 1980 population of 250,000.
DIAGRAM 1
ORGANIZATION OF THE URBAN AREA
Lincoln is an unusually attractive city. There are relatively few areas of blight, satisfactory residential amenities being available to virtually all income groups. The economy of the city is such that there are not many of either the very rich or the very poor. A reasonably satisfactory standard of public services and facilities have been provided at a most reasonable level of local taxation.

The city is located in a bend of Salt Creek. (See diagram.) The city's center is a tightly interrelated complex including the State Capitol, the central business district, the University, and a major industrial area. The residential areas have grown outward from this center. However, because of the difficulties in crossing the creek (both physical and psychological) very little growth has gone to the north and practically none at all to the west. Instead, the city has grown outward from the central business district to the northeast, east, southeast, and south. The urban pattern might be visualized as about two-fifths of a pie with Salt Creek running along the radii and with the city's center at the apex.

A fundamental objective of the city's planning program is to bring about a better balance in the urban pattern, to put it another way, to foster and encourage a greater amount of growth to the north and west. Greater available traffic capacity on existing streets and highways is found to the north and west. These areas impose no major sewer problem, draining into the treatment plant by gravity. The efficiencies and economies
that would result from a more balanced growth pattern are recognized by city officials and civic leaders.

The Comprehensive Regional Plan of 1960 contained detailed proposals for bringing about a better balance in the population pattern. The land use plan proposed:

1. Reasonably complete development of existing areas that had been subdivided and provided with sewer, water, street paving, etc. which would accommodate 175,000 persons. This included allowances for increases in density in areas adjacent to the central business district.

2. Additional neighborhoods to the north - 8,000 persons.

3. Additional neighborhoods to the west - 12,500 persons.

4. Additional neighborhoods to the south - 15,000 persons.

The remainder of the future regional population of 250,000 would be located in rural areas of the county and in two small satellite cities - one near the Atomic Power Plant south of the city and one on the new interstate highway to Omaha.

In no sense did the plan propose a completely new urban pattern. By and large, the future urban pattern was an extension of and a continuation of past trends. The sole exception was the proposals for new neighborhoods to the north and west. Yet, these were proposed to contain only about 21,000 persons of the future population of 250,000.

The plan did, however, in no uncertain manner, call for a halt to growth to the east. This had been the pronounced trend of the post-war, large-scale, single-family mass building
Diagram 2
Relation of Drainage Areas to Urban Form Proposed in 1960 Plan
and this, in turn, had brought about construction of a regional shopping center on the main east-west thoroughfare, "O" Street, located about three miles east of the downtown area. This center had "sopped up" much of the increase in retail trade and had effectively halted downtown retail expansion. Completion of the interstate highway and construction of shopping centers in the western part of Omaha had had their competitive effect also. However, this had fostered a general belief in the business community that eastern growth was "inevitable".

In a planning problem of this type, the major difficulty is to draw the line. The planner may be able to persuade the community power structure that the line should be drawn but he has much more of an uphill fight to convince them that he has drawn the line in the right place. In the case of the expansion of Lincoln to the east, assistance came from the topography of the site. All of the Lincoln urban area drains into Salt Creek. (See diagram.) The city's sewer system has been so arranged that the treatment plant could receive by gravity, sewage from several tributaries of Salt Creek - Oak Creek, Haines Branch, Beal's Slough, Antelope Creek, and Dead Man's Run. The limits of the Dead Man's Run Watershed permitted development about as far east as 84th Street and this seemed a good boundary for development to the east.

East of the Dead Man's Creek Watershed is a large area drained by Stevens Creek, an intermittent stream. To provide sanitary sewers in this watershed would require construction
of a separate treatment plant or a force main of considerable length. While this did not impose any unsolvable problem, it was one factor that lead to the proposal of the plan that "Stevens Creek" (i.e. the watershed) not be developed. To consistently enforce this policy would mean that urban growth would be directed by municipal policy to the south, west, and north and a better balance in the urban pattern result.

In order to make this proposal effective, the planning program included both negative and positive measures. Under Nebraska law, Lincoln, in common with other cities in the state, has extraterritorial zoning powers. In Lincoln's case these reach out three miles from the corporate limits. By an aggressive annexation policy and a sound policy limiting extension of water service to the corporate area, Lincoln had been able to keep virtually all urban development within the city limits. This fact, plus the extraterritorial power gave the city rather full control over its area of urbanization. Finally, Lancaster County is zoned; while the zoning is obsolete, a new ordinance coordinated with that of the city is under consideration and the present regulations are sufficient to prevent "leap-frogging" over the three mile area.

Thus, the city could say, "No urban development beyond this line", and make it stick. This was accomplished by placing areas beyond the proposed urbanization limit in a "Rural and Public Use District". A minimum lot area of one acre was required as experience had indicated that this would prohibit
all urbanization. Should this prove not to be the case, the minimum lot area could be raised. It is most important to note that the minimum lot area requirement was designed to prohibit all urban residential development and not to bring about residential areas on one-acre lots. It has been effective in accomplishing this purpose.

As positive measures, the plan proposed basing all public improvements on the land use pattern and urged that the municipality provide utilities and do all in its power to promote growth to the north, west and south. It was recognized that both types of measures - the "carrot" and the "stick" would be needed to achieve the objectives of the land use plan.

The Governmental Setting

The physical setting and the comprehensive plan must be viewed in the light of extensive changes that had been made in the organization of local government in the Lincoln area. The first of these came in March of 1959 when a joint city-county planning agency was established utilizing a Nebraska act that permits two or more units of local government to join together to provide a common service.

In 1956, the Mayor of Lincoln appointed a Charter Committee which proposed some 33 amendments of the City Charter. The City of Lincoln was then operated under a Charter which was essentially a weak Mayor-Council form of city government with the city administrative staff organized under three department heads: a Department of Parks, Public Property and Improvements, a Department
of Public Welfare and Safety and an Accounts and Finance Department.

One of the changes proposed in the Charter amendments was the establishment of a Department of City Planning on the same level as the other municipal departments. This Charter amendment called for preparation and adoption of an official plan, for mandatory referrals and gave the Director of Planning wide powers in making recommendations to the Council and in reviewing all municipal proposals and their relationship to the Comprehensive Plan and its objectives.

The amendments were submitted to the electorate; 32 were approved in March of 1959.

The Revised Charter of Lincoln gives the Director of Planning considerable administrative power, charges him with instituting all proposals for zoning and the master plan for action by the Planning Commission and City Council and makes the Planning Commission advisory to the Mayor and City Council. The Charter amendments integrated planning into the municipal administrative machinery and publicly recognized planning as one of the major municipal functions and responsibilities, thus greatly enhancing its stature.

The Charter Commission, recommended a strong Mayor form of government. However, this amendment did not carry; consequently, the amendments did not solve the basic problems of city administration, particularly insofar as effective city policy and administrative leadership was concerned. To correct this, the amendment for the strong Mayor in a slightly different
form was submitted to the Electorate again in November 1962. This amendment was passed; the first strong Mayor election was held in May of 1963 and Mr. Dean H. Petersen the first strong Mayor in the City of Lincoln was elected.

At this point a word should be said about the extraterri-
torial zoning and subdivision control power in Nebraska. This power is granted to all municipalities in the state, with the larger municipalities exercising it over a wider area. Omaha and Lincoln, for example, have this power over an area within three miles of the city limits while smaller cities have the power over a one mile area and villages for one half mile. While the power had been available for many years, it had not been tested in the courts and grave questions were raised as to its practicability and enforceability. A law suit was in-
stituted contesting the extra-territorial zoning of the City of North Platte. This suit finally reached the Nebraska Su-
preme Court and a decision was handed down in 1961*. The Su-
preme Court of Nebraska in this decision threw out completely the theory that this power was "regulation without representa-
tion", stated that the extra-territorial zoning power was, in effect, a partial extension of the corporate limits and by the decision reaffirmed the power of Nebraska cities to effectively control land use within areas outside of their city limits. This decision is of very considerable importance not just in Nebraska but in other states with similar legislation.

*Schlientz v. City of North Platte, 172 Neb. 477, 110 N.W. 2d 58
Nebraska law also prohibits the incorporation of any new city that is located within three miles of an existing city without the permission of the existing city (which, of course, will seldom, if ever, be granted).

The general problem of the control of the pattern of urbanization (or the prevention of "urban sprawl" depending upon how the matter is presented), is made easier in the Lincoln area by intelligent and realistic views on the part of many of the rural residents. The rural school districts in the environs of Lincoln have an assessed valuation per pupil approximately twice as high as does the Lincoln School District. The rural districts consist of quite prosperous farming territory which, however, may be prosperous only so long as the area does not have to finance any urban problems. Thus most of the rural portions of the county believe it is wise to control and prevent the expansion of the urban areas into their districts rather than endeavoring to welcome them for speculative land value increases as is usually the case. Thus the Lincoln area does not have the pressure for land speculation that is found in so many environs of rapidly growing American cities. This has been most helpful in enabling public support for joint city-county planning efforts and for zoning to control the location of urban development.

The Issue - The Stevens Creek Matter

While the various planning studies were being made and the above described changes in the basic governmental powers and
organizations were taking place, the City of Lincoln continued to grow to the east, to the south and to the northeast. Endeavors to encourage greater growth to the north had a limited success. The north area (known as "Belmont") had contained a middle-to-low income residential area of generally unsatisfactory standards. New growth was encouraged to go into this area and some progress was made. However, little progress was made in fostering or encouraging growth to the west of Salt Creek. There were not enough positive efforts on the part of the city to provide utilities and to expedite subdivision and development of areas to the north, to the west and to the south. The trend of growth to the east and to the northeast continued unabated and approximately one year ago the development ran up against the watershed line of the areas draining into Stevens Creek.

In October of 1963, a major developer presented to the city a petition asking that approximately 110 acres of land within the Stevens Creek watershed be changed from the "AA" Rural and Public Use District to the "A-2" Single-Family Residence District. The fire was now in the fire.

In Lincoln, the procedure for zoning changes calls for the Director of Planning to make a report to the Planning Commission. This report includes recommendations, is prepared in writing, is released to the press, to the petitioners and to other city officials. In reporting on this proposed change in zone, the Director of Planning, Douglas Brogden, recited the proposals of the City Plan in regard to the bringing about of
a balanced pattern of urban development in the city and made the point that the 110 acres could not be considered alone, but rather that the problem under consideration was whether or not the Stevens Creek watershed as an entity was to be urbanized and whether or not a different and more unbalanced overall land use pattern was to be chosen for municipal development. He stated that if this one petition was approved that it would not be unreasonable to assume that within 10 years there would be two square miles of land developed within the Stevens Creek watershed for urban purposes. With a normal density that the city was getting in its "A-2" Single-Family Residential District he estimated that the area developed within ten years would contain some 3,400 dwelling units. His report went on to state that three aspects of city development would be substantially affected: the major street system, the central business district and the sewer system.

Brogden estimated that the construction of 3,400 homes would produce between 1,400 and 2,000 peak hour traffic movements destined to the central area of the city. This amount of traffic would require a much more extensive development of several of the east-west major streets. Several miles of an additional major artery would be required. The current cost of an artery of that type in the Lincoln area was approximately $1,000,000 per mile.

As his second point, Brogden indicated the impact of the purchasing power of locating 10,000 to 12,000 persons in a site
most inconvenient to the central business district, yet well-related to the newly developing shopping center area. The shopping center area could not practically be provided with traffic arteries permitting it to serve so great a population.

Finally, of course, there was the outright duplication of sewerage facilities that would be necessitated by the development of this land. The sewer system of the city had been designed to accommodate a different growth pattern.

The Director of Planning, consequently, strongly recommended that the application for rezoning be denied.

The public hearing was attended by the proponents of the project but aroused relatively little public interest otherwise. The League of Women Voters appeared in opposition to the proposal, calling for adherence to the Comprehensive City Plan.

In its report to the City Council on the proposal, the Planning Commission stated that:

"When the current Comprehensive Plan was adopted it was the feeling of the Commission that urbanization to the east into the Stevens Creek watershed should be discouraged as long as possible because of the utilities problem inherent in providing sewerage east of 84th Street. It was hoped that population distribution into the southwest, to the north and to the west could be encouraged and some progress has been made in this direction. However, despite the repeated urging of the Planning Commission, with notable exceptions, utilities have not been extended into the
areas which it was felt desirable to encourage population growth. The reticence of the city to extend utilities to the north, west, and southwest until in the recent past has been a reflection of a historic attitude that utilities would be made available only after substantial development has occurred in the area. It is hoped that the city now recognizes that in its own interest it should lead and encourage population distribution by the time the construction of utilities in areas where growth is desirable from an overall planning standpoint."

The Planning Commission went on to unanimously recommend approval of the change of zone! It cited the historic pattern of growth to the east, the fact that it did not believe it was the business of the Planning Commission to "force people to live in areas where they do not wish to live" and also cited the relation of the area to potential industrial districts and finally referred to the possibility of a scattered and unfortunate development occurring in the Stevens Creek watershed under the current zoning regulations. In recommending approval of the application, the Planning Commission reluctantly turned its back on a major proposal of its own Comprehensive Plan.

Because of the long-range importance of the proposal, the Mayor of Lincoln requested reports from all of his department heads regarding the question of urbanizing the Stevens Creek watershed before making his report to the City Council. The City Attorney stated that, in his opinion, the City had the power
to prevent urbanization of the Stevens Creek watershed if it was in the public interest to do so. The report of the Director of Planning reinforced the report he made to the Planning Commission, cited the difficulties with traffic, the importance of preserving the central business district and the duplication of sewer facilities that would result, should this area be urbanized. The Director of Planning also cited that "currently in our Capital Improvement Program we are preparing to extend or are extending water and sewer to the north, west and south. These studies of the Comprehensive Plan reveal that there is ample room for urban expansion in these three directions for the growth that is proposed to occur in Stevens Creek. Therefore, duplicate facilities must be made to serve all of the areas."

The Director of Public Safety stated that the fire stations of the city had been located on the basis of urban growth not going into the Stevens Creek watershed and that if this policy was to be changed he would find several fire stations mislocated and that he would have to reconsider the program for the location of fire stations. The Director of Health was concerned about the proposal to establish temporary sewage treatment plants in the Stevens Creek watershed, citing the inadequate flow in the creek for satisfactory dilution. The Director of Public Works cited the overall costs of providing sewers in the watershed. The Traffic Engineer outlined
the difficulty in providing adequate traffic capacity from the business district to this portion of the urban area, in comparison with the available traffic capacity already provided to serve other portions of the urban area.

The issue was presented to the City Council of Lincoln in a very clear-cut manner on November 23, 1963. The result was a unanimous action on the part of the Council refusing the change of zone. A motion was made a week later to reconsider the proposal, which motion died for lack of a second. The action taken by the Council is possibly not as significant as is the fact that the action was taken with the knowledge of the importance of what was being decided. The Councilmen know that they were making a decision in relation to the urban form of their city. They weighed the arguments in favor and against and their vote was actually an opinion expressing a preference for a more balanced urban form over an unbalanced urban form. They were, of course, swayed in their judgment by the almost unanimous opinions of their department heads in relation to the cost of developing the Stevens Creek watershed. However, their decision was a planning decision based upon planning considerations, and as such, probably represents a relatively unusual action on the part of an American city.

This, of course, does not settle the issue for all time. There will be continued pressure to subdivide the Stevens Creek watershed and a future council may succumb to this pressure. On the other hand, a "hold the line" policy for a few years may result in new growth trends in other directions.
Lessons Learned

This is one of the few instances of a local decision based upon so important a question as the basic form of the city. The question had been brought from the theoretical into the real; the issue was posed and was answered.

The experience demonstrates the great value of extra-territorial zoning. Such zoning is available in Nebraska, Illinois, South Dakota, Kentucky and in North Carolina. It is unfortunate that this power is not made available to more cities. It is an extremely valuable one when utilized in the proper manner.

The experience in Lincoln demonstrates also that zoning is a valuable tool to guide and determine the basic urban pattern of a city. While it may not be a completely satisfactory tool by itself, and while it may be of much greater usefulness when coupled with other planning powers of the city, particularly the power to schedule public improvements, nevertheless, if designed, enacted and administered in accordance with a Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the zoning ordinance itself when it may be applied to the entire area of urbanization may almost guarantee bringing about a pre-designed, basic urban pattern. This, of course, results from the power to, through zoning, preclude all urbanization by requiring large lot areas or otherwise. Without being able to do this in a straightforward manner, the zoning cannot be of any great usefulness in controlling the basic urban pattern.
The Lincoln experience demonstrates the value of unified control of the area of urbanization on the part of the municipality. It would have been much more difficult to deal with this problem in Lincoln if the zoning power over the nearby unincorporated area had resided in the hands of the County, a township, or a suburban municipality. It is not possible to demonstrate so conclusively the interrelationships between land use, zoning, traffic, sewer costs and other considerations unless all of these matters may be dealt with on a unified basis by one unified local government.

Control of the basic urban pattern is the absolute fundamental of planning. Planning really starts here. This is the problem that must be solved first. If the areas to be urbanized cannot be predetermined, of what use is it for the planner to worry over such details as where the schools, the parks, or the sewers might go. The experience of Lincoln, Nebraska is useful and valuable as an approach to this basic problem.