

# Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

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## CITY PLANNING

STORY No. 1

*One may spend money without planning  
but  
One may not save money without planning*

City planning is not a device to encourage spending. It is a method of controlling a city's growth so as to secure for the city the greatest service for the least money and for the citizens the greatest amenity for the least tax burden.

It represents saving, not waste—economy, not extravagance. Whatever may have been in the minds of the first advocates of city planning, it is now recognized by all that a growing modern city cannot afford to proceed without coordinated city planning.

## But what in a city needs to be planned?

One might better ask what does not need to be planned? Indeed everything the city does is now planned as an individual undertaking, but not always in relation to other possible undertakings of a similar kind.

The Bloor-Danforth Viaduct was well planned as a unit, but its relation to the whole plan of communication inside and outside the city, its effect on other parts of the system, its relation to assessments and civic revenues, its relative importance from the standpoint of the needs of the city as a whole, was not studied and decided as a part of a general plan. These things were talked about, even thought about in an inchoate way. But the city did not by careful and prolonged study arrive at an intelligent, considered judgment as to these facts in relation to the general plan of the whole city. It was known the city could afford, it was supposed that it was the first thing to be done, and it was decreed that all the taxpayers of Toronto should meet the cost entirely irrespective of the relative benefits received by taxpayers in different parts of the city.

After years of what can hardly be styled planning, the Bloor street widening is being carried out with dignified restraint. But who really has a right to have an opinion as to whether or not it is more important than the Sherbourne Street extension, Bay Street widening, University Avenue extension or whether or not the ends desired might not have been better served by a through parallel highway north or south of Bloor Street?

## Need for Planning Recognized

The necessity of city planning is recognized in the city's present procedure. There are by-laws creating so-called restricted areas. But every once in a while, without any real study of the whole question involved, one or more numbers on streets in the restricted area are exempted from the operations of the by-law, with the result that so-called restricted areas are spotted all over with unrestricted patches. The purpose of such by-laws is to preserve the amenities of residential districts and to prevent the partial loss of investments in residential districts due to depreciation caused by the entry into the district of

activities deemed objectionable. Nevertheless there is no guarantee that a man investing money in a home may not have part of that investment wiped out almost overnight by the permission of exemptions to restricting by-laws. It is said that in a growing city such things are inevitable. They are if the present procedure is continued. The chances are that with thorough-going regulations, the character of neighborhoods could be preserved indefinitely without serious declines in value. To take the contrary stand without a thorough study of the facts is an admission of supineness.

In the by-law regulating the height of buildings, the city also recognized the desirability of city planning. However, the city councils of recent years have been more impressed with the desirability of ignoring the by-law than with its strict enforcement. Have the advantages and disadvantages of the "skyscraper" type of building been carefully weighed before exceptions have been made to the existing by-law? Is it possible that a type of building suitable for a city whose business centre is confined by natural boundaries within certain limits might be out of place in a city like Toronto which offers plenty of room for expansion on three sides? Is it possible that the erection of a number of "skyscrapers" makes difficult the economic development of contiguous areas and thus retards what might be a uniform and orderly development? Is it better from the standpoint of the citizens as a whole to have one 30-storey building surrounded by nondescript two and three-storey buildings or an orderly development of substantial buildings of fairly uniform height? In order to avoid further traffic congestion on streets scarcely adequate for present traffic, should the relation of a proposed skyscraper to the capacity of existing traffic arteries be considered before the permit is issued or should it be issued first and the traffic problems dealt with afterwards by widening streets at the expense of the taxpayer? Should a certain definite portion of the city or certain portions of suitable streets be set aside now for the erection of buildings of this class? These are some points to be considered in the relation of the height of buildings to city planning.

By provincial legislation the city has control of the street lay-out in a five-mile-wide ring around the city. In this field the city exercises more real town planning control than within its own boundaries.

## From the 1926 Annual Report of the Bureau of Municipal Research

City planning is going on all the time; but whether it is piecemeal, unco-ordinated planning made year by year, or month by month as at present, or city-wide planning over a term of at least ten years, as it might be, makes the difference between waste and economy. City planning, properly understood, does not mean more but less expenditure. With planning, the same expenditure will go further. Unless within a short period a study is made before the city commits itself to any programme of capital expenditure showing on the one side the costs of proposed capital expenditure and on the other the effects of such expenditure on current taxation, the city is liable to find its position as a city of homes and as a desirable site for business and industry seriously jeopardized.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the city needs an advisory town planning committee which should study continuously the improvement needs of the city as a whole and keep always up-to-date for a period of ten years in advance, a programme of capital expenditures which the city can properly carry. When the City Council has once adopted a recommendation of such a committee, or has validated a city plan, no change should be made therein without the consent of the committee, except on a two-thirds vote of Council or an authorization of the Legislature. Such an arrangement would provide adequately for continuity of policy in capital expenditures and would practically insure that improvements would be taken up in the order of their importance and on the basis not of sectional but of city-wide requirements. Such a co-ordination of physical and financial programmes has been found feasible and indeed indispensable in much larger cities than Toronto.