

TOWN PLANNING THAT PAYS.—(Continued)

also that some of your best property has been cut up and ruined, and your main street blocked and diverted, you become both sadder and wiser, but know there is nothing to do but grin and bear it, since the location of a railway is deemed to be as fixed and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

The same way too with our factories, we are all so glad to get one good factory to locate in our midst, that we are ready to give the shirt off our back. But the factories are by no means an unmixed blessing, and unless they are most carefully and properly located we soon find they will damage and depreciate the value of adjoining property, necessitate heavier paving, more extensive water and sewerage services, and altogether cause more trouble and expense than they are worth.

Some of these notions and customs we would do well to get rid of are unfortunately backed and enjoined by legislative authority, and others through want of legislative control over individual license are suffered to become a public menace and abuse.

The law of the Province of Quebec for instance prescribe a minimum street width of 66 feet within an incorporated town, thereby locking the stable after the horse is stolen, for most of the damage has been done as a village, before the incorporation took place. The main thoroughfares are entirely too narrow and cramped, whilst the new side streets are compelled to be of unnecessary and extravagant width. We have plenty of land in Canada, it is true, and don't need to be too skimpy about it, but we have not enough money for unnecessary paving, and when added to the cost of needless land comes the cost of superfluous paving and maintenance, it is easy to see where the money goes and why other needful improvements are shelved.

And when we come to think of it this width of 66 feet is about as bad a selection as could be made, for it is too narrow for any street with a double track car line, and much too wide for any purely residential street. We understand this enactment was made just after the great fire at St. Sauveur, Quebec, and was principally designed as a preventative of the spreading of fire and if that were so it certainly was the costliest that ever visited this province, and the people in every part of it are paying for it to this day, when the same result could have been just as effectually and ever so much more cheaply met by keeping the building line ten, fifteen or twenty feet back from the street line.

It might possibly be urged that it is a good thing to keep all the streets wide enough in case any of them might develop into a main thoroughfare, and thus save the expense of expropriation for street widening. But we must remember that the main thoroughfares of a town seldom exceed ten or fifteen per cent of the street mileage. And so roughly speaking we are asked to throw away eighty-five or ninety per cent in order to be in a position to meet the possibility of saving ten, which is a new kind of economics.

Here again we can arrive at the solution of such a difficulty by the simple expedient of determining before hand where the main thoroughfares are to run. And we can rest assured that any additional width further than is necessary to accommodate present and prospective traffic in waste, and a constant charge on the community. And now we begin to see something of the virtue and the value and the wonderful saving of a little judicious Town Planning.

But it is not every municipality that is fortunate enough to have very much say as to the layout of its streets. That is a privilege which the laws of our country reserve for the land owners and real estate exploiters, whose main object is to dump as much of their land as they can on the unwary settler, and then saddle the community with the cost of improvements. Of course, the rights and privileges of Private Property must be upheld at all hazards. But wouldn't it be a bit refreshing if some of our law makers, by way of a change should stand up in defence of the rights and privileges of the Public, whose only remaining privilege appears to be the privilege of paving.

Land in the province of Quebec is generally laid off in a succession of strips very much longer than they are broad, fronting on a main road or river, which is very much the best and wisest lay-out for farm lands, and is to a great extent the secret of the farmers remaining on the land in this province, encouraging as it does sociability and neighbourliness, whereas in the Province of Ontario

and in the North West where the layout is in sectional squares, they are deserting the land out of sheer lonesomeness and hyking after the bright lights and glamour of the larger towns and cities. But it is less fortunate when these long strips come to be sub-divided and laid off to suit the requirements of a town more especially according to its trend of traffic, for we usually find they are lying in the opposite way from what would be most suitable. But Mr. Landowner doesn't bother about a little thing like that, and he engages his surveyor at the smallest price per lot to sub-divide his land to suit the farm boundary lines, with absolute disregard of adjoining properties and streets, and the new settler and the municipality are left to wallow in the mess or fight it out between them as best they may. Of course, it must not be forgotten that the original proprietor saved a few hundred dollars, but in the end it is the municipalities and the people who have to pay thousands for every dollar he saved.

The municipalities of the Dominion of Canada should never be content till they have the layout of their streets and sub-divisions entirely in their own hands. It is important to have such control but it must be exercised intelligently, and not as at present where some of them have the power, to be allowed to remain as a dead letter.

Of course the easiest and cheapest way to lay out a sub-division is by straight lines crossing one another, no matter whether it fits the ground or not while the likeliest direction or volume of traffic is never even considered. I hardly need say that when street traffic has to travel along the two short sides of a triangle instead of by the one long side it adds nearly one third to the cost of that traffic, and when the question of grades is taken into account it mounts up to considerably over one third what it should do.

Just imagine for a moment what that means to a city like Montreal, and that this is going on every year, and every day of the year, heaping up by hundreds and thousands of dollars till it reaches millions, and the total debt of the City of Montreal begins to look small in comparison. So we can see that what was cheap at the beginning may easily prove a mighty costly thing in the end, only it makes a big difference who has to shoulder the burden, and this time it is the meek patient and long suffering public.

I have said that Town Planning is just plain ordinary horse sense, and I mean it, and would like to lay special emphasis on the word "horse." When you see a horse dragging a heavy load up a hill you will notice that if left to itself it will naturally assume a zig-zag path, it will try to take the hill on the bias within the available limits. In Montreal we don't do anything like that, we are too clever, and so when we see a good steep hill we make a bee line straight up the face of it. Now I would like to say that no self respecting horse of ordinary intelligence would think of doing anything so supremely silly.

It is a by-word in Boston that the streets of that city follow the lines of the original cow-paths, and I might venture to add that if New York, Chicago, Toronto and Montreal had done something similar they would have had a more sensible and convenient street layout, fewer expropriation bills, and be more beautiful and interesting, and much less costly places to live in.

What I would like to emphasize here is that if we are to do anything worth while with conditions like these, we must take them in their beginnings, and while the value of land is reasonably low. A town is just like a wild animal or an unruly boy and cannot be caught young enough. There is only one time that is the best time for Town Planning and that is to-day; to-morrow is just one day too late. You may not feel the need today but a few years hence you will feel it, and then it will cost you fifty times as much. It is true you are not overburdened with funds, local improvements are pressing and the tax-payers are clamouring to see something for their money. There's where the temptation and the danger lie, for by going ahead with these very improvements you are closing and fastening the door on your own face, and throwing away the key. You are piling up great rocks on the path ahead of you through which afterwards you will have to blast your way. Always remember that the need for Town Planning is never imperative, and seldom even apparent, till its cost becomes almost prohibitive.

But it may be asked regarding most of our little towns "How do we know they are ever going to grow up into large flourishing centres?" And my answer is that it depends upon yourselves and the faith that is in you, your

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