

## FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE MAKING OF PLATS.\*

The general principles to be followed in developing a proper street plan have been laid down by Professor Unwin as follows:—

Having settled the purpose of the different areas, determined the general character of growth and the approximate direction desirable for main and subsidiary highways, the town planner finds himself with the following component parts out of which to make his design, namely: The main centre-point, or climax, dominating the whole; the secondary centres in definite proportion and relation to it; and the main highways linking them up; the whole giving the bones or main framework of the design.

Within the space defined by this framework, having special relation to the secondary centres and proportion to the primary highways, we have the network of secondary highways; while within the areas which these leave, for the purpose almost solely of giving access to the buildings we have the minor roadways or drives, which should be in relation to the subsidiary centre-point, and both in relation and proportion to the framework of secondary highways. No system cuts up the land into more awkward corners or more thoroughly destroys the street façades than that which consists of a framework of diagonal highways laid upon a rigid gridiron system of minor roads, and from no system do such unsatisfactory road junctions result. In town planning it is essential to avoid being carried away by the mere pattern of lines on paper. Order, definiteness of design there must be, but there must first be grasped an understanding of the points where order is important and will tell, and of those where it matters little.

These principles may perhaps be restated as follows: In every city there is a central business area to and from which the greatest amount of traffic flows. There are, in addition to this central area, subsidiary centres of activity, either business, social, educational or residence. Each of these subsidiary centres should be connected by direct routes having easy gradients with the central portion of the city. It is not necessary, in fact it is not even desirable, that these routes should be straight, but they should be conditioned by the topography and by existing improvements. The subsidiary centres should also have direct means of communication with each other. After these main lines of travel have been laid down, secondary lines may be developed also in conformity with topographical and other conditions. This will leave, then, certain areas of larger or smaller extent to be subdivided into tracts by means of purely local streets. Now it is not at all important—in fact, it is extremely undesirable—that these local streets should all follow the main points of the compass. The systematic division of our country into townships and sections has been a great convenience in many respects, but it is carrying the influence of the section line entirely too far to make it—as has been done so universally throughout the western state—the basis of all street planning work. Each tract of land into which the primary and secondary system of streets divides should be platted solely with a view to its own special requirements, with such orientation of blocks and arrangement of streets as will serve to develop to the best advantages its own individual peculiarities. It is by no means important that these local streets should be continuous, in fact it add very much to the beauty and detract nothing from the utility of the district if these streets are not continuous, but are so arranged as to furnish desirable building sites, closing the vista at convenient points. By following this plan the sharply angular lots involved in

the diagonal street laid across the rectangular street plan will be very largely avoided. Each tract will have a character and an attractiveness of its own and the city will be free from the curse of dull uniformity.

The platting of any district should, of course, be varied to meet the topographical conditions. In some cases, for instance, we have steep hillsides. The folly of platting such hillsides in the regulation way into blocks consisting of two tiers of lots separated by an alley or sometimes by no alley at all, is apparent. In grading the streets laid out in this manner there will necessarily be heavy cuts on one side and heavy fills on the other. The cost of grading is therefore enhanced, as is also the cost of adjusting the property to private use. In such cases it is very much better if narrower and more frequent streets should be platted, so adjusted as to give reasonably good gradients and easy access to the property; these streets to be separated by a single tier of lots. These lots might be a little longer than the ordinary lot. The property then has the advantage of permitting all of the residences to be so situated that they have an outlook away from the hill instead of having half of them face into the hill. Furthermore, they will have access both from the rear and in front, which is a great convenience under these conditions. Where the ground is more uniform the ordinary plan of platting may be followed, but even here the exercise of a little ingenuity will yield very desirable results. It is not at all necessary that even on flat lands all blocks and lots should have uniform dimensions. This was the case in New York City, the lots all being 20 to 25 by 100 ft., and if you wish to build a church or a factory, a house or an office building, you have no choice as to dimensions except to take as many lots as may give the needed frontage.

Authority, therefore, should be vested in the city to regulate not only the size and location of streets dedicated to public use, but the size of the lots themselves. We are all familiar with the fact that the farther the lots are situated from the centre of the city and the cheaper the land the smaller the lot becomes. Public interest and convenience require that there should be public control over this feature of platting.

Then, too, it has sometimes been the custom when plats fail to receive the approval of city authorities that the owner proceeds to sell the lots off by metes and bounds descriptions, without regard to the public interest. The law should provide a certain subdivision of a section or a minimum size and prohibit the sale of smaller tracts unless a proper plat had previously been duly prepared and filed for record. In the making of any plat it must be borne in mind constantly that the present use of the property may—undoubtedly will in many instances—be greatly modified as time goes on. In so far as possible such future use should be anticipated and the plat adapted to such changing use as nearly as may be. This changing use of property, due, of course, to the fact that a city is a living, growing organism and not a dead piece of mechanism, constitutes one of the chief difficulties of city planning. The erection of garden cities, with every detail ordered before hand, seeks to eliminate this difficulty by fixing the maximum limits of the future city. It is better from this point of view to build a new city than to permit the old one to grow beyond its boundaries.

It is important that alleys should be required in all blocks platted on reasonably level ground. Such alleys will have a use even when the property is used solely for residence purposes, in that they permit the construction of garages in the rear of the property. Later on, as the

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