

City Planning From Fiction to Fact—Chicago's Gigantic Civic Improvements

(By GUY WILFRID HAYLER).

The brief announcement in the daily press of the popular approval of a Bond issue in Chicago for the carrying out of large improvement works does not only do credit to what is not only a great local achievement but an epoch in practical City planning in America. Paper schemes and plans are too apt to receive more recognition than they are worth and a realisation of projects is very often passed aside with scant observation. City Planning has suffered, and is now suffering, from the want of popular approval. In many quarters of public life it is characterised as an idle boom and those championing it as mere visionaries. It is only fair therefore that when a great city like Chicago is accomplishing a real practical result from City Planning the fact should be made known as evidence that scientific civic improvement is not merely an operation of 'beating the air.'

The story of Chicago and its City Plan goes back to the time of the World's Fair when the inspiration of a beautiful pleasure city lead to the desire of a better working and living-in city. That was a time when people thought City Planning could beautify a city by the mere adding of artistic ideas without considering the basic necessities expressed in the systems of transportation, parks and playgrounds and in the housing of the people. That idea has largely passed away since the term 'the city beautiful' has come to be considered as misleading and inimical to the demands of genuine City Planning. So in 1908 when the late William Hudson Burnham designed the famous Chicago Plan he not only forecast a beautiful city but a city designed and equipped with all the necessities for an ever expanding urban population carrying on an intensive civilisation in healthy, comfortable and efficient conditions.

Probably no city in the world has ever initiated such a persistent and imaginative propaganda on behalf of civic improvement as Chicago and in season and out of season the work of educating the people up to the ideals of Burnham has gone on. In spite of the death of the great City Planning in 1912 the work has not faltered and a great deal of credit is due to Hon. Charles H. Wacker, Chairman of the City Planning Commission who has unsparingly devoted himself to the achievement of the great quest. All through the war the work has been maintained draftsmen have been engaged on the plans and everything was in readiness for the period of re-construction we have now entered. In no city in America was a more comprehensive programme ready when the war ended. The original Burnham plans have been of course modified by now-prevailing conditions but in the many essential particulars they are the same as are now to be entered on. Their excavation would not have been delayed these 11 years but for the multiplication of governing authorities in Chicago and the difficulty of getting a simultaneous agreement amongst them, on the projects. The works are much overdue. Chicago is ready for them and will not only pay the price in cold coin but certainly appreciate them and the benefits they will confer on her citizens.

On Feb. 24th at the Municipal Elections a vote was taken on six Bond issues totalling 20 million dollars in all, and the following were the majorities for the different proposals:—

	Majority for
1.—Lake Shore Improvements	35,787
2.—Grant Park Improvements	33,008
3.—Grand Boulevard Extension	32,206
4.—Grant Park Stadium	32,883
5.—Roosevelt Road Extension	31,130
6.—New Small Parks	30,901

The total vote for each proposal ranged from 70,000 to 75,000.

Considered in order, the nature of the works contemplated and approved by the Chicago South Park Commissioners—who control the Bonds and are responsible for the schemes—is as follows:—

1. **Lake Shore Improvements.**—This work is to eventually cost \$30,000,000 and will take ten years to complete, but in the meantime an initial expenditure of \$8,000,000 is authorized for work which will occupy 3 years. The scheme in its entirety consists of about 7 miles of Lake Shore improvements which when finished will make a

waterside Park of 26 miles along Lake Michigan when the Lincoln Park Commission has completed its extension northward from its present limits to Devon Avenue at the City boundary. The new work will consist of the creation of a number of small islands in the lake and the formation thereby, of a system of lagoons from Grant Park to Jackson Park. This will be the basis for a Boulevard system from the centre of the city along the shore to the extreme South side. All the way along Bathing Beaches, Pairslips and Ornamental Bridges connecting to the main land will be provided together with the ordinary Park embellishments.

2. **Grant Park Improvements.**—Within the last few years the portion of this area, north of the Art Institute has been improved and now the major part of the Park which still remains a barren waste will be completed at a cost of \$3,700,000 and is to be finished in three years. The land East of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks is to be planted with trees bushes and grass, a boat landing provided on the shore, athletic fields, sunken garden, etc. The I. C. R. Railway now cutting through Grant Park is to be electrified and spanned with ornamental bridges.

3. **Grand Boulevard Extension.**—This work is provided for by a Bond issue of \$1,300,000 and an almost equal amount will be added by special assessment proceedings to be started at once by the South Park Commissioners. The Boulevard will be in operation in three years. The plan is to construct a new traffic artery to relieve the present congestion on Michigan Avenue and at the same time give the motorists a more beautiful drive. This will be a through-city route of immense importance. It will be created by widening South Park Avenue from 35th Street to 23rd Street. At 23rd Street a wide viaduct over the Illinois Central Railroad will carry the new Boulevard into the new shore-line park where it will run north to along side the new Field Museum. With the completion of "the Boulevard link" (or Michigan Avenue extension) for which \$16,000,000 who voted in bonds last November, the new Boulevard will unite the North and South side Boulevard systems.

4. **Grant Park Stadium.**—This is to cost \$2,500,000 and to be completed in two years. It is situated just South of the new Field Museum and will be the largest stadium in the world. The work is to start now and plans have been approved after a selection of six designs submitted by the leading Chicago's Architects—Messrs Holobird and Roche are the successful designers.

5. **Roosevelt Road Extension.**—This covers the extension of the South end of Grant Park to the North line of Roosevelt Road (old name "Twelfth Street") and the continuation or extension of widened Roosevelt Road from Michigan Avenue over the Illinois Central Railway tracks by a wide viaduct through Grant Park and along in front of the Field Museum to the Lake. The Bond issue approved is of \$1,500,000, to be used for acquiring property between Michigan Avenue and the Illinois Central Railway and between Lake Park Place and Roosevelt Road now occupied by the I. C. Railway Depot and a number of dilapidated structures. The Railroad is donating its occupied portion.

6. **New Small Parks.**—\$3,000,000 is authorised for bonds to finance this work which will consist of the improvements of Calumet Park in South Chicago, Gage Park at Garfield and South Western Boulevards and the rehabilitation of several other small parks in the South side and the creation of new ones in the South West section of the City. This work is to be ready in three years.

On February 18th the representatives of the Illinois Central and Michigan Central Railroads presented to the Chicago City Council the formal acceptance of the ordinance governing the Lake Front improvements, with a bond for \$1,000,000 to be forfeited if either fails to carry out the provisions of the ordinance. When this was received, the War Department would issue a permit to fill in the Lake and so thus ended some 12 years of negotiation. The total cost for three years work is about \$120,000,000, of this sum the two Railroads will pay \$80,000,000 and the South Park Commissioners \$30,000,000.

Mr. Wacker says:—"The victory of the South Park Commissioners Bond proposals is the biggest, finest and most far-reaching undertaking for the public good." Chicago has launched in its entire history and true to his long continued enthusiasm for the better city he draws attention to the other huge improvements under way:—