

Town Planning

By HARRY BRAGG

Mistaken ideas about what Town Planning really is are largely responsible for the apathy, or even hostility, with which it is too generally regarded in many places in the Dominion.

It is too often considered to be the ideal of the landscape architect, who is considered to be largely actuated in his advocacy of his plans by the fees which he will receive for preparing them.

Then the magnificent and costly plans prepared for large cities are apt to frighten the property owners in smaller places, even if they do not make them believe that Town Planning can only be of practical interest to large centres of population.

On the contrary, Town Planning covers such a wide field that it is a matter of prime importance to even a village, which is growing and progressive.

Town Planning should be understood to include every phase of at least the physical condition of every place; and may even be accepted in a broader sense as Town Management; and thus would include Taxation, Fire Protection, Policing and similar phases of communal life.

Many small places are practically planning their town unconsciously. The purchase of a lot in order to correct two streets, is nothing but a step in Town Planning; while sewers and waterworks are essentially included in it.

It is important, therefore, that the simplest changes in physical features of any place should form part of a comprehensive plan for future changes and development.

It is unwise to purchase even a lot for a new street, with out looking further than the immediate present; for future needs may indicate a different procedure to-day.

It is imperative then, to secure a plan of the existing town, and to study it, in order to see how it is likely to develop. Then to lay out a plan for this development, which may occupy ten or twenty years to complete, and which may be modified during its execution.

Such a plan will cost money; but it is an investment, and its cost will, in reality, be spread over many years. While the carrying out of the plan may be done as occasion requires.

All land necessary for additional streets, parks or playgrounds, should be purchased, or secured, as early as possible. And if more land than is needed is purchased, the sale of the balance after the improvements are completed, will reduce the cost, and may even lead to an immediate profit on the work done, as well as a fixed increase in valuation.

The experience of constructing the great Kingsway, in London, England, is a case of this profit-making by improvements. For although the new street cost \$125,000,000, it was a profitable investment, apart from its value as an artery for transportation.

But an example can be found in Canada in the experience of the city of Montreal. The city decided to continue St. Lawrence Street through some very valuable property. Instead of expropriating merely what was required for the street, considerably more on both sides was bought. Then, when the proper land for the street was taken out, the balance was sold; and instead of the city having to pay out money for the improvement, there was a profit of some \$80,000 on the transaction.

These two cases show the immense advantage of "excess condemnation," of the expropriation of more land than is actually required for the proposed improvement, with the sale of the excess portion after the alterations are completed.

Unfortunately, there are very few places in Canada which do not need Re-Planning as well as Planning. Too often the street plan has been badly designed, the favorite "grid-iron" plan instead of diagonal main streets is too frequent.

But an even greater, and less excusable, drawback is the way in which the streets on two adjoining subdivisions are designed to miss, instead of meeting each other.

Examples of such cases are very noticeable, even in Toronto, showing how necessary it is to have a central authority which should control the planning of all private property where public streets are included in the plan. If private owners arrange for streets—which will become public property—so as to make the rest of the property valuable, they should not be allowed to load upon the public such street lines as they like, irrespective of whether these lines agree with a general plan, and may, on the

other hand deviate essentially from existing public streets, and thus lead to inconvenience and possibly to expense for alterations.

The calm way in which a plan is made for property adjoining a municipality, without any consideration as to how it will fit in with the existing plan of the municipality, is absurd—but it is also costly.

Then the securing of vacant land for parks and playgrounds as early as possible, is also advisable. A case occurred of a certain large area adapted for an athletic ground on which a far-seeing citizen secured an option for \$3,000, offering the option to the Council, and pointing out that enough could be sold on the edges to pay for the field, and still leave a large open area. But the Council was far too canny to spend money in this way. And to-day their predecessors would like to buy what is still vacant, about two-thirds, but the price is \$20,000.

The creation of a small park or a square can generally be done without any cost, if sufficient be purchased to give lots round the square for re-sale. The enhanced value on these will pay for the square, while the extra valuation—which is a permanent profit—will be an additional gain.

Another very important feature of Town Planning is a good Building By-law. One essential is that every dwelling should be sanitary—there should not be a single "dark room"—that is without a window opening to the outside—in any place. Then—so far as the greed of landlords and the laziness of tenants will allow—no flats or tenements should be permitted, at all events in any but large cities. Tenements and flats in small towns are abominable, and too quickly degenerate into slums.

The dividing into zones, for business, factory and dwelling purposes, is also desirable. For the community, as well as the individual, suffers when a shabby shack, or a poor store is built next to a good dwelling house.

The ideal dwelling, of course, is a detached house, with a garden or a play-yard. And all honor to the men who are going out of the crowded cities into the suburbs, and building, with their own hands, a tiny cottage where the wife and children can have a share of God's air and sunshine. They are doing their part not only to make that glimpse of heaven on earth, a home; but they are doing their part towards making the future citizens healthy and robust!

Town Planning is not a fad of idealists. It is hard-headed common-sense. It saves money, gives health and happiness, and makes the young citizen strong and healthy.

MUNICIPAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION.

The inaugural banquet of the Municipal Officers' Association was held in the Victoria Hotel, Fort William, Ont., on Wednesday, January 6th, when thirty-five officials and guests were present.

Mayor Young was absent from the city, but Ald. Murphy took his place.

City Clerk McNaughton presided, and after welcoming the guests, sketched the field of work which the Association proposed to cover, and the benefits that would accrue from it to all civic officials who became members. It would not only be of personal value to themselves, but would also prove beneficial to the municipalities which they represented.

Ald. Murphy, in replying to the toast of the "City of Fort William," spoke in high terms of praise of the value of such an association, and testified to the good results of getting the staff of the City Hall to work together harmoniously.

Mayor Oliver and Mayor-Elect Mooney responded for the "City of Port Arthur."

Mayor Oliver cordially endorsed the aims of the association, and was proud to claim that he had suggested the idea to City Clerk McNaughton a couple of years ago. The "get-together" spirit was the only one that could command success, and the association would prove of advantage in many ways to every member. In educational ways, it would be of great value, and would compensate, to some degree, for the lack of a Municipal Department in the Provincial Government, such as the Western Provinces possessed. Municipal officials required three essential qualifications:—Courtesy, harmony and educated brains.

Mayor-Elect Mooney spoke briefly, and as an alderman of some years' standing, he expressed his practical knowledge of the good which the association was able to do to all interested, both the officials themselves and the places which they served.

Musical selections were provided by members of the civic staffs of both cities, and a very enjoyable evening was spent.