

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Podcast

Episode 21: Chicago's Got No Little Plans

And welcome to the 21st episode of The VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, and thank you so much for joining. It's officially official now. The window for the experience essays is over and done, so for everyone now, it is on to the exam materials.

If you're just picking up with the essays behind you or forging ahead, you have until April 30th until the deadline for registering for the exam. And the exam window opens - FYI that's about 60 days.

Last episode we covered a couple of court cases, *Mugler V Kansas* (which talked about the courts responsibility to overturn laws that are not related to police powers) and the *US V Gettysburg Electric Railways Company* (which established historic preservation as a valid public purpose). Yay!

This week were pivoting back to some plans and getting into the nitty gritty of Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago and the book about his plan that followed; Walter Moody's *Manual of the Plan of Chicago*. So sit down, grab an Italian beef sandwich, deep dish pizza, or Chicago dog (don't forget the sport peppers) and let's get this show on the road.

(1:41)

Officially called "The 1909 Plan of Chicago," Burnham's Plan of Chicago actually began about three years earlier.

So to set the stage for you, Chicago was a growing city, like a really quickly growing city: like between 1870 and 1900 it was the fastest growing city in the world, increasing its population from 299,000 all the way to almost 1.7 million people.

So it's not a surprise that some of the leaders of the community recognized that a plan would be needed to help guide some of this growth. So, a group of Merchant's in 1906, led by the likes of Charles Dawes, Frederick Delano, and Charles Wacker started the process. And this group known under the incredibly creative name - The Merchant's Club - commissioned Daniel Burnham fresh off his fame from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Actually that's not entirely fair. It wasn't just fame from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. At this point Burnham had also completed, or worked on, plans for D.C., Cleveland, San Fransisco - shit, he even completed some plans in the Phillipines. Anyways, Burnham hired Edward Bennett to help him co-author the plan since the two had also worked on the plan in San Fransisco and Burnham was a fan of his work (and you will need to know that by the way: Burnham and Bennett, 1909 Plan of Chicago, Burnham and Bennett, Burnham and Bennett, Burnham and Bennett, Burnham and Bennett).

Anyways, what did these two rabble rousers focus on in this 1909 Plan of Chicago?

Well? A boat load, but in the end (for the sake of time) the plan had six major components: the Lakefront, a Highway System, Railway Terminals, Parks, the Street Network, and Civic and Cultural Centers.

As far as the lakefront was concerned, reclaiming the lakefront for the public was probably one of the primary goals. According to Burnham, "the lakefront belongs to the people. Not a foot of its shores

should be appropriated to the exclusion of the people.

And this concept was one of the ones in the plan that did actually stick. I lived in Chicago for a little over a year and it really is awesome what the city's done with its shoreline. Damn near every part of it is an open public park, which as a planner I whole heartedly love and appreciate.

Skipping ahead, but along the same veins, Burnham's Plan also built on the conservation momentum going on at the time. Not only did he propose to make all of the lakefront open to the public, he also included proposals that followed the movement already going on at the time: to preserve the natural areas around the city that would eventually become the Cook County Forest Preserves. There were also recommendations to expand the park and boulevard system, but this was Beaux Arts, so...yeah.

So those two recommendations revolved around public spaces and parks, but three of the other four major components were related to transportation. Keep in mind, this is the 19-0-9 plan of Chicago. At this point, railways are still booming as a means of moving people (as it should be - especially today - but I digress).

Anyways, rails were booming, but we were also on the cusp of the new era of the automobile. So, that dynamic had to be taken into account as well. So while Burnham did provide some direction regarding the rail lines, he also took into account both local streets and a more regional transportation system as well.

First, there was a strong focus on the railways; most notably the terminals. The plan highlighted the inefficiencies in transit based on the competing railroads each using their own tracks and subsequently Burnham had some ideas on consolidating the usage of the tracks to make it all operate more efficiently.

There were also plans to even consolidate some of the terminals for efficiency as well, although that had a more economic motivation behind it. You see, by consolidating the six terminals into two complexes on the west and further south, the business district would have been able to expand. That's just for the railways though.

As far as the automobiles were concerned, the plan included the vision of Chicago's region extending 75 miles from the city core (which is some pretty progressive forward thinking for the time), but not progressive enough. You see, Burnham - limited by his time I suppose - didn't see automobiles as the game-changer we now know that it was. In fact, he really just saw them as recreational and a way for city folk to get out to the countryside. My how that changed.

That said, one of the other major components of his plan - the street networks in the city itself - included the widening of some existing arterial streets and even the development of new ones. It included some diagonal roadways, but more importantly to the City at least was the widenings. You have Michigan Avenue (if you've ever been to Chicago, the importance of that one should be self-explanatory there), and the creation of Wacker Drive (you're welcome Hollywood). Of course, over the years many of the planners in Chicago changed some of these plans; mostly because of the changing importance of the automobile, but that wasn't until later on. And finally, we have what would have been the most visible part of the plan - and most typical - considering the beaux arts style: the focus on civic and cultural centers.

The proposal was for a new civic center at the intersection of Congress and Halsted. Don't know where that is? Well, that's because Congress eventually became I-290, so the location we're talking about here is actually about where the 90 and 290 interchange is. Not exactly the civic center Burnham was thinking of. But, maybe that's more like the twenty first century version of a Civic Center: an interchange.

Anyways, the plan also included provisions for a new cultural center in Grant Park with a new Field Museum of Natural History, and a new Art Institute of Chicago.

As far as implementation was concerned - well - co-author Edward Bennett was in charge there. Why didn't Burnham help with the implementation? Well, because he died in 1912. That would have been difficult.

That said, the rapid growth of the city allowed for a decent amount of the plan to be implemented, but

not all, of course. We're planners, we get it. Especially when you consider the Great Depression in 1929. That kind of put a financial damper on a lot of the improvements.

All of that said though, the 1909 Plan of Chicago also ran into a decent amount of backlash. You see, the beaux arts era was coming to a close. Unfortunately - and subsequently - there was a decent amount of criticism based on its focus on physical improvements by calling it an attempt to create "Paris on the Prairie"; cause you know, when I go to a city I'm all like: "Wow, what great programmatic in city hall." Oh wait, no I don't.

Anyways, as a fun tidbit, the 1909 Plan of Chicago is also where we get the iconic quote from Burnham: "Make no little plans." And if you haven't heard that overly used quote before, then I seriously can't help you. It's only used on at least 1 slide in every planning presentation, at every conference, ever. Again though, I digress.

(10:34)

So if you remember, one of the guys that commissioned Burnham to do the plan was Charles Wacker. Now Chuck Wacker here was a fan, and thought the Plan was pivotal to make Chicago a metropolis to be proud of.

So what did he do? Well, he pushed the issue until the Chicago Plan Commission got a guy named Walter Moody to write a book about it. Of course! What better way to promote a city plan than by creating a middle school textbook about it!

Seriously though, can you imagine if your city, county, community, wrote a damn textbook about your plans? Unreal.

Anyways, this book was meant for 8th graders and was actually adopted by the Chicago Schools Superintendent - like as a required part of the curriculum - for 20 years.

It didn't just focus on the Chicago Plan though. It also provided a brief history of European and American cities, and also helps explain some of the planning concepts behind the topics in the Plan of Chicago. The manual talked about the concept behind street systems, parks, and it even placed importance on the kids themselves in creating a better city.

Moody even said "Conditions, then, demand that this new impulse of love for this city shall be fostered and that our children shall be taught that they are the coming responsible heads of their various communities. We direct the national patriotic impulse into the paths of duty, and it is vital that we do the same with the new impulse for civic good"

But what's important here - aside from a textbook being written about the Plan of Chicago - and I mean, who wouldn't take a little self-gloating in a textbook being written about your work. But aside from that, why was *Walter Moody's Wacker Manual of the Plan of Chicago* important for us to remember?

Well, because it was quite possibly the first textbook / formal instruction on city planning below the college level. But what about at the college level? Well? That is our topic next week!

(13:16)

Let's run through a quick recap though. We were pretty one dimensional today and that's ok. We covered everyone's favorite beaux arts planner Daniel Burnham and his trusty buddy, Edward Bennett, and the results of their combined powers: the 1909 Plan of Chicago.

We talked about some of the lasting impacts like the preservation of the lakefront for the public, and of course, the resulting 8th grade textbook - the maybe first grade school level textbook on planning: *Walter Moody's Wacker Manual of the Plan of Chicago*.

Well, thanks again for joining me. Sorry for being a week behind, there was some issues over at buzzsprout, the place where I upload these episodes, but they have it all wrinkled out now. Yay.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at theveryunofficialAICPGUIDE@gmail.com and I'll do my best to help out if I can.

For those who tuned in last week, our question last week was, "Which one of these cases, *Mugler v Kansas* or the *US v Gettysburg Electric Railway Company*, had to do with the relationship between laws and police powers?

And that would be *Mugler V Kansas*. Remember, while it wasn't direct, the courts found that they did have a responsibility to strike down laws that didn't relate to the police powers.

If you want to play along this week, our question is - and this is a little more murky - "What was one of the main criticisms of the Plan of Chicago, and ultimately, the beaux arts style of planning as a whole." Anyways, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts and feel free to sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And, share this out with any planners you know and don't forget to leave a review either.

Drop in next week when we - as promised - we go all acadamia. We'll talk the first course in city planning, the first chair of civic design, and the first major textbook on city planning.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

Links:

Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burnham_Plan_of_Chicago

<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/10537.html>

<https://www.architecture.org/learn/resources/architecture-dictionary/entry/1909-plan-of-chicago/>

Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago:

<https://www.architecture.org/learn/resources/architecture-dictionary/entry/wackers-manual/>

<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/10418.html>

<https://www.planetizen.com/node/29243>