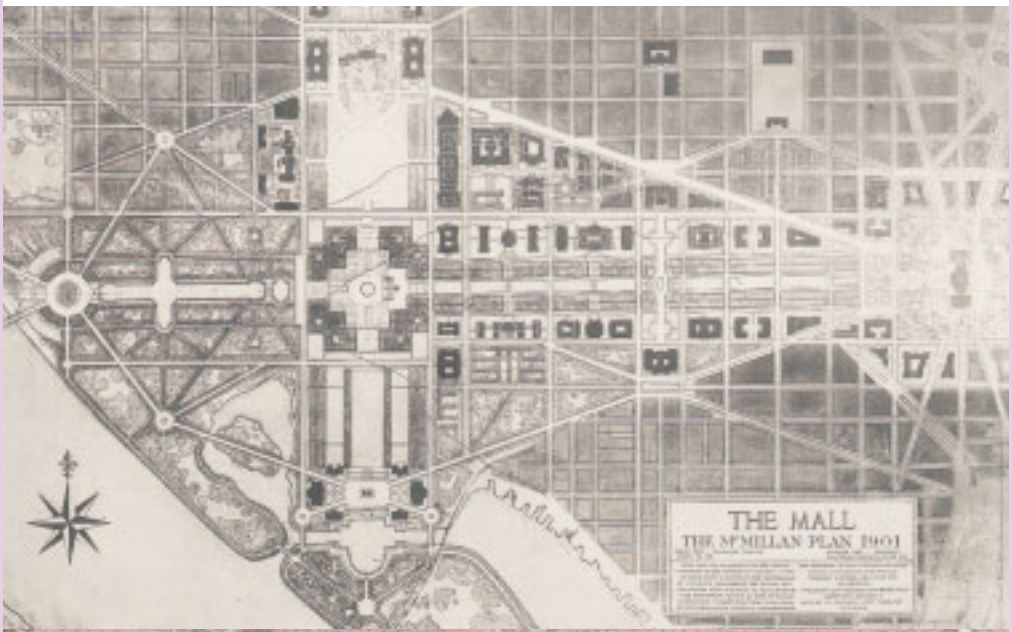
1789

Courtesy of the National Capital Planning Commission

1901



Courtesy of the National Capital Planning Commission

1995

Courtesy of the National Capital Planning Commission

(top) ***A Capital City*** Pierre L'Enfant created the master plan for Washington, D.C., which included a rectangular grid with broad diagonal avenues.

(center) ***McMillan Plan*** L'Enfant's plan was modified by the McMillan Commission. The removal of unattractive elements in some locations created more open space while maintaining L'Enfant's design.

(bottom) ***Monumental Core*** L'Enfant's master plan for Washington is still evident in a plan developed by the National Capital Planning Commission. A key element of the plan is to connect the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers to the city by a network of public corridors that include parks, plazas, trails, marinas, and other amenities.

The Making of a City

Carmel Underwood and Robert Underwood

When we look at large urban centers, the great cities of the world, we often do not think about how they were originally planned or what decisions it took to make them what we call "great." For a city to be beautiful, for the traffic to move freely, for communications and commercial centers to operate effectively, and for people to live in clean, safe, and healthy conditions requires organized plans and well-conceived designs at all stages of the city's birth and development. This is called urban planning.

The art of designing urban centers is not new; historians have recorded the plans of many ancient cities, and archaeologists can trace signs of urban planning in the cities in Mesopotamia and South America, and throughout Asia. When Alexander the Great walked along the Mediterranean beach front in what would one day become the Egyptian city of Alexandria, a world-renown urban center of commerce, learning, and philosophy founded in 332 B.C., he measured his steps and pointed out where he wanted the commercial center to be built, where the main harbor should be located, where temples, palaces, and homes would rise. When Alexander planned his city on a north-south, east-west grid, he was practicing urban planning.

In the United States, as in any new country, it took time for the early citizens to develop well-defined designs for how they wished their future cities to look and function. Yet not long after gaining independence, the new Americans made the decision to build their capital on the banks of the Potomac River. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French immigrant, artist, engineer, who had been a soldier in General George Washington's revolutionary army, was asked to design the new nation's capital city. L'Enfant's rectangular design with broad diagonal main avenues to provide light and fresh air for pedestrians, majestic buildings and monuments that etch the skyline, and a grand, open ceremonial space featuring the domed Capitol building as its center is what a visitor finds today in Washington, D.C.

For the past two centuries, surprisingly few modifications have been made to L'Enfant's design for the nation's capital. Most notable of these changes is the work done by the McMillan Commission in the early part of the 20th century. This work was implemented by Daniel Burnham, the designer of Union Station in Washington, D.C., as well as Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Charles Follen McKim. The group cleared areas that had grown unattractive, such as railway lines and slums, and added more open space to L'Enfant's original plans. Additions included parkways, an improved National Mall—the long expanse of lawn flanked on either end by the Capitol building and the Lincoln Memorial—and space for new monuments to be built. Though these urban planners' ideas improved the beauty of the capital, L'Enfant's original rectangular design is still dominant.

(opposite) ***Chicago, 1901*** This map shows downtown Chicago before Daniel Burnham devised "The Plan for Chicago" in 1909. His urban design included the development of Wacker Drive and a system of parks along the shore of Lake Michigan.

(opposite inset) ***Michigan Avenue Bridge*** A large ore freighter passes under a raised drawbridge as it negotiates a narrow bend in the Chicago River. The Wrigley Building is the white building to the left of the bridge and the Chicago Tribune Tower is the Gothic Revival building on the other side of Michigan Avenue.

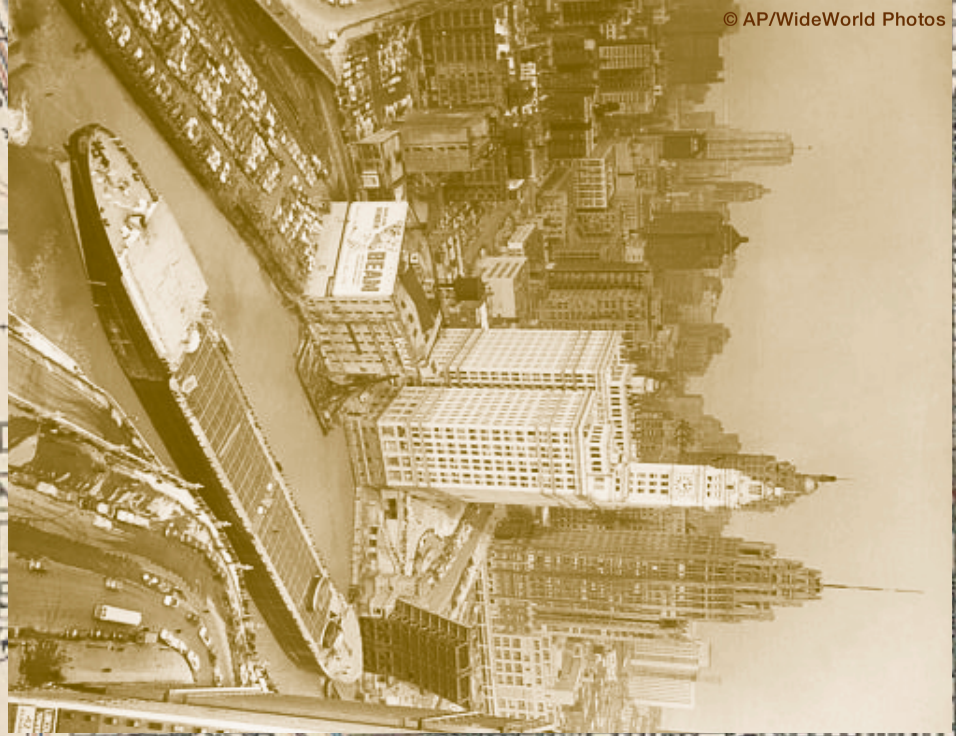
(below) ***The White City*** The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago gained international recognition for Daniel Burnham as an urban designer. This dramatic view epitomizes the idyllic world of canals and Beaux Arts architecture that Burnham envisioned.

Like L'Enfant, Daniel Burnham was a great force in American urban planning. Burnham first gained worldwide recognition from his supervision of the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a world's fair that exhibited his "White City" and had more than 27 million visitors in six months. On the wings of this success, Burnham, famous for his inspirational statement, "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood…Make big plans; aim high in hopes and work…," along with Edward Bennett, was asked to create a plan for the urban design of Chicago. This 1909 conception, called The Plan for Chicago, is recognized as the first comprehensive city planning document in America and became a model for other urban planners and designers across the country. The signature style of Burnham is evident in Chicago today. Wacker Drive and the parks along Lake Michigan were in his Plan. Architecturally, historical landmarks such as the Monadnock, Reliance, and Rookery buildings all bear the stamp of Burnham's work.

The concept of zoning laws eventually became a factor in the planning of cities as they developed and expanded. Zoning laws were first adopted in New York City in 1916, and similar laws quickly came into existence in cities across the nation. Zoning laws, applied to each district of a city, determined and regulated such important planning features as the width of city streets, the height of buildings, and the types of transportation used. Such laws provided developers with new incentives to carefully consider planning features and their impact on an area's design, development, and its potential for future growth.

Another, more recent, influence on the design of America's cities derives from Charles Edouard Jeanneret, a Swiss-born French painter, writer, and architect, known as Le Corbusier. As early as the 1920s, Le Corbusier wrote about "the city of tomorrow." He influenced American planners with his ideas of a city with a residential district that was contained in the high-rise elevator apartment buildings so common in today's

Library of Congress



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Courtesy of the University of Texas

American cities. According to Le Corbusier's designs, this district would provide all the educational, recreational, and aesthetic features required by residents to make their community a desirable place to live. His innovative plans called for super highways to cut across these urban centers, improving their accessibility, again, much as we see in cities in the United States today. Le Corbusier's designs also included a towering business district and a warehouse/manufacturing district to fuel the economic needs of these urban communities. Some preservationists regret that some planners' interpretations of Le Corbusier's theories at times resulted in the removal of historic sections of cities. And, though well-intentioned, such questionable interpretations would also lead to the creation of trouble-ridden, high-rise projects, such as Cabrini-Green in Chicago, the antitheses of Le Corbusier's urban visions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, planners implemented revolutionary city concepts such as those that can be found in Reston, Virginia, and Columbia, Maryland, today. These completely pre-planned cities follow a pattern now seen in many locations across the United States in which new residential districts are constructed around a central retail area, such as a shopping mall, with a great deal of open space built in to supply abundant recreational opportunities for the inhabitants. Residences often include an attractive mixture of home styles—condominiums, single-family homes, and even much larger houses, more expensive and more opulent than their modest counterparts. Homeowners living in these pre-planned communities can enjoy both the open space of a scenic countryside and the benefits of living in an urban environment with cosmopolitan amenities but fewer of the problems associated with large cities.

Most experts agree that America's past experiments in urban planning have included both satisfying successes as well as some dismal mistakes. But it is important to note that city plans are quite simply just that—plans. They may predict, but do not necessarily create, a successful future for an urban center. Alexander Garvin, author of *The American City,* writes that there are six ingredients that need to be considered in planning successful cities. According to Garvin, there must be a market, or a need, for a city plan and a willingness among the population to pay for it. The actual, physical location for a city, the second ingredient, must not be harmful to air quality or prohibitive in its distances from work centers or recreational facilities. The design of an urban community, as Garvin notes, must be functional for its residents over the long term, not a plan that fades in and out of style. In addition, to be effective, an urban plan needs financial support from both public and private sectors and from entrepreneurs willing to take financial risks for an improved living environment. Garvin's final ingredient is time; a successful city design must consider both the short-term and the long-term effects of its plan on its residents, the commerce conducted by the city, and its environment. Today, it is critical that, when designing an urban center, urban planners consider not only current needs but also the rapidly changing needs of generations to come.

No matter how well they are planned, cities are growing and changing organisms and will continually surprise planners with their rapid need for improvements, adjustments, and compromises. Much of modern urban planning consists of working through a complex system of studies and more studies, dealing with environmental concerns, and getting approvals of designs or projects after a budget has been created and passed by governmental agencies and concerned citizens. Most urban planners today are members of a governmental agency that is accountable to its citizens. The responsibilities of urban planners are immense, and for urban planning to be effective, an educated populace needs to play a significant role in the urban designs that are made for them and their children.

Perhaps, Mohsen Zahran, a respected educator and architect who provided inspiration for the recent rebuilding of the Alexandria Library, in the city that Alexander the Great designed over 2,000 years ago, can give us an insight into what urban planning encompasses. He writes that: "Urban planning is a multidisciplinary science that…opens up vistas, challenges, and horizons for uplifting the human condition, and…fulfills human dreams for a better tomorrow for all, regardless of color, creed…or national origin, with equality and basic human rights protected and secured for all under the law."

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(top) ***Le Corbusier*** Charles Edouard Jeanneret–Le Corbusier (center)–internationally renowned architect, planner, and designer, attended a conference of artists in 1952 in Venice, Italy. His urban planning theories incorporated the ideas of super highways to improve access to cities and towering business districts to meet cities' economic needs.

(below) ***Cabrini-Green*** Failure of other urban planners to fully comprehend the theories of Le Corbusier led to the destruction of historic sections of cities and the creation of well-intentioned public housing projects that ultimately became infamous failures. One such failure was Cabrini-Green in Chicago.

(top) ***Cluster Development Model*** This detail of the scale model illustrates the cluster development strategy developed by James Rouse.

(bottom) ***Full Model of Columbia*** This intricately made model of Columbia was exhibited so that potential home owners could see exactly how Rouse's visionary town would appear when built.

The Evolution of COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

In the early 1960s, James Rouse had a vision of building a community that would make America a better, finer, and more interesting place to live. It was not a new idea—since the beginning of the United States, visionaries, like Rouse, from native origins and from across the seas have had ideas for creating new towns, communities, and cities that would provide a better way of life for those who moved there—but Rouse had the means and the ability to make his vision into a reality. He would call his visionary community Columbia, and it would be built between Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. For Rouse, and for many people who wished to take part in this visionary experiment and would later move there, including writer Michael Chabon and his family, Columbia was an ideal location. It was to be located only 30 to 40 minutes by car from the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., and the same distance from downtown Baltimore, Maryland. Columbia would be served by highways, commuter trains, and buses to make transportation comfortable and easy. The Chesapeake Bay and lovely beach resorts would be nearby. Columbia was to be a clean and affordable choice and a new beginning for all who chose to move there.

For Rouse and the citizens who would follow, the location was not as important as how the city of Columbia would be designed and built; Columbia was to be a totally "planned" community. Rouse wanted to create a city with diversity in the population, copious open space, and all basic services in reach of every resident. To achieve this goal, Rouse called on experts in the fields of education, economics, family life, health, housing, transportation, psychology, and sociology. These experts became Rouse's "Working Group." Rouse also wanted to bring to his visionary city expert knowledge in the newly developed area of recreation. He wanted resident families to have all the tools and amenities to be happy, comfortable, educated, and healthy.

Rouse's design called for a series of planned neighborhoods. Each neighborhood was to be made up of roughly 300 to 500 families, or about 1,200 to 2,000 people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. Rouse and his experts decided that five of these neighborhoods would form a village; several villages combined would become the city of Columbia. A visitor to Columbia today would find nine villages, each self-contained with such amenities as single-family homes, recreational facilities, a library, an intermediate school, a shared place of worship, and other features essential to a community. In what is called the Town Center, Rouse even planned for a 70-acre, air-conditioned shopping mall. According to Rouse's plans, residents of Columbia would eventually total about 110,000 to 125,000. Today, four decades later, Columbia's population is 96,000.

Important to Rouse's design were open spaces for all to enjoy. Today Columbia comprises 14,000 acres with several parks, lakes, and areas covered with trees and crossed by streams. More than 5,300 acres of open space are shared by members of the community.

According to the Rouse Co. brochure available at the time Chabon and his family were planning their move to Columbia, Columbia's Town Center neighborhood was to be a home for art galleries, theaters, and museums. There would be restaurants, coffee shops, and nighttime activities planned around a lake and a park.

Today there is a controversy involving Rouse's vision and the future development of Columbia. Essentially, the conflict is over proposed construction in the Town Center neighborhood. Developers want to build 1,600 additional housing units, while many residents of Columbia favor construction of office buildings and retail shops to create a more urban setting with a city-like, dense ambiance. These residents believe that the vision of galleries, theaters, museums, and nighttime entertainment can never come to fruition if the Town Center is used to build the proposed housing units.

Urban planners are following the controversy carefully. From their observations, they are learning that, over time and with experience, perceptions change about what makes the best and most interesting place to live, as has happened with Columbia. Clearly, Columbia is an experiment that has not yet been completed. James Rouse died a few years ago, and planners and current residents of Columbia are still struggling with the vision of the perfect "planned community."

Courtesy of Columbia Archives

(bottom) ***Town Center*** A lone boater drifts on Lake Kittamaqundi in the early days of Columbia.

Rebuilding Cabrini-Green

One problem facing urban planners, cities, and the population of American urban centers today is how to revitalize, or bring back, parts of a city that have turned into worn out, crime-ridden, undesirable areas. Many of the world's cities have areas that tourists are warned not to visit, that natives avoid, and that residents dream of moving away from so they can raise their families in a more livable community. The Cabrini-Green housing project in Chicago, one of America's great cities, has had the reputation of being one of the most undesirable areas to live in the United States. It has been a location in great need of change. The Chicago Housing Authority, the organization in charge of public housing, has joined forces with some innovative planners and developers to change Cabrini-Green into a neighborhood of attractive housing that is desirable as well as affordable and reflects the varied ethnic and income groups for which Chicago is known.

Cabrini-Green started out as a low income housing neighborhood where people could live until they had the means to move somewhere better. In the beginning, this idea seemed to work. But in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, a new type of construction took place in the area. The popular "high rise" buildings of that era were built on Cabrini-Green. This new style of architecture, with living areas confined in concrete high rise towers, one on top of the other, resulted in overcrowding, crime, and other social problems. With the rise of crime, fear, and poverty, those who could, moved out of the Cabrini-Green projects; those who could not move were left at the mercy of their decaying surroundings and a city that seemed to give up on the once harmonious and decent place to live. The Cabrini-Green projects gained a well-earned reputation as one of the most dangerous and unhealthy locations in America.

But Chicago did not abandon Cabrini-Green. In the 1990s, Cabrini-Green had the good fortune to change again. Because the dreaded projects were in a prime location, the Chicago Housing Authority decided to tear down the high rises and build desirable housing. The dream of having all types of families with mixed incomes, and diverse social and ethnic backgrounds living side by side is what is now envisioned and taking shape with the new development on the site of Cabrini-Green.

Peter Holsten, one of the developers who has added an innovative idea to the new Cabrini-Green development, has influenced other planners and developers in America's cities with his ideas. In an area called North Town Village near Cabrini-Green, Holsten has built a development of townhouses and condos that is home to a complete mix of private and public housing built side-by-side. Some residents pay several hundred thousand dollars for their homes, while their neighbors with low incomes live in publicly-funded homes. All residents must pass a strict screening process and attend an orientation meeting to qualify to live in North Town Village. For some, this innovative community seems too good to be true—quite a change from the old Cabrini-Green in every way. If this revolutionary concept in public housing works as all hope it will, it is certain to be duplicated in other cities in America.

(opposite bottom) ***Redevelopment of Cabrini-Green*** New row houses were built on the site of demolished high-rise towers of Cabrini-Green. Formerly one of the least desirable addresses in the United States, this public housing development has become coveted real estate through this massive redevelopment project in Chicago. Old housing towers awaiting demolition are just beyond the new buildings.

(top) ***Controversial Demolition*** A crane with a wrecking ball demolishes another tower of Cabrini-Green. Demonstrators attempted to stop the demolition, protesting that adequate on-site housing for displaced residents of the housing project was not included in the redevelopment plans.

(bottom) ***Seward Park*** Workers finish paving newly constructed Seward Park on the former site of a tower of Cabrini-Green. The park is part of the Chicago Housing Authority's continuing redevelopment of this area.

Glossary

amenities *n.* features that make one comfortable or increase the attractiveness or value of a piece of real estate or geographic location

aesthetic *adj.* the quality of being attractive

capital *n.* the city where a nation or a state's central government resides

capitol *n.* the building in which a government's laws are made

condo *n.* short form for condominium, a separately owned apartment

entrepreneur *n.* a person who has the vision and the finances to start a business

revitalize *v.* bring back to life, make useful

The White City *n.* the name given to the World Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 because most of the buildings erected for this fair were based on classical architecture

Web Sites of Interest

Chicago Landmarks

http://www.ci.chi.il.us/Landmarks/Architects/Architects.html

This Web site features a tour of Chicago's landmark architectural treasures. Information on Daniel Burnham and other famous architects that influenced the development of Chicago can be found here.

Le Corbusier, the Architect

http://www.uky.edu/Classes/PS/776/Projects/Lecorbusier/lecorbusier.htm

A biographical overview of this visionary's life and work as an architect and city planner, pictures of his work, and a bibliography for further research are available at this Web site.

The L'Enfant & McMillan Plan

http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/lenfant.htm

This informative site provides an historical overview of Pierre L'Enfant's plan for building the nation's capital city, Washington, and the McMillan Plan for restoring the Capitol grounds at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Remembering James Rouse

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/remember/rouse_4-10.html

An interview, conducted in 1996, just after Rouse's death, with people who knew the planner of Columbia, Maryland, reveals Rouse's life and work.

Columbia, Maryland

http://www.columbia-md.com/

Current information about the city and its plans for the future. See pictures of Columbia and learn about the amenities of the city.

The Redevelopment of Cabrini-Green

http://pubweb.northwestern.edu/~smc365/final/final.html

This site details the transformation of Cabrini-Green and includes interviews with several individuals involved in the redevelopment project.

Holsten Real Estate Development Corporation

http:www.holstenchicago.com

With a link to the North Town Village development of Cabrini Green in Chicago, this site provides information on the work that is being done and where to access further information on the project.

(left top) ***Past and Present*** An architectural landmark from the past, the Chicago Water Works Tower, photographed with the contemporary John Hancock Center, built adjacent to the tower.

(below) ***Chicago Skyline*** The summer clouds and contemporary architecture create a dramatic Chicago skyline as viewed from Lake Michigan. The lake provides many opportunities for recreational water sports.

(Top) ***Grant Park in Chicago*** The Chicago skyline towers over Grant Park, Chicago's main downtown park. The park, originated in the 1830s and expanded in the 1920s, is located along the shores of Lake Michigan. *© Corel*
(Bottom) ***Buckingham Fountain*** Buckingham Fountain provides a majestic focal point in Grant park. Built in 1927, this fountain was designed by French sculptor Marcel F. Loyau, inspired by a fountain at the Palace of Versailles. *© Corel*