

Planning, Community, and Renewal:
Harland Bartholomew Associates
and the 1951 Armourdale Redevelopment Plan

by

Daniel Serda

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Signature of Author

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 23, 1996

Certified by

John de Monchaux, Professor of Architecture and Planning
Thesis Advisor

Accepted by

J. Mark Davidson Schuster, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
Chairman, Master in City Planning (M.C.P.) Degree Committee
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Planners, policy makers, and the public have discredited urban renewal for displacing the poor, destroying vital neighborhoods, and imposing physical design solutions poorly suited to the social dilemmas of urban America. In this thesis, I examine the process of city planning in Kansas City, Kansas, and the practices of an influential consultant planning firm, to identify the considerations that led planners to suggest large-scale redevelopment projects as remedies for neighborhood decline following the passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1949. Conceived after a catastrophic flood by the St. Louis-based firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates, the 1951 redevelopment plan for the Armourdale district of Kansas City, Kansas, offers important insights into the methods of analysis and city planning objective that shaped the form and scale of redevelopment proposals for blighted neighborhoods.

My research shows that several factors influenced planners' underlying social objectives, determination of appropriate scale, and selection of suitable morphology in urban renewal. The "City Efficient" movement, an outgrowth of Progressive Era municipal reform, reoriented planners from aesthetic to economic, social, and fiscal concerns, while legitimizing their status as professional experts. The consultant/client relationship between professional planners and city governments enabled planners to formulate redevelopment plans based on non-aesthetic, professionally determined, social and economic objectives. Working within an institutional framework of comprehensive planning, Harland Bartholomew and Associates attempted to stem urban decentralization and remedy urban blight by reshaping declining areas into socially cohesive neighborhood units. The morphology of their proposals reflects the consistent application of several City Efficient ideals, rather than the imposition of prevailing aesthetic archetypes.

The failed legacy of urban renewal remains a significant influence on contemporary planning thought. New substantive emphases in contemporary practice, such as neighborhood and advocacy planning, reveal the profession's responses to persisting criticisms regarding public participation, the status of expert knowledge, and the influence of political elites on the planning process. In conclusion, I urge city planners to reconsider our understanding of historical modes of practice and action to ensure that we match prevailing concerns to appropriate methods of analysis and frameworks for planning action.

Thesis Advisor: John de Monchaux

Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning

Acknowledgements

While historians generally insist upon a personal detachment from subject matter, many planners openly confess that values not only influence their professional philosophy, but the types of work they will undertake. In writing this thesis, I find myself in the curious position of being planner and historian, while having experienced the lingering effects of the events chronicled in this study. Growing up in Armourdale made me aware at an early age of the unease and disruption imposed on people's lives by urban renewal, and has no doubt motivated my interest in both planning and this case. (Upon reflection, it occurs to me that personal, and often passionate, interest motivates most historical study.) I hope that the reader nonetheless will find my analysis to be objective and engaging.

I began this project as an independent study while a research associate in the Department of History at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, a position funded through a grant from the William T. Kemper Foundation, Commerce Bank Trustee. I presented a rough sketch of my research findings before the Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians in March 1994, and received encouraging feedback from a small, but diverse audience of design professionals and scholars.

My work has been enriched by conversations with Frederic Robinson, the planner who devised the redevelopment plan. Despite his age and diminishing health, Mr. Robinson provided frank and lively commentary and insights during a telephone interview in March 1994. I feel grateful to have had the opportunity to draw upon the reflections of such an inspiring original source. (My friend Alisha Thomas has recently transcribed this interview in painstaking detail.)

This thesis would not have been possible without the diligent assistance of skilled archivists. I conducted nearly all of my work at a distance from original sources, a task made possible by the availability of online bibliographic databases through the Internet. Carol Prietto, manuscripts librarian at Washington University's Olin Library, was especially helpful in identifying relevant materials in the Bartholomew firm's papers and making the microfilm copies of this important collection available to me via Interlibrary

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Loan. Aloha South at the National Archives in Washington located and copied obscure documents recounting the Federal response to the Armourdale redevelopment proposal.

This thesis was advised by John deMonchaux, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design. His guidance helped me to fight back my persisting tendency to explore every tangent and take on additional (and usually unnecessary) research tasks. Patience and supportive comments go a long way in soothing rattled nerves. J. Mark Schuster, Assistant Professor of Urban Studies, helped me to narrow and focus my original draft. During an early review of my proposal, Robert Fogelson, Professor of Urban History, recommended that I “stick to the story,” and avoid getting bogged down in the theoretical issues posed in much of the literature on planning history. His suggestion (and John deMonchaux’s frequent reiteration) helped me through the arduous task of writing this thesis while attending to competing academic obligations.

These contributions only add to the quality of the final document. Any errors, omissions, or oversights are of course my own.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Textual References

- AAA Armourdale Activities Association, Kansas City, Kansas
HBA Harland Bartholomew and Associates, St. Louis, Missouri
HHFA Housing and Home Finance Agency, Public Housing Authority, United States
KCK Kansas City, Kansas

Source References

- KSHS Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas
MVSC Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City, Missouri Public Library
NARA National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
NARA-CP National Archives and Records Administration, Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri
WCHS Wyandotte County Historical Society, Kansas City, Kansas
WHMC Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Kansas City
WULS Washington University Library System, St. Louis, Missouri

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Urban Renewal and the Legacy of Modern American Planning

Over the last thirty years, architectural and planning theorists have offered numerous perspectives on the legacy and deficiencies of urban renewal. Beginning with Jane Jacobs' seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), and culminating in recent attempts to rework the physical and social dimensions of troubled large-scale urban housing projects, urban renewal has represented the apotheosis of the flaws in “expert” planning theory and methodology. Planners, policy makers, and the public have discredited urban renewal for displacing the poor, destroying vital neighborhoods, and imposing physical design solutions poorly suited to the social dilemmas of urban America. Planners themselves have become frustrated by inability of land use policy and physical planning to achieve desired results. The lay public, practitioners, and planning scholars remain skeptical of design-based interventions, and instead have moved in recent years towards refined specialties and social service-oriented approaches to redressing urban social problems.

Despite the profession's skepticism, the basic processes of planning analysis and the role of expert planners in the urban renewal process remain underexplored and poorly understood. What considerations led planners to recommend and design now-berated large-scale, high-density redevelopment projects? In this thesis, I examine the process of city planning in Kansas City, Kansas, and the practices of an influential planning firm in order to identify the considerations that led planners to devise large-scale redevelopment interventions following passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1949. Conceived after a catastrophic flood by the St. Louis-based firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates, the 1951 redevelopment plan for the Armourdale district of Kansas City, Kansas, offers important insights into the methods of analysis and social objectives consultant planners used to redevelop blighted neighborhoods. My analysis of this case further demonstrates that prevailing explanations of how planners fit social objectives to the physical design and programmatic aspects of redevelopment plans do not adequately consider several important factors.

Beginning with an examination of the City Efficient movement, I explore the development of professional practices and norms within an influential firm, and then apply this analysis to the methods and objectives observed in the case study. I argue that the methods and theories of planning analysis, the institutional basis for professional practice, and a neighborhood-based approach to comprehending the city converged in the postwar period to produce large-scale, high-density renewal projects in American cities, independent of local conditions and the character of the preexisting residential environment. By considering the logic of the planning process that helped institute the berated large-scale urban renewal and slum clearance projects undertaken during the postwar period, within the institutional context of postwar planning practice, I hope to offer some new and interesting insights about the nature of planning analysis in the urban renewal process.

My analysis demonstrates that the causes for the failure of urban renewal are not to be found in the realm of architecture, nor in the inappropriateness of physical interventions, but in the means and objectives of City Efficient planning which led to the clearance of derelict neighborhoods and their replacement with large-scale, Modernist developments. In conclusion, I urge city planners to reconsider our understanding of historical modes of practice and action in order to ensure that contemporary trends are matched to appropriate methods of analysis.

This Preface offers an examination of the dominant explanations in the literature on urban renewal and the failure of city planning. I first consider two dominant, but insufficient, explanations of the failure of urban renewal. I then offer a taxonomy to classify the prevailing theories explaining the deficiencies of city planning and the resulting inability of planning interventions to accomplish their intended objectives. This essay offers a point of departure for this thesis to which I will return in the Conclusion, where I argue that the profession needs to better understand the historical patterns of planning practice in order to appropriately respond to the contemporary crisis of the profession.

The Reactive Emphases of Planning Practice and Action

Since the publication of *The Death and Life of American Cities*, the planning movement has witnessed a crisis of legitimacy that has altered the primary objectives and the formal training of planning practitioners. This transformation mirrors, in many respects, the early evolution of the planning field. As is discussed in Chapter One, city planning arose from the divergent streams of architecture (and its predecessor, civil engineering) and municipal reform, combining essential objectives of each field into a new profession. The ongoing transformation of the field has recently emphasized renewed attention to “soft” infrastructure, such as the provision of employment training and social services to poor urban residents, as opposed to the physical infrastructure and land use planning emphases that presumably prevailed in an previous era.¹

While Progressive Era reformers worried about the physical conditions and dwelling inhabited by the poor, and the detrimental effects of such environments on the moral and psychological well-being of residents, contemporary housing planners worry less about the physical design of housing than the social infrastructure that supports the residents of low-income communities. These concerns have been reinforced in federal policy towards public housing; during the past three years, the provision of social services and employment opportunities has become an important new assumption underlying several rehabilitation initiatives funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.² In turn, the technocratic, land-based aspects of city planning seem to have been left for urban designers, civil engineers, and administrators of municipal public works.

These shifts in planning emphases represented the profession's response to public and internal concerns about methods and processes in contemporary practice. As has been the case with most major movements in urban history and progressive reform, the

¹“The place of public in housing,” *Architectural Record* (January 1994): 26-29, 43, 45; Peter Marcuse, “Interpreting 'public housing' history,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 12,3 (Autumn 1995): 240-258.

²See, for example, *Implementation Grant Application, Mission Main Housing Development; Urban Revitalization Demonstration Grant Application Program* (unpublished document submitted to Department of Housing and Urban Development by City of Boston, Boston Housing Authority, and Mission Main Tenant Task Force, 26 May 1993); and *Final Submission, Implementation Grant Application, Orchard Park Neighborhood Revitalization, Hope VI Plus* (unpublished document submitted to Department of Housing and Urban Development by City of Boston, Boston Housing Authority, and Orchard Park Tenant Association, 1 September 1995).

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evolution of planning emphases within the profession appears as a linear, dialectical evolution.³ Often, this progression has moved with little regard for the self-conscious examination of the factors underlying the shifts. While the protagonists were defining the debates, the historical dimensions of earlier practice seem to have been lost. The shifting emphases of traditional planning practice are paralleled in the historical and theoretical literature. The result has been an excessively conceptual, polemical focus on the deficiencies of contemporary practice, rather than empirical study of how planners worked and how the logic of planning analysis shaped their plans. Not until Alan Altshuler's *City Planning Process* (1965) did the specific work and philosophical outlooks of city planners become a germane issue in planning theory, though even Altshuler spoke reflectively as a participant reporter.⁴ Few researchers have endeavored to examine historical modes of practice, the institutional context of planning, the non-aesthetic objectives of planners, and their relevance to the evolution of planning theory and practice.

Aesthetic and Politic as the Basis for Failure

The troubled legacy of public housing in the United States has been ascribed to the deficiencies of aesthetic and/or political calculations in the planning process. A most striking explanation of the failure of public housing and modernist architecture has been offered by architect Charles Jencks. "Unlike the legal death of a person, which is becoming a complex affair of brain waves versus heartbeats," Jencks writes, "Modern Architecture went out with a bang. . . . when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final *coup de grace* by dynamite."⁵ Despite the

³Norman I. and Susan S. Fainstein, *Urban political movements: the search for power by minority groups in American cities* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), pp. 27-28.

⁴Another notable exception is Langley C. Keyes, *The Rehabilitation Planning Game: A Study in the diversity of neighborhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), which examines the planning process in addition to the political dynamics of rehabilitation planning in three Boston neighborhoods.

⁵Charles Jencks, *The language of post-modern architecture* (London : Academy Editions, 1977), p.23 [italics in original]. The political and technical objectives underlying the development of Pruitt-Igoe are examined in Roger Montgomery, "Pruitt-Igoe: Policy failure or societal symptom," pp. 229-243 in Checkoway and Patton, *The Metropolitan Midwest* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985). The space program developed by renowned architect Minoru Yamasaki for Pruitt-Igoe reflected several underlying concerns of the site plan and program envelope, including the need to eliminate slum conditions, the high cost and value of inner city land, and an effort to conserve urban densities while promoting circulation and the provision of open space with a

fact that Pruitt-Igoe itself represented the outcome of a complex and contending political and technical concerns, the deficiencies of aesthetic and the abrogations of politics have served as the textbook explanations for the problematic history of public housing and city planning's inability to effectively aid the poor.

For example, in *Cities of Tomorrow*, one of the most impressive of the grand syntheses, Peter Hall describes the evolution of urban renewal as the outcome of a protracted struggle between two coalitions: one led by Catherine Bauer, a Progressive Era housing advocate, who sided with construction unions to advance the cause of better housing for the poor; and the National Association of Real Estate Boards and its research arm, the Urban Land Institute, fierce opponents of public sector intervention in the private housing market. According to Hall, the tensions between these factions resulted in the peculiar structural arrangement of the 1949 Housing Act, a proviso that federal funds could pay for acquisition and clearance of land, but that tenant rents would be required to pay for the completed project's operating expenses. According to Hall, this compromise prevented local authorities from ever being able to appropriately manage public housing.⁶

Hall's analysis is substantiated by other work in the field, and together these accounts form an important basis for understanding the political and social contexts that shaped the evolution of urban policy during the postwar period. Hall's does not, however, address the process of planning itself – the methods of analysis, social and professional objectives, and means of implementation that shaped the daily work of professional planners. Instead, most planning history and theory has faulted a legion of grand ideas

neighborhood unit plan. Minoru Yamasaki, "High-rise or low-rise in public housing?" (abridged from presentation at NAHO Middle Atlantic Regional Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 22-23 May 1952), *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (August 1952):74-80. Montgomery expresses particular surprise that the domination of the planning process by the ideas of a single planning consultant (Harland Bartholomew) has yet to be examined. *Op. cit.*, 233-235. The political dynamics of Pruitt-Igoe's development are developed in Alexander von Hoffman, "Why they built Pruitt-Igoe," unpublished paper delivered at the Sixth National Conference on American Planning History, Knoxville, Tennessee, 13 October 1995.

⁶Hall 1988, 228-229. One dustjacket review lauds the book as the exemplar of how historical understanding can inform contemporary practice. "It is his understanding of the present," *The Times Higher Education Supplement* boasts, "which will make readers interested in his interpretation of the past. By engaging the reader in debate, Hall implicitly raises questions about how cities and planning them should be understood today."

for the profession's failures. The result is a bizarre tendency for the profession to blame planners on the basis of their assumed sins, rather than on the basis of documented connections between planning methods and assumptions and the outcomes of specific planning interventions. Even where such connections are identified, the indictments usually convey a superficial (or even erroneous) impression of contemporaneous methods in practice. Others works rationalize errors in planning judgment as the symptom of much larger political forces beyond planners' control. In effect, the work of professional planners is simultaneously blamed and exonerated for the varied legacies of a failed urban policy.⁷

A second fundamental oversight of the literature and interpretation of planning thought and practice in America is the emphasis on the evolution of great plans and their unrealized potential or mistaken premises. While Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*, and Burnham's 1909 *Plan of Chicago* (and indeed, Burnham's purported exhortation that the field "make no small plans") certainly merit study as the embodiment of distinct civic ideals and grand planning ideas, there is no reason to assume, as have many superficial examinations of planning history, that such plans determined the objectives and methods of planning practice. Indeed, while each of the works mentioned above seems to have had particular influence in varied contexts, ascribing planning successes and failures to these ideas alone does not account for the methods employed in ongoing practice by resident planners. The proper framework for an examination of the failure of urban renewal lies in the realm of planning theory and history, rather than in the limits of physical design or the dynamics of political process. As a profession, planners must look to the city and the history of professional practice to discern patterns and gain understanding, rather than accepting superficial explanations in good currency.

A Taxonomy of the Dominant Approaches

The basic story offered by many planning histories is fairly straightforward. Like all grand urban enterprises, planning practice has been indelibly shaped by local and national

⁷Michael B. Teitz, "The uses and misuses of history," *APA Journal* 55,1 (Winter 1989): 81.

political calculations. Policies have been determined largely on the basis of who stands to gain or lose; certain types of plans and outcomes were favorable to some interests and inimical to others. Given the underlying objectives of such literature (connecting the history of planning and the evolution of federal and local policies to the contemporary status of the profession), the focus on such macro-level phenomena is understandable. Somehow, planners must adapt to the changing political and economic realities of the environments in which they operate, and perhaps by looking to the evolution of planning as a continuous historical process, suggestions might be found that can help guide the future direction of the profession.

The literature of planning history and theory tends to emphasize the inappropriateness of specific aesthetic models and intervention strategies for urban renewal as exclusionary or class-biased. Plans and planners have been criticized for their inattention to community participation, while architects have been attacked for promulgating modernist ideals without regard to the social dimensions of community. While the existing literature has offered important insights into crucial aspects of urban renewal, it nonetheless tends to overlook certain aspects of the planning process in ways that limit our understanding of how and why urban renewal went wrong. This is due, in part, to the theoretical frameworks underlying much of the research on this subject, which tend to fall among four lines of reasoning:

Political approaches to urban renewal, the most common avenue of analysis, focus on the power relationships among the various actors in urban renewal scenarios. The classic explanation for the dominance of urban renewal as a planning intervention has been the cadre of downtown capitalists, eager to fend off suburban competition, usually at the expense of nearby neighborhoods. Many studies emphasize the central role of civic elites in promoting urban renewal as a means of removing the poor from the vicinity of metropolitan downtowns.

The underlying theses of such works are often inconsistent; while some can be characterized as extremely critical of the role of elites in promoting renewal at the expense of the poor, others retain the focus on politics to defend those making decisions regarding renewal. In many respects, political approaches tend to insulate planners themselves from fault, since they are cast either as willing or

unwitting participants in a much larger, protracted political struggle.⁸ In either case, the spotlight of such studies is on the political dynamics of renewal decisions. Inevitably, these studies pay inordinate attention to the political dimensions of planning, a necessary but insufficient approach to understanding outcomes.

Economic inquiries have included cost-benefit analyses of specific local proposals and the national urban renewal program (Anderson 1964), the welfare costs of relocation (Hartman 1964), and the politico-economic dimensions of the federal renewal program (Fainstein 1986). Such examinations have generally concluded that the benefits of urban renewal to city governments and relocated residents were either marginal or nonexistent, and have been among the more damning inquiries. Planning practice and the formulation of alternatives are not among the considerations of such research, however, an understandable limitation.

Polemical approaches to understanding planning have perhaps been the most dominant in both the literature and planning education, primarily because they are usually grounded in social science theory and the ability of the author to synthesize vast details and differences within planning practice into a singular interpretive narrative (Jacobs 1961; Boyer 1983). While sometimes offering interesting insights into the putative motivations of planners and planning, these works risk losing the details in the story and allowing theorizing to take precedent over understanding.

For example, Jane Jacobs (1961) faults City Beautiful ideals for ignoring needs of people on the street and intrinsic complexity and social organization generated by urban density.⁹ Likewise, Christine Boyer (1983) describes the institution of planning as the outcome of an evolving search for disciplinary order rooted in a desire of “progressive” reformers to reinforce and protect the capitalist structure from the pervasive threat of competition from small-scale enterprises. The city, Boyer writes, needed to be organized in a way that minimized the apparent chaos and disorder and made more efficient the flow of capital and production to permit consumption in the least costly manner, both in terms of resources used,

⁸Examples of the latter include Thomas J. O'Connor's *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

⁹Jacobs' analysis of planning history is based primarily on seven works: Howard's *Garden cities of tomorrow*, Mumford's *The culture of cities*, Geddes' *Cities in evolution*, Catherine Bauer's *Modern Housing, Towards new towns for America* by Clarence Stein, Unwin's *Nothing gained from overcrowding*, and Le Corbusier's *The city of tomorrow and its planning*. Along with other abridged extracts, these works were compiled by Charles M. Haar in an early and important synthesis of dominant ideas in the profession (*Land-Use Planning: A casebook on the use, misuse, and re-use of urban land*, Boston: 1959). Relying solely on these sources, rather than any empirical study of planning methods, Jacobs misapprehends these polemics to describe the process, as well as the ambitions, of city planning practice. The result, as intended, is another polemic. Jacobs, 17.

land occupied, and time spent. Both views say little about planning practice itself, and neglect the possibility that planners worked to achieve ambitions independent of those prescribed by actors in the political process.¹⁰

As the late David Hill has argued (Hill 1993), normative theories adopt a particular interpretation of history in the pursuit of a specific normative end. In the context of city planning, Hill explains, such theories advance a particular idealized urban form by contrasting it with an interpreted historical pattern of urban form and development. Notable examples of such theorists include Jacobs, Lewis Mumford, Patrick Geddes and Victor Gruen, each of whom advanced his or her ideas in contrast to putative historical ideals. The works of Jacobs and Mumford, in particular, retain their status as the notable paragons of design theory and the interpretation of American planning history.

An ontological dilemma arises, however, when planning history is produced in order to shape the outcome of deliberations in the present. Urban renewal, in particular, has served as a rallying point for practitioners advocating greater participation by affected community residents in the processes of decision making. Normative and polemical theories are intended to justify conclusions by contemporary planners as to the advisability of particular policies and programs. Derived from generalization and conjecture, and shaped by the advocate's desire to justify particular conclusions, the underlying historical assumptions of normative theory may indeed prove ill-founded, incomplete, or even erroneous. If such is indeed the case, the conclusions proffered by these theories compel reexamination (Berkhofer 1995; Teitz 1989).¹¹

Laudatory descriptions of the careers and work of specific planners and architects tend to emphasize the importance of the individual's contribution to the profession. This type of literature is commonly conceived with the explicit ambition of informing the profession by example, and is among the more prominent approaches to understanding the relevance of history to planning (e.g., Johnston 1964; O'Connor 1993; Krueckeberg 1993; Hall 1989). As might be expected, such approaches are often superficial and defensive, and overlook critical shortcomings and failures of practice.¹²

¹⁰Indeed, Boyer describes her postmodern analysis as an examination of the "structures of planning thought." Christopher Silver, "New paths in city planning history," *Journal of Urban History* 15,3 (May 1989): 337-351.

¹¹As Teitz writes, "Such arguments are often compelling, but they are also among the most egregious misuses of history."

¹²This is especially true of Hall (1989), who uses an evolutionary scan of the field as a prop for progressive action. His call to action is explicit. "America needs its best brains, its most fertile imaginations, in its urban planning profession. It needs a new generation of Mumfords, Steins, Bauers, Tugwells, Perloffs." Peter Hall, "The turbulent eight decade: challenges to American city planning," *APA Journal* 55,3 (Summer 1989): 275-282.

For example, while bristling at suggestions that his earlier work constituted hagiography, the canonization of early figures in the movement, Donald Krueckeberg nonetheless advocates a sympathetic appraisal of the way that a planner's conception of self and culture was reflected in practice, which serves in turn that helps "form a culture – a community of ideas and contentions that defines and redefines our salvation in our practices." In other words, a planner's understanding of himself in the context of a broader culture not only helps explain contradictory, egotistical, altruistic, impulsive, fantastic, and even foolish behavior and decisions, but also provides a means for contemporary planners to comprehend their own status and worth.¹³ Another commentator has recently argued that historical understanding of planning practice offers the "compelling promise" that planners can both legitimize their role as part of an historical tradition while recognizing their ability to move strategically in the future.¹⁴ Like the approaches mentioned above, laudatory exaltations of planning heroes do little to advance contemporary understanding of historical planning practices and objectives.

These classifications are by no means exclusive, nor do they necessarily do full justice to the range of views presented. They do suggest, however, the parameters and limitations of traditional approaches for understanding the legacy of urban renewal. Ultimately, little regard is offered in the literature for the logic and methods of planning analysis that induced the formulation of specific urban renewal schemes.

Research Approach and Questions

As has been demonstrated, much of what passes for planning history is in fact broad generalization painted from the brush strokes of earlier polemics; the superficial characterizations of planning ambitions, practices and aims offered by those seeking to rationalize their own position has been utilized extensively by those who have attempted to synthesize the literature of the field into something resembling a formal history. I do not take issue with the credibility or veracity of such works; instead, I am concerned with their interpretation. In the field of planning, the historical literature has been used in large measure as the basis for analyzing the evolution of policy.¹⁵ To the extent that such

¹³Donald A. Krueckeberg, "Between self and culture or what are biographies of planners about?" *Journal of the American Planning Association* 59,2 (1993):217-220.

¹⁴Seymour J. Mandelbaum, "Historians and planners: the construction of pasts and futures," *APA Journal* 51,2 (Spring 1985):185-188.

¹⁵The role of history in shaping contemporary practice is an area of planning theory that deserves additional

analysis bears on current practice, one is hard pressed to justify the use of works that may in fact offer little meaningful analysis of the active trends in practice during the period in dispute. Only a thorough historical appraisal of professional practice can adequately inform the profession and contemporary modes of practice.

In order to move beyond the dominant themes of the literature and comprehend the connections between planning analysis and planning outcomes, I have carefully framed this study in a broader context. My analysis is based on the following questions:

- What guiding considerations and underlying assumptions of planning analysis led to the conception and endorsement of certain interventions by city planners?
- How did the professional and institutional context of city planning practice influence the stature and ability of planners to shape planning outcomes?
- How did planners perceive existing urban form? Did planners modify their proposed interventions to reflect established development patterns, or did renewal planning portend wholesale replacement of established form?
- How did the process of comprehensive planning suggest the appropriateness of specific models of urban form as remedies for distressed communities? Were issues of form conceived of by planners independently of Modernist ideals in architecture? Were redevelopment plans formulated on the basis of planning concepts articulated in other areas of the city?
- How were these standards and framework of analysis reflected in the design and implementation of specific planning schemes?
- Finally, what are the implications of these findings for contemporary understanding of the status and methods of the profession?

I begin this study examining the establishment of planning practice and methodology. I start Chapter One by chronicling the emergence of the City Efficient ideal and the establishment of legal and institutional mechanisms for zoning, city planning, and redevelopment in Kansas City, Kansas. I then examine the ideas and methods employed by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, and the professional objectives pursued by

emphasis and examination. Despite regular discussions on such topics among planning theorists, these issues are seldom discussed in master's-level education or among practitioners. With the exception of Boyer (1983), who interprets historical study of planning as a means of legitimation, few contemporary works regularly read by planning students explain this issue. In the only substantive attempt at suggesting a role for history in planning analysis within the professional literature, Carl Abbott and Sy Adler instead suggest that analysis of historical contexts and the evolution of policy can serve as an important tool to complement established methods. Abbott and Adler, "Historical analysis as a planning tool," *APA Journal* 55,4 (Autumn 1989): 467-473.

Bartholomew's consultant practice. In Chapter Two, I examine the establishment and evolution of the Armourdale district, and describe the ways in which Bartholomew's analysis apprehended the social and physical structure of the community. In Chapter Three, I examine in close detail the formulation of the 1951 Armourdale redevelopment proposal, the response of concerned citizens and property owners, and the dilemmas that eventually forced the city government (and the Bartholomew firm) to at least temporarily abandon the project. In each chapter, I relate the specific accounts to the larger themes being explored. In the Conclusion, I examine the implications of these findings for contemporary practice.

By considering the origins of City Efficient planning, the institutional context for planning practice, the role of the consultant planner vis-a-vis city governments, the development of Bartholomew's logic of planning intervention, and the historical development of the community in question, I believe that I offer new and compelling insights into historical processes of planning practice. The broad aim of this thesis is to set this case into an appropriate interpretive framework in planning history. By considering actors and events in the context of their own time, recognizing the constraints imposed upon them by contemporaneous knowledge and methods, this thesis will elucidate aspects of planning practice that are crucial to understanding the nature of the planning enterprise in the early postwar period. Such an understanding is a necessary prerequisite to the examination and formulation of contemporary planning processes and objectives.

Chapter One

Planning as Profession and Method

While the city planning movement often has been described as a counterpart to the Progressive Era movements for municipal and housing reform, by the 1920s, a new and powerful emphasis was emerging. Closely allied to economic Taylorism and the municipal reform movement, the emergence of the City Efficient ideal in city planning not only heralded a shift away from beautification schemes and the landscape planning of exclusive residential districts, but recast the role and stature of the professional planner. The new planner became a distinct type of expert, a person versed not only in the engineering and architectural devices of physical planning, but in the application of social theory to urban problems. As Christian Topalov relates, the professional consensus that evolved from the regular interchange of ideas and discourse at the annual meetings of the National Conference on City Planning, and their dissemination to cities throughout the United States, served to announce and to legitimize the role of the planner as expert. This new professionalism represented the fruits of important mimetic influences not only within the profession itself, but within a broader array of municipal reform organizations in the United States.¹⁶

Armed with this legitimation, city planners were able to transform empirical observation, scientific theory, and teleological principles into a framework for action by city governments.¹⁷ This development suggests a number of important questions regarding the specific objectives planners pursued in formulating planning interventions, and the means by which they arrived at these determinations. What basic considerations and methods of analysis enabled planners to fit physical remedies to a diagnosis of social,

¹⁶“[L’organisation nationale naît d’un congrès] leur permet d’élaborer un langage commun, de formuler des objectifs généraux, d’étendre le mouvement à de nouvelles localités. Elle est donc d’abord un instrument de légitimation et de mobilisation.” Christian Topalov, “L’urbanisme comme mouvement social: militants et professionnels du city planning aux États-Unis (1909-1917),” *Annales de la Recherche Urbaine* 44/45 (December 1989):139-154, 153.

¹⁷The theory of technical rationality, which emerged during the period examined in this chapter, held that professional expertise was based on the command of a specialized field of knowledge and the application of this knowledge to the territory over which the specialist claims mastery. Donald Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp.20-30, 22.

economic, and fiscal distress? How did the institutional basis for planning practice influence the role of the planner relative to the city government, and the degree to which planners were responsible for the outcomes observed in urban redevelopment schemes? Upon what basic principles and objectives did planners base their analysis and recommendations?¹⁸

In this chapter, I will address each of these questions with specific reference to the Bartholomew firm and the institutionalization of city planning in Kansas City, Kansas. (This analysis will frame the discussion of Bartholomew's role and objectives in the Armourdale redevelopment proposal in Chapters Two and Three.) I begin by describing the evolution of planning thought from a focus on aesthetics to the application of City Efficient principles to social phenomena and municipal administration in American cities. I then consider the institutional and political/legal framework within which professional city planners executed their work, arguing that planners' relationships to city governments permitted them to determine both the methods of planning analysis and the prescription of appropriate remedies for the social ills of the urban metropolis. Next, I examine the development of Harland Bartholomew's ideas of planning, considering the influence of other planning theorists, Bartholomew's identification of the primary forces shaping the urban setting, and his explication of the criteria by which comprehensive planning and the redevelopment of blighted districts should proceed. I conclude by discussing the professional development objectives of the Bartholomew firm and the means by which Bartholomew's ideas were embedded in the process of professional practice.

Aesthetic and Science within the Emerging Profession

In 1909, Daniel Burnham published his famed *Plan of Chicago*, a document which has been described as both the epitome and the death knell for the influence of the City Beautiful upon American city planning. Guided by architects and planners like Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., John Nolen, and Flavel Shurtleff and George Kessler, the City

¹⁸As is suggested in the Preface, with reference to the thematic emphases of planning history, planning theory has been evaluated primarily in the light of contemporary practice, and only since the mid-1960s. As such, the professional assumptions, norms, and values that guided planners historically have gone largely unexamined.

Beautiful movement had attempted to address the ills of urbanization by creating “natural” escapes from the evils of the industrial city, and creating a new democratic ethos through the imposition of neoclassical architectural forms. But in 1915, attention would shift from Chicago and the landscape architects to Boston and a new group of civic planners, as Edward Filene and other Boston luminaries began a survey process to “plan for a Boston plan.” The outcome of their process was to shepherd in a new movement in urban planning, which some have termed “The City Functional” or the “City Efficient.”

The new guiding norm in such planning became the efficient provision of municipal services and management of fiscal stability in all areas of the city, rather than the design central civic centers and outlying residential zones encompassed by the City Beautiful. As described by architect and planner George B. Ford, the new emphasis in city planning portended great advances in the utility of city planning for the well-being of American urban life:

“The principle is this: a city is essentially a place where people live and work, and work to live; anything that can be done to make the city a better place to work in, a better place to live in should be done as a matter of common sense; anything that is going to make a man's work easier or more enjoyable; anything that is going to make his life more worth the living is fundamental, absolutely, to city-planning....If there is any one service city-planning can render to humanity, it is that of making the city a decent and a fit place for human beings to live in.”¹⁹

While there was some disagreement within the profession over the appropriate balance between the earlier emphasis on “civic art” and the emerging focus on economic and fiscal efficiency, a year later, Ford would confidently evoke the idea of planning the City Scientific, “as definite a science as pure engineering.”²⁰

¹⁹George B. Ford, “Recent city-planning reports.” *National Municipal Review* 1,2 (April 1912):262-263.

²⁰Ford, who coined the phrase “City Scientific” at the National City Planning Conference in 1913, remained somewhat ambivalent about the appropriate balance between the two contending forces. While advocating the developing of city planning as a science in 1913, by the 1915 Conference Ford was fretting about the abandonment of aesthetic ideals in planning in favor of innumerable and questionable surveys that offered little in the way of achievable results. “They [planners] failed to appreciate that what is economically and socially good may be esthetically shocking; that the offense to the senses may more than outweigh the gain in well-being.” George B. Ford, “The City Scientific,” *Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on City Planning* (1913), pp.31-45; “The architectural side of city planning,” *Proceedings of the Seventh National Conference on City Planning*, 129-134.

This new emphasis on utility and efficiency was paralleled by a rise in the stature of the professional planner, accounted for by two interrelated factors. First, during the early 1920s, in response to pressure from municipal reform organizations, a number of states laid the legal groundwork for the development of city planning and zoning as municipal functions. The political movement to institute these tools at the municipal level originated in the first decade of the twentieth century, but only after World War I did municipal reformers gain adequate influence to override concerns about the effect of these powers on private property rights. The credibility of planning as a profession distinct from architecture was further accounted for by a shift in emphasis from aesthetic to efficiency norms among planners themselves. Part of this shift can be accounted for by the practical work undertaken by planners on behalf of the defense mobilization efforts during the Great War.²¹ Having devised these early Federal interventions, a number of city planners (most notably, Edward Bassett and Alfred Bettman) became advocates within the municipal reform process. Along with colleagues drawn from the civil service ranks of local governments, this group urged the adoption of centralized planning functions as a means of enabling city governments to handle the problems imposed by postwar growth.

The most common result of this granting of power by states to municipal governments was the development of politically-appointed city planning commissions, which oversaw the administration of zoning ordinances and planning schemes devised by consultant planners. The foundation established during the 1920s by a narrow corps of consultants would in turn influence greatly the means and methods of city planning on a metropolitan scale. The movement for comprehensive planning, which unfolded dramatically as the Depression waned in the latter half of the 1930s, was a reflection of both the values inculcated in the field by professional planners, and the emergence of legal tools that permitted municipal governments to exercise powers previously unavailable to them. As a result, the practices of city planning as refined by the

²¹Christian Topalov, "Scientific urban planning and the ordering of daily life: the first 'war housing' experiment in the United States, 1917-1919," *Journal of Urban History* 17,1:14-45.

consultant planners themselves were embedded in the structures of municipal government designated to undertake the planning function in American cities.²²

Municipal reformers in Kansas City, Kansas, along with local business leaders, began to advocate for the institution of municipal planning in response to several problems with franchised public utilities. Once granted the legal authority to undertake city planning and zoning, Kansas City, Kansas would engage the services of consultant planner Harland Bartholomew. An initial planning contract later became an established consultant/client relationship, resulting in the formulation of a comprehensive city plan that would identify problem areas within the city and provide a framework for redevelopment activity after World War II. The interaction between the consultant firm and the city government would encourage the city government to undertake interventions suggested by Bartholomew, which were formulated on the basis of a methodology developed by the firm during the 1930s. This chapter examines each of these developments, and provides the organizing framework which describes the application of Bartholomew's planning ideals to the Armourdale district in Chapter Three.

The Political Rationale and Legal Basis for City Planning

City planning was instituted in Kansas City, Kansas largely through the efforts of the local Chamber of Commerce. A coalition of business interests, in concert with two influential local politicians, began the effort to undertake serious comprehensive planning primarily in response to three issues. First, the city undertook in 1909 to operate its own water works, originally a private investment established under city franchise. Continuing disputes with the water works, along with several other franchise utilities, including street railways, electric works, and natural gas companies, over rates and oversight, soon made efficiency in public administration a key issue in several municipal elections in Kansas City, Kansas. Second, the city was facing a period of relative stability in the aftermath of the First World War, but was also facing increasing pressures from growing immigration from Eastern Europe and Mexico. These forces in turn were promoting haphazard development and unsightly intermingling of land uses, especially near established

²²This point is demonstrated with reference to Kansas City, Kansas, in the section following.

middle-class subdivisions in the heart of the city. Finally, the city suffered from a persistent stigma as the “little brother” of the larger city across the state line.²³

The Chamber of Commerce began promoting planning by instituting its own subcommittee for city planning, and in March 1920, the Chamber arranged a visit and survey of the city by British town planner Thomas Adams. Adams attended a meeting of concerned citizens convened by the Chamber on March 1, and then conducted a four-day survey of the city. At the conclusion of his visit, Adams presented a formal report, outlining general suggestions for improvement of the physical condition of the community. Adams noted that the city had done little planning, with the exception of conceptual studies prepared by a landscape architect for the design of a public park system. Arguing that the city's rugged topography (Figure 1.5) provided some of the most dramatic vistas and terrain suited to exclusive residential development, Adams recommended that the city pursue state legislation to gain zoning and planning powers, the two basic elements required to permit the city to regulate the use and subdivision of land. Adams also suggested a general framework for a comprehensive plan, and suggested that the city should appoint a City Planning Commission despite the lack of a state enabling statute, offering a draft of Oregon's law as a model.²⁴

The local Chamber of Commerce took on Adams' charge, and remained especially influential in the push for municipal planning in Kansas. The Chamber joined members of the Kansas League of Cities and lobbied to obtain Kansas' first city planning legislation the following year. The law permitted city governments in cities of the first class (cities of at least 10,000 in population) to establish City Planning Commissions, appointed by local governments to two-year terms. Through the activities of the City Plan Commission, in concert with the KCK Chamber of Commerce, Kansas City, Kansas would earn the distinction of being the first city in the metropolitan area to engage in

²³Eldridge Lovelace, “Coordinating public works and urban renewal in Kansas City, Kan.,” *Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Journal of the City Planning Division 2* (December 1959), p.30; “Address of Allen D. Albert at the Annual Banquet, Chamber of Commerce, Kansas City, Kansas, March 29, 1920,” (Kansas City, Kan.: Chamber of Commerce, 1920).

²⁴Michael Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement: Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1900-1940* (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1985), 127; Thomas Adams, “City Planning and City Building for Kansas City, Kansas, March 29, 1920” (Kansas City, Kan.: Chamber of Commerce, 1920).

full-scale comprehensive planning. Beginning with a social survey conducted during 1919,²⁵ the Chamber and city government would make Kansas City the foremost advocate for municipal planning in the state. On June 29, 1920, the city passed an ordinance creating a nine-member planning commission, the first such commission created in the State of Kansas.²⁶

In November 1923, the city entered into its first contract with a firm headed by thirty-four year old city planner Harland Bartholomew in St. Louis. For a fee of \$5,000, HBA agreed to develop a major street plan, comprehensive zoning ordinance, and plans for public recreation and educational facilities. The firm's reports were issued in 1924, and served as the basis for the city's municipal zoning ordinance, passed by the City Commission in July 1924.²⁷ Some time would pass, however, before any meaningful or active planning work by either a planning commission or professional staff would begin, primarily because the City Planning Commission failed to perform effectively. Over the next five years, as the terms of the original members expired or members left the commission, new members were not appointed. The reasons are unclear, but by 1928, the commission would be characterized by one commentator as being in disarray, and apparently, the planning commission conducted little if any work and held no regular meetings.²⁸

²⁵Manuel C. Elmer, *Armourdale: A City within a City; the report of a social survey of Armourdale, a community of 12,000 people living in the industrial district of Kansas City, Kansas* (Topeka: University of Kansas Extension, 1919). The survey and its implications are discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁶The composition of the commission was altered slightly in 1923 after passage of a second law permitting city governments to determine the number of members. Lovelace, "Coordinating public works and urban renewal in Kansas City, Kan.," 30; Albert B. Martin, "Twenty Years Zoning in Kansas, 1921 to 1941," *Bulletin [League of Kansas Municipalities]* 120 (1941, pp.14,27-28. Little immediate activity seems to have followed establishment of the commission, likely due to the fact that the authority of the state enabling legislation was subjected to intense scrutiny by rural lawmakers.

²⁷Contract dated 1 November 1923, between Harland Bartholomew and City of Kansas City, Kansas, Roll 1, Contracts, Microfilm Collection, HBA Papers, WULS; "Kansas City adopts zoning ordinance," *Kansas Municipalities* 10,11 (November 1924): 29. There is little indication, however, that much work was done in the city; most likely, the work was performed by Bartholomew himself, in consultation with the City Commissioners.

²⁸In a lawsuit filed that year, the State Supreme Court was required to consider whether the city government had followed procedures consistent with state law in downzoning property in an outlying section of the city from light industrial to residential use. *Armourdale State Bank v. Kansas City*, 131 Kan. 419 (1930), cited in Martin, 1941, p.30. The controversy centered on the fact that the planning commission had appointed a subcommittee of three members to consider the zoning proposal, rather than meeting as a whole body to consider the matter, as was required by the state enabling legislation.

Despite the decline of the city planning commission during the 1920s, Kansas City, Kansas, remained a notable early participant in comprehensive planning within the metropolitan area and the region. The distinctiveness of this fact is most notable in contrast to the lack of similar planning activity in Kansas City, Missouri. Despite state legislation permitting the city to act in a similar way, Kansas City, Missouri did not adopt comprehensive planning until the decline of an entrenched political machine by reformers in 1940. This is not to suggest that planning stopped in Kansas City; to the contrary, landscape planning through the city's Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners continued, and public works planning, particularly as embodied in a major campaign launched in 1930, which led to the construction of a major civic center, including a City Hall, County Courthouse, and Federal buildings.

On the whole, Kansas City, Missouri's emphasis on public works projects tended to reinforce the influence of the city's lingering City Beautiful traditions, although this changed slightly in 1919, when the city's first Plan Commission began to study the improvement of trafficways, the creation of a civic center, and the administration of the city's zoning ordinance, adopted in 1923. This focus on public investments and land use was an important reflection upon the concerns of the local machine regarding the political benefits the accrual of financial benefits that flowed from roadway and infrastructure improvements to adjacent property owners. In Kansas City, Kansas, on the other hand, planning emerged as a systematic analysis of public investments and administration in an effort to guide municipal government towards efficient utilization of a city's physical fabric and natural resources.²⁹

This is an important contrast, since it demonstrates the degree to which strong-arm mayoral administrations and city politics in major metropolitan areas worked to delay the institution of comprehensive city planning. Indeed, Kansas City, Kansas seems to have

²⁹The evolution of formal city planning in Kansas City, Missouri is outlined in *City Planning: Kansas City, Missouri, 1920-1941* (Kansas City, Mo.: City Plan Commission, 1941). Robert A. Futterman, *The future of our cities* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961), p.208-216, describes the emergence of a comprehensive city plan as the first fruit of victory by a reform administration in 1940. The evolution of the Kansas City, Missouri projects is recounted by proponents in Civic Improvement Committee, *A 10-year plan for public improvement in Kansas City* (Kansas City, Mo.: 1930) and Chamber of Commerce (Kansas City, Mo.), *Where these rocky bluffs meet; including the story of the Kansas City ten-year plan* (Kansas City, Mo.: Chamber of Commerce 1938).

been receptive to the institution of comprehensive planning precisely for these same reasons. Not only was the municipal government not of sufficient size or scale for bureaucrats to oppose the introduction of a potentially contradictory force, but the city's commission form of government, which provided for at-large elections and a weak mayor, did not tend to encourage the sort of major projects intended to benefit partisan interests, as was clearly the case in Kansas City, Missouri. Moreover, during the first three decades of the century, Kansas City, Kansas saw a succession of municipal administrations, and no persisting influence of a single mayoral administration or political party. Indeed, from 1901 until 1927, no fewer than twelve men would fill the office of mayor (six Democrats and six Republicans), and of these, only three would be elected to more than one term. While the larger city's government clearly responded to internal political dynamics, the smaller's seems to have been driven by transitory issues raised in the biennial campaigns, such as controversies over the renewals of franchises to the city's streetcar and public utilities systems.³⁰

The growth of interest in comprehensive planning in Kansas City, Kansas was spurred by the expanding role of municipal government in and concern by local politicians in the city's fiscal and economic health. Efficiency in public administration became a key issue in several municipal elections in Kansas City, Kansas. Goaded by the local Chamber of Commerce, the city government quickly attempted to obtain the assistance of outside planning expertise. As municipalities began to undertake direct administration of utilities such as electric power and water and sewerage, the efficient management of these enterprises in an effort to minimize cost to consumers became a fundamental issue. Comprehensive planning emerged from concerns that a single agency was needed to consider simultaneously the separate but interdependent systems of which a city was composed, in contrast to the narrow views common to functionally-designated municipal

³⁰Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Pendergast Machine* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1972), describes the ascension and persistence of the dominant political machine in Kansas City, Missouri. The rapid turnover in municipal administrations in KCK, which partially explains the inability of the City Planning Commission to function effectively, was in part due to a succession of scandals that resulted in the removal of two mayors from office. Margaret Landis, *KCK's mayors: a look back*

departments.³¹ The prevalence of concerns about efficiency in planning seems an important dynamic of small- to mid-size American cities, rather than the larger cities (such as Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York) which tend to dominate the literature describing the evolution of city planning in American cities.³²

Harland Bartholomew and the Rigor of Process

Harland Bartholomew began his career as consultant city planning engineer to the City of Newark, New Jersey in 1914, and so gained the notoriety of being the first planner per se officially employed by a city government in the United States. An alumnus of the civil engineering program at Rutgers University, Harland Bartholomew began his career as a young planner in the employ of George B. Ford in Newark, New Jersey. He was later hired as consultant planning engineer to the that city, and took similar position in St. Louis in 1916. By the end of the First World War, Bartholomew had developed a basic methodology of planning analysis based on City Efficient principles. In 1920, Bartholomew established a private consulting firm in St. Louis, and during the early 1920s, Bartholomew and his partners would apply these methods to the formulation of comprehensive plans for a dozen Midwestern cities.

The basic components of the Bartholomew plan, outlined in the table on the following page, are grouped into three categories. Unlike the patternistic aesthetic application of consistent design ideals to different local conditions, Bartholomew's approach applied the newly devised methods of applied statistics and surveying methods to a canvass of the social and economic characteristics of the city. This methodology would identify basic trends and deficiencies. Physical characteristics would be control through legal regulation and provision of public facilities. The third, and crucial aspects of the plan, was the

³¹Robert A. Burnham, "Planning versus administration: the independent city planning commission in Cincinnati, 1918-1940." *Urban history* 19,2 (October 1992):229-249.

³²The prevalence of large-scale, public works projects framed in a City Beautiful vein are apparent in the two major surveys of planning progress in American Cities, George B. Ford, *City Planning Progress in the United States, 1917* (Washington: Committee on Town Planning of the American Institute of Architects, 1917), pp.80-85; and Theodora Kimball Hubbard and Henry Vincent Hubbard, *Our cities, to-day and to-morrow, a survey of planning and zoning progress in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929).

development of methods for its implementation.

While the basic outline of the Bartholomew plan was similar to that advanced by contemporary planners, Bartholomew departed from characteristic survey-based methodology and application of stylized aesthetic forms by using emerging criteria for sound neighborhood planning derived from sociological research. Bartholomew's approach to comprehensive planning was based on the Neighborhood Unit Plan advocated by Clarence A. Perry in the 1929 New York Regional Plan. Perry's concept sought to create cohesive, self-contained community units within which all commercial, civic, and recreational needs of residents would be satisfied. The Neighborhood Unit would avoid the disorder generated by the arbitrary imposition of gridiron subdivision, while promoting safety, family life, and community interaction. Though similar in density and proportions to Garden City planning, the Neighborhood Unit Plan departed from Ebenezer Howard's ideas by promoting the neighborhood as a distinct cell within a larger metropolitan center.

COMPONENTS OF A BARTHOLOMEW PLAN

- A. Matters of Research and Analysis
 - 1. Historical Background
 - 2. Site Characteristics and Development
 - 3. Social and Economic Characteristics
 - 4. Population Growth, Density and Distribution
 - 5. Land Use

- B. Plans for Physical Improvements
 - 6. Major Street Plan (including Off-Street Parking and Land Subdivision Control)
 - 7. Local Transit Facilities
 - 8. Transportation-Rail, water and air
 - 9. Water Supply, Sewers and Drainage
 - 10. Park and Recreational Facilities and Public Schools
 - 11. Zoning
 - 12. Housing
 - 13. Public Buildings and Publicly Owned Lands
 - 14. The City's Appearance

- C. Ways and Means of Carrying Out the Plan
 - 15. Administrative Policy and Practice
 - 16. Capital Expenditure Program

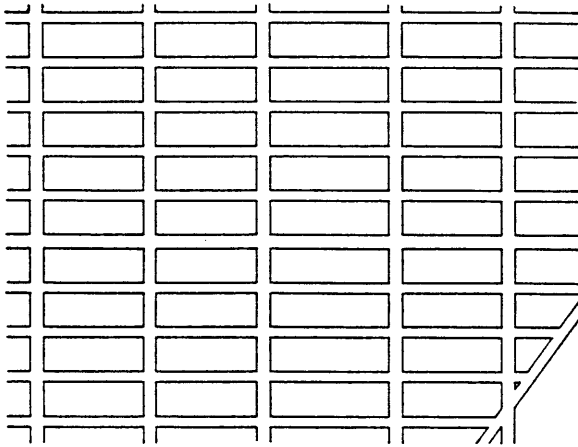
SOURCE: Harland Bartholomew, "The Plan—Its Preparation, Composition and Form." In American Planning and Civil Annual (1951): 97-102, 99.

Perry outlined several basic considerations for the use of the Neighborhood Unit principle. First, the formula should not be considered a detailed plan of a model residential development, since the idea needs to be applicable to the wide variety of local conditions in American cities. Second, the plan should be expressed in city planning terms, that is, it should take into consideration comprehensive aspects of city form, including design of appropriate building lots, recreational and civic spaces, highway location, land use, and provision of public utilities. Finally, the project should be of sufficiently self-contained scale so that the project can be completed within a reasonable period of time and without requiring the planning and reconstruction of adjacent areas.³³

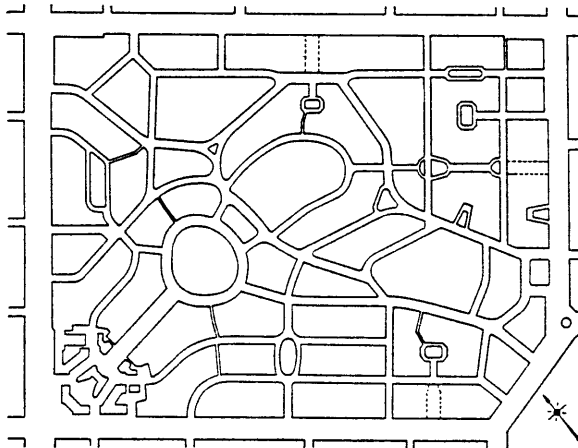
These considerations serve as the basis for a set of six Neighborhood Unit principles, which, according to Perry, would generate sound neighborhood development.

1. *Size.* A residential unit development should provide housing for that population for which one elementary school is ordinarily required, its actual area depending upon its population density.
2. *Boundaries.* The unit should be bounded on all sides by arterial streets, sufficiently wide to facilitate its by-passing, instead of penetration, by through traffic.
3. *Open spaces.* A system of small parks and recreation spaces, planned to meet the needs of the particular neighborhood, should be provided.
4. *Institution sites.* Sites for the school and other institutions having service spheres coinciding with the limits of the unit should be suitably grouped about a central point, or common.
5. *Local shops.* One or more shopping districts, adequate for the population to be served, should be laid out in the circumference of the unit, preferably at traffic junctions and adjacent to similar districts of adjoining neighborhoods.
6. *Internal street system.* The unit should be provided with a special street system, each highway being proportional to its probably traffic load, and the street net as a whole being designed to facilitate circulation within the unit and to discourage its use by through traffic.

³³Clarence Arthur Perry, *The neighborhood unit*, in Volume VII, *Neighborhood and Community Planning* (New York: Regional Plan Commission, 1929); *Housing for the Machine Age* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1939), pp.49-50.



A.—LEADING NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR



B.—LEADING TO PLACES WHERE PEOPLE GO

FIG. 32

CONVENTIONAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD STREET SYSTEMS

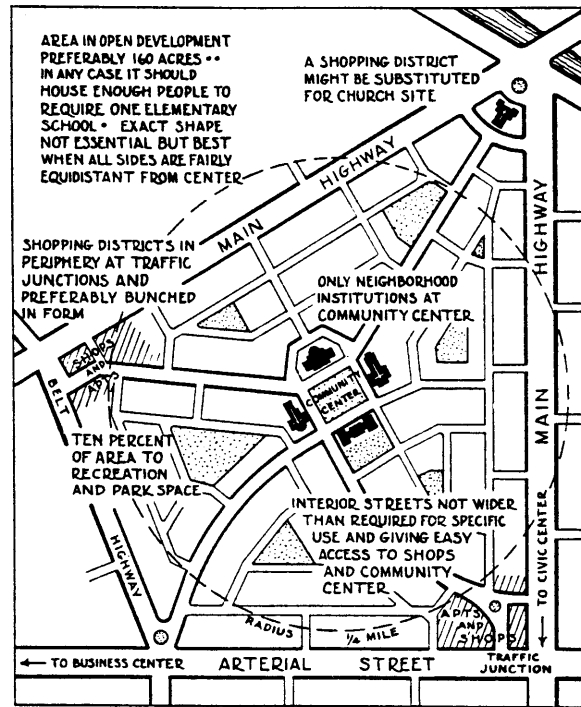


FIG. 33

NEIGHBORHOOD-UNIT PRINCIPLES

Figure I.I. Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Unit Principles, 1929. Perry sought to create cohesive, self-contained community units within which all commercial, civic, and recreational needs of residents would be satisfied. Perry's Neighborhood Unit sought to avoid the disorder generated by the arbitrary imposition of gridiron subdivision, while promoting safety, family life, and community interaction. Though similar in density and proportions to Garden City planning, the Neighborhood Unit Plan departed from Ebenezer Howard's ideas by promoting the neighborhood as a distinct cell within a larger metropolitan center. (From *The Neighborhood Unit: A Scheme of Arrangement for the Family-Life Community*, Monograph One in Volume VII, *Neighborhood and Community Planning*, New York: Regional Plan of New York and its Environs, 1929.)

“Together,” Perry noted, the principles “do not make a plan. They are principles which a professional planner – if so disposed – can observe in the making of a development plan.”

Perry acknowledged that the unit scheme could only be applied to new developments, or to the total redevelopment of established areas “sufficiently blighted to warrant reconstruction.” He also offered an idealized application of the plan, showing a neighborhood to which each of the principles had been applied systematically (Figure 1.1). The fundamental objective of the neighborhood unit was not aesthetic, but instead intended to match social objectives to an appropriate physical configuration of land uses and civic institutions. “If they are complied with,” Perry wrote, “there will result a neighborhood community in which the fundamental needs of family life will be met more completely, it is believed, than they are now by the usual residential sections in cities and villages.”³⁴

In operationalizing these principles, Perry advocates an empirically-rooted, rather than aesthetically normative, approach to the physical design of communities. Each of the six principles is derived from analytical study of both social behavior within communities and problems apparent in reform- and New Deal-era social surveys of problem neighborhoods. While specifying rigorous requirements for the attainment of a sound physical basis for socially active and healthy community life, Perry's formula leaves most aesthetic issues to the consideration of the individual designer. Issues of form are handled by the Neighborhood Unit proposal only by consequence, rather than by intention.

Perry's advocacy of the Neighborhood Unit Plan has gone largely unacknowledged, except for a general line of criticism regarding the isolating and elitist effects of its reasoning. Perry's ideas were shaped by emphases in social theory, especially ideas advanced by the Chicago School of Sociologists, which believed that physical neighborhoods no longer resembled communities. In order to strengthen such bonds, therefore, Perry argued for social segregation, homogeneity of neighborhood populations, and the elimination of nonconforming uses from neighborhood districts. These

³⁴Perry, *Housing for the Machine Age*, pp.51-52; *The Neighborhood Unit*, pp.34-35, 107-109.

emphases created sharp contemporary reactions, which persist due primarily to their echoing in the writings of Jane Jacobs and other recent commentators who favor heterogeneity and intermingling of uses.³⁵

Perry's thinking had an important effect on several planners, including Harland Bartholomew, and the Neighborhood Unit would become an important lens of analysis shaping the character of postwar renewal plans. In 1938, Bartholomew advocated city-wide planning based on neighborhood councils or associations, which would be empowered to petition city government for development and restriction of a specific neighborhood area. Neighborhood-based planning, Bartholomew argued, "is vital not alone to the success of our larger city plans but to the very existence of our cities."³⁶

Although Bartholomew began his career preoccupied with infrastructure provision and the creation of civic centers, standard elements of city planning during the teens and twenties, by the end of the Depression, his focus had shifted to the application of the Neighborhood Unit principles to the redevelopment of blighted areas. Bartholomew's use of the Neighborhood Unit principle was based much more on efficiency considerations than the social objectives Perry suggested. Nonetheless, Bartholomew still believed strongly in the ability of appropriate environmental regulations to enhance community life. "These neighborhoods should be so arranged," he wrote, "as to produce individual and collective harmony and stability, rather than the all too prevalent continuous conflict leading to ultimate disintegration of the whole group."³⁷ Slum districts, Bartholomew argued, were problematic in that they consumed far more in public resources than they returned in tax revenues. This was also true, Bartholomew noted, of new subdivisions on

³⁵The growth and use of the neighborhood unit concept is outlined in James Dahir, *The Neighborhood Unit Plan: Its spread and acceptance; a selected bibliography with interpretative [sic] comments* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947). The influence of the Chicago sociologists and the resulting disagreements between Perry and other planners are discussed in John D. Fairfield, "Alienation of social control: the Chicago sociologists and the origins of urban planning," *Planning perspectives* 7,4 (1992):418-434.

³⁶Christopher Silver, "Neighborhood planning in historical perspective," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 51,2 (Spring 1985): 161-174, 165-168.; "For the replanning of cities by neighborhood areas," *American City* 53,2 (February 1938): 56-57; Harland Bartholomew, "Neighborhood rehabilitation and the taxpayer," *American City* 53,2 (February 1938): 57; Silver, "Harland Bartholomew's Scheme for Richmond," Chapter Five in *Twentieth-century Richmond : planning, politics, and race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), pp. 159-175.

³⁷Harland Bartholomew, "The neighborhood: key to urban redemption," National Conference on City Planning, *Proceedings* (Washington: American Planning and Civic Association, 1941), p.214.

the fringes of developed cities, which required substantial initial infrastructure investment while returning much less (as residential properties) in revenue generation. “The American city,” Bartholomew argued, “is now face to face with the dual problem of curbing uneconomic and unjustifiable further expansion on the one hand, and of discovering how to redeem abandoned or depressed older areas.”³⁸

Bartholomew was adamant in his portrayal of sprawl as a force that undermined the integrity and vitality of established urban centers, and believed the basic form of the city was “fundamentally sound both from an economic and from a social viewpoint.” “A more appropriate term for this process,” Bartholomew argued, “would be 'disintegration,' rather than 'decentralization.’”³⁹ During the early 1930s, Bartholomew used surveys of several cities to develop and promote a system for predicting the absolute and proportional amounts of land required for different uses. Based on these findings, Bartholomew concluded that most cities were inappropriately applying zoning for inordinate amounts of the wrong types of uses, especially in the case of residential and commercial use.⁴⁰ At the same time, many subdivisions were being platted outside of incorporated areas, a factor that compelled city governments to annex suburban land and impose taxes equivalent to the investments required to service these outlying developments. Bartholomew presented graphic illustrations demonstrating the inevitable sprawl that would result without an organized program for recentralization of American cities (Figure 1.2).

Bartholomew explored the revenue efficiency issue through systematic appraisal and mapping of tax records to identify neighborhood districts with high differentials between the cost of government services and tax revenue received. In Richmond, Virginia, Bartholomew used such an analysis to suggest target areas for rehabilitation within the framework of the city's 1942 comprehensive plan (Figure 1.3.). Those areas identified

³⁸Harland Bartholomew, “The neighborhood: key to urban redemption,” p.213.

³⁹Harland Bartholomew, “A program to prevent economic disintegration in American cities,” in National Conference on City Planning, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, *Proceedings* (Philadelphia: The Conference), p.7; *The Present and Ultimate Effect of Decentralization Upon American Cities* (Chicago: Urban Land Institute, 1940) p.4.

⁴⁰Harland Bartholomew, *Urban land uses, amounts of land used and needed for various purposes by typical American cities; an aid to scientific zoning practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932).

were among the first to be targeted for redevelopment after the Federal government provided acquisition funding through the 1949 Housing Act.⁴¹ To deal with central city decline while addressing suburban sprawl, Bartholomew proposed that cities be governed and planned on the basis of neighborhood units, in order to encourage civic involvement and sound neighborhoods. To prevent the continuing loss of population to suburban areas, Bartholomew proposed that blighted areas of cities be reconstructed on a neighborhood basis, with backing from the Federal government, to create and maintain permanent value. This would be accomplished both by redeveloping such districts to place them on a “paying basis,” where enhanced property values would in turn generate proportionally greater revenues, and also by retaining population within the established city limits. Developed suburban areas too could benefit from the application of neighborhood planning, so that the value and character of individual subdivisions could be protected against blighting influences.⁴²

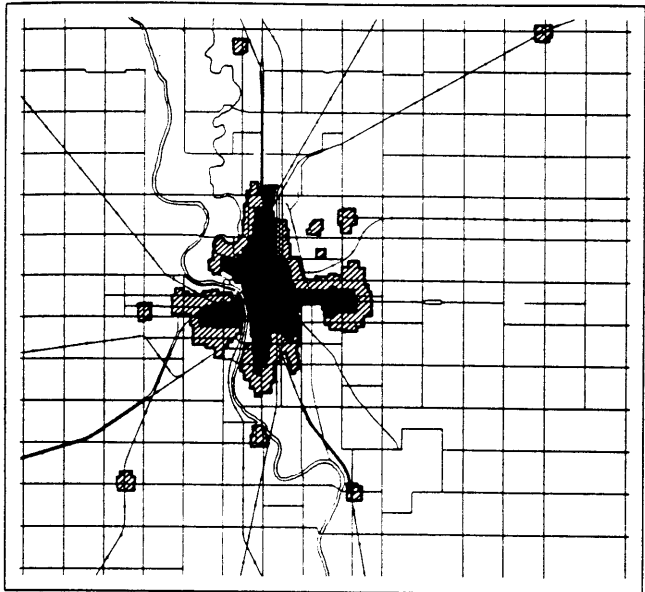
Bartholomew's earliest application of the Neighborhood Unit in this fashion occurred in a proposal devised in 1932 for Manhattan's Lower East Side. “The name,” Bartholomew argued, “is synonymous with poverty, slums, and babel of tongues.” Under contract to the East Side Chamber of Commerce and the Lower East Side Planning Association, a neighborhood organization, Bartholomew and Associates developed a plan to provide new, moderate-rent dwellings, with provision of commercial facilities, schools, playgrounds, parks, churches, and open spaces. Reformers lauded the proposal for emphasizing the large available population of daytime workers who might choose to live in the newly developed residences near Wall Street and uptown. To finance the proposal, Bartholomew and Associates proposed the creation of limited dividend, for-profit housing corporations.⁴³

While district proposals like the Lower East Side plan were common contracts for HBA, Bartholomew's most extensive use of the Neighborhood Unit concept occurred in comprehensive planning, the firm's noted expertise. During the early 1940s, Bartholomew

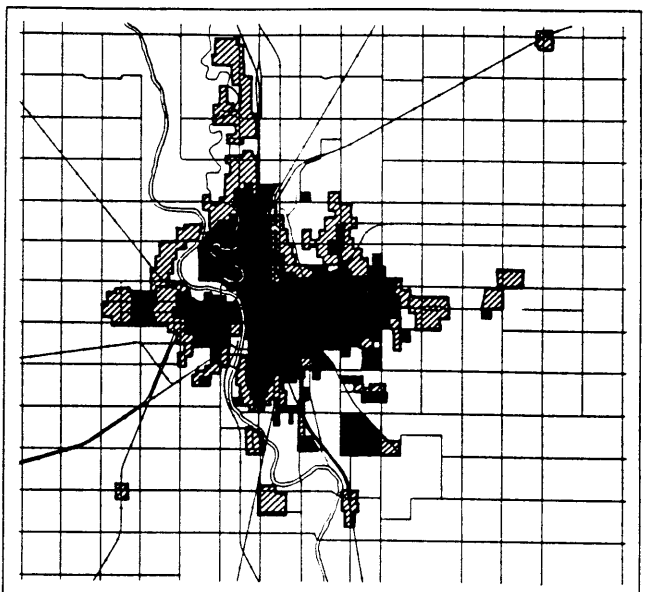
⁴¹Silver, *Twentieth-Century Richmond*, pp.173-175.

⁴²Harland Bartholomew, “The neighborhood: key to urban redemption,” p.213.

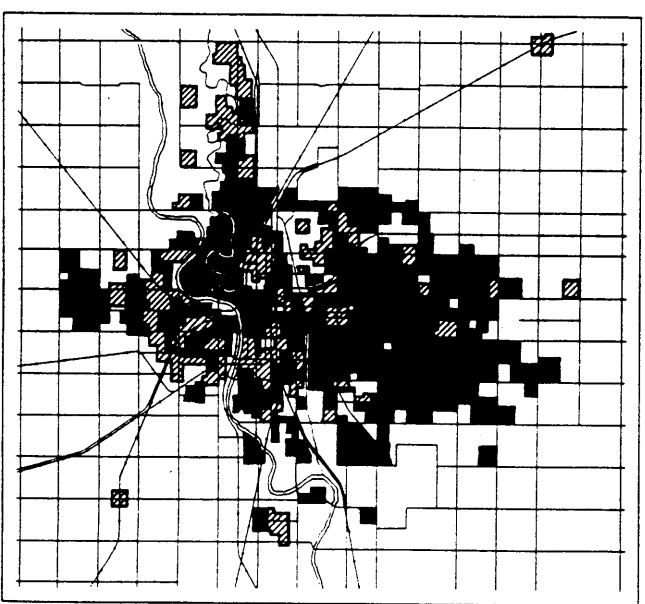
⁴³Harland Bartholomew, “The reclamation of the Lower East Side,” *National Municipal Review* 21,7 (July 1932): 408.



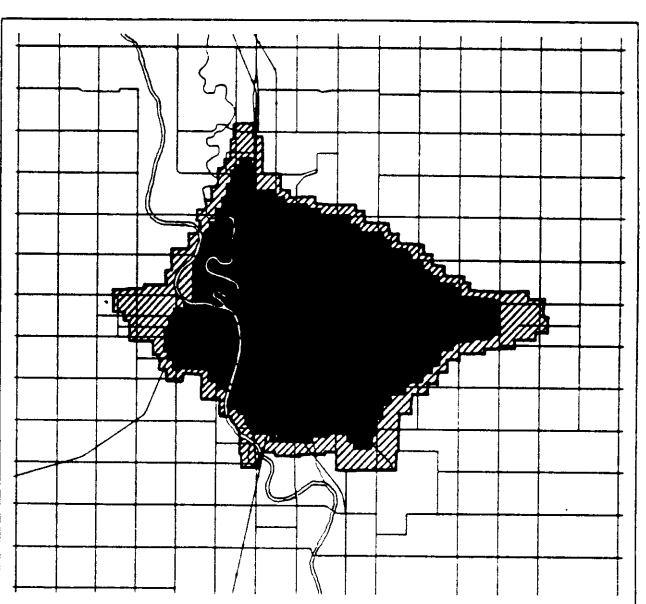
WICHITA IN 1921



WICHITA IN 1943



WICHITA IN 1970
THIS? - - -



WICHITA IN 1970
- - OR THIS?

THE
CITY PLANNING
COMMISSION
WICHITA · KANSAS

GRAPHIC PATTERNS
OF THE EXISTING &
FUTURE URBAN AREA

HARLAND BARTHOLOMEW
& ASSOCIATES
PLANNING CONSULTANTS
ST. LOUIS · MISSOURI

0 SCALE IN MILES 5

S.C.B. 43

Figure I.2. Graphic Patterns of the Existing and Future Urban Area, Wichita, Kansas, 1943. (From *A Preliminary Report upon Your City and Planning, Wichita, Kansas*. Wichita, Kan.: City Planning Commission, February 1943.)

CITY OF RICHMOND VIRGINIA

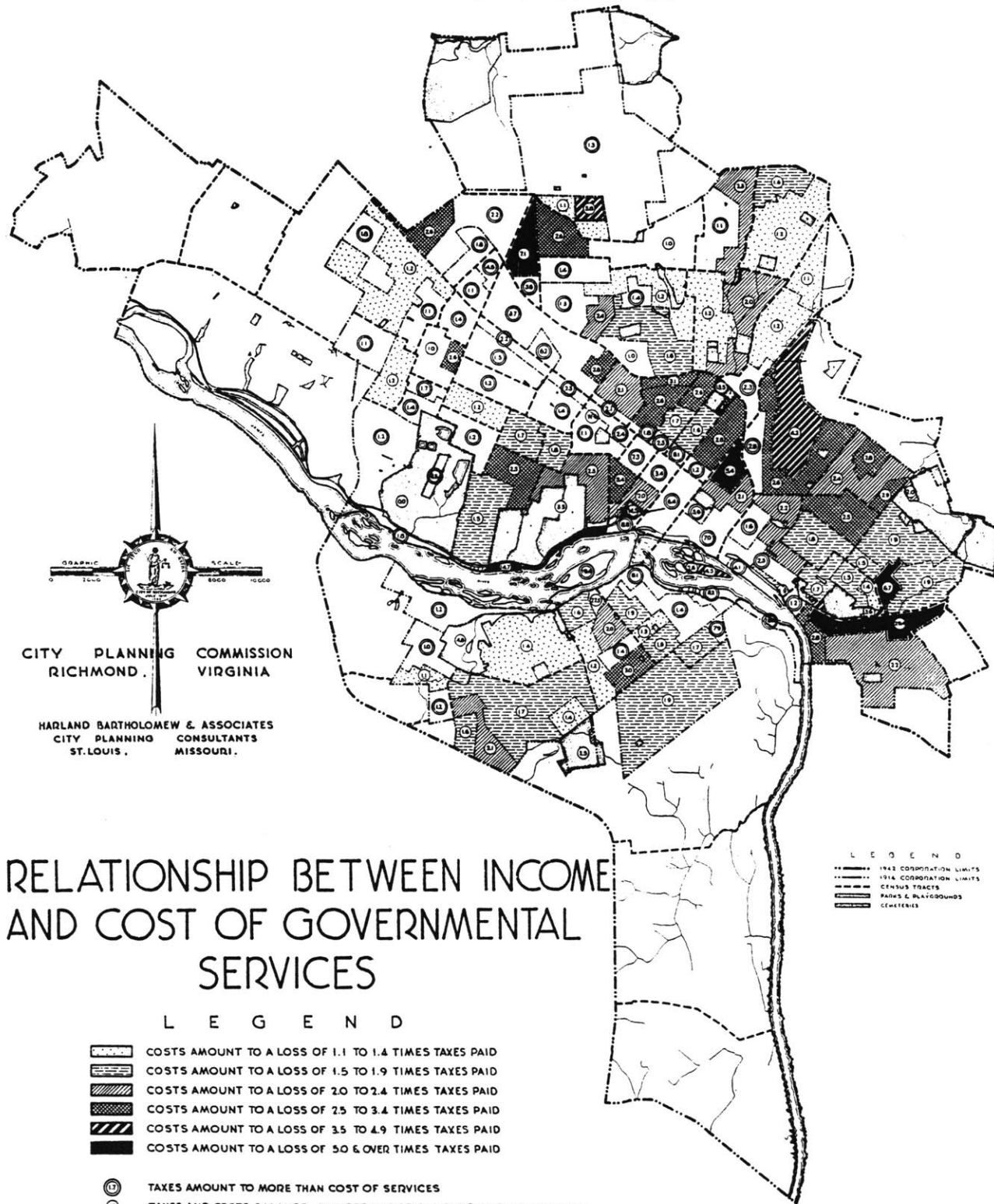


Figure I.3. Relationship Between Income and Cost of Governmental Services, Richmond, Virginia, 1942. (From *A Preliminary Report on Housing Conditions and Policies*. Richmond, Virginia: City Planning Commission, 1942.)

applied the Neighborhood Unit concept to the reconfiguration of a near-downtown district in Wichita, Kansas (Figure 1.4.). Like a similar reconfiguration of a district in Richmond, the Wichita application of the Neighborhood Unit concept modified an existing grid and its seemingly haphazard uses into a carefully coordinated, cohesive whole. Rather than permitting intermingling of uses, Bartholomew segregated industry and commercial structures to the boundaries of the district along major thoroughfares. Internal streets were limited in favor of consolidated green spaces tying together apartment houses and civic and recreational spaces. Overall, Bartholomew's use of the Neighborhood Unit principle suggested an abandonment of the open, externalized grid into a concentrated, internalized communal space.

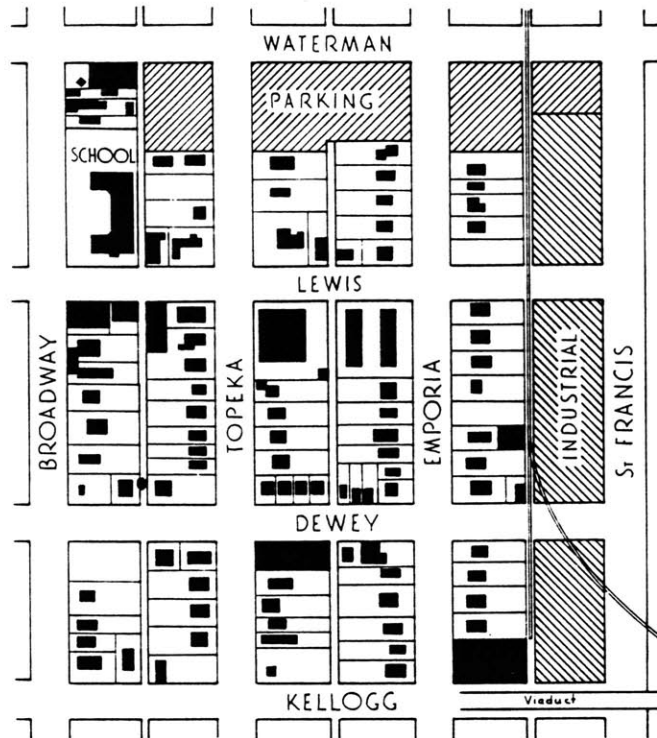
Bartholomew and his staff developed his methods of planning analysis and application of planning principles over nearly two decades of consulting practice. The analytical frames were based on Bartholomew's systematic diagnosis of the sources of urban degeneration and the inappropriateness of contemporary zoning and planning practice. Having developed a characteristic, refined set of tools, based on City Efficient ideals, Bartholomew next set out to apply them in a variety of municipal settings. In doing so, he pursued two complementary objectives: the advanced of the professional careers of his young associates, and the promotion of institutionalized planning within municipal governments. These objectives would shape Bartholomew's relationship with client governments and the firm's stature as a technical consultants.

Embedding The Methods in Practice

Basing their methods on a tailored approach to achieving City Efficient ideals, Harland Bartholomew and Associates began to have an increasing pervasive influence on the practice of comprehensive city planning in the Midwestern United States. From the firm's inception in 1920, Harland Bartholomew and Associates would apply the fundamentals of Bartholomew's approach to planning the future of nearly 300 American cities. Moreover, the Bartholomew firm managed to secure a foothold in many cities with the ambition of using this presence to encourage municipal governments to further institutionalize planning practice.

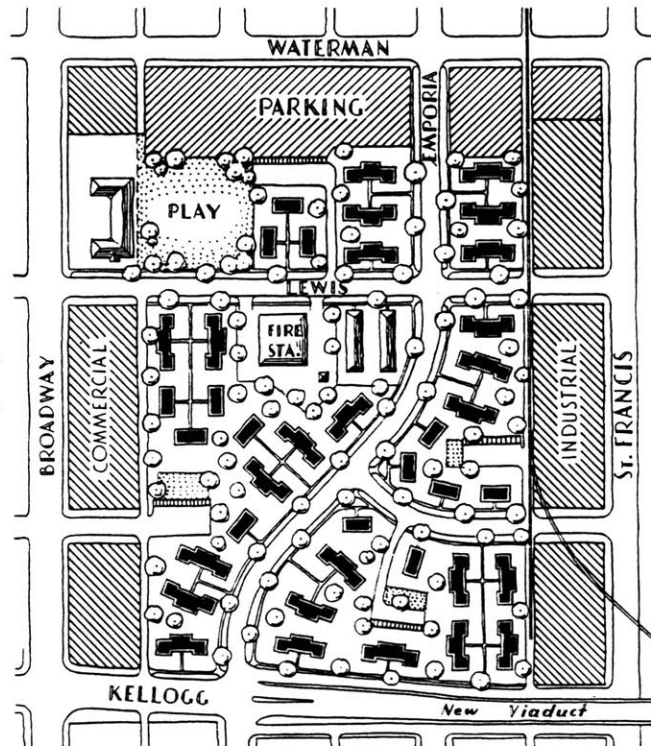
The extent of the influence of Bartholomew's firm is accounted for primarily because of the way that the firm executed comprehensive plans under the contracts it executed. All substantive work was conducted by the firm's field representatives, who were dispatched from St. Louis to take up residence in the respective cities being planned, under the supervision of a particular HBA partner. (While most Bartholomew plans bear only the name of the supervising partner, most work was handled in fact by younger Bartholomew associates working in the field, in consultation with the St. Louis office.) This practice, which began informally during the 1920s, was undertaken with two objectives. First, it would permit the young associate's work to be coordinated with the firm's staff in St. Louis, who in turn could offer whatever technical support was needed for the field representative and the production of the finished document. Bartholomew's plans have been noted for the active use of statistics, illustrations, and projections, work executed in the St. Louis office based on data submitted by the field representative. Second, it ensured that the plans being prepared for each city, while crafted to suit the particular characteristics of each, would nonetheless conform to the firm's established methodology.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Interview with Frederic Robinson, 15 March 1994; Eldridge Lovelace, *Harland Bartholomew: his contributions to American urban planning* (Urbana: Board of Trustees, University of Illinois, 1993), pp.59-60; Norman Johnston, *Harland Bartholomew: his comprehensive plans and science of planning* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1964), pp.244-245.

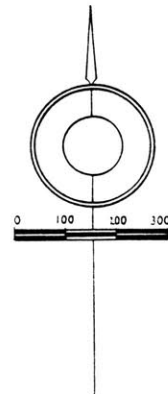


EXISTING CONDITIONS

 SUGGESTED TREATMENT



BARTHOLOMEW
 & ASSOCIATES
 CITY PLANNING
 ENGINEERS
 ST. LOUIS, MO.



REHABILITATION AREA

WICHITA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

S.C.B-44

Figure I.4. Existing Conditions and Suggested Treatment, Rehabilitation Area, Wichita, Kansas, 1943. (From *A Preliminary Report upon Your City and Planning, Wichita, Kansas*. Wichita, Kan.: City Planning Commission, February 1943.)

This important point served as an important factor conditioning the body of planners working for the Bartholomew firm. As Frederic Robinson explains, “the approach to planning that was followed by all of the employees and officers of Harland Bartholomew and Associates were patterned on his approach to planning. I suppose that if you were in disagreement, you would have found some other place to work.” This is not to suggest, of course, that Bartholomew dominated the work of his young associates, or that there was tremendous conflict among planners as to what the appropriate format of the comprehensive plan was to be. “Those who stayed there respected him for his tremendous ability,” Robinson explains, “and also the logic of his approach.”⁴⁵

Bartholomew's broader objective in dispatching a field representative, however, was to ensure that the plan itself did not serve simply as a static document, but instead was one of several studies that formed the basis for a continuing process that adapted that plan to the changing conditions of the city. During the 1920s and 1930s, municipal governments had commonly commissioned city plans from consultant firms, who then produced a plan that had little meaning for municipal policy, had created a great deal of skepticism among municipal administrators as to the value of investing in a consultant's skills. In part, this was due to the focus on piecemeal improvements that pervaded the aesthetic approaches to city planning. Designing a civic center, widening major thoroughfares, and providing recreational space were conceived by architects and planners as functions independent of each other. More often than not, such plans became little more than advisory documents, and were consigned to the shelves of the municipal archives.⁴⁶

This was a source of considerable worry for Bartholomew and his contemporaries, and he carefully refined the practices of his firm to preclude the problem. Bartholomew and other advocates of the City Efficient approach instead advocated planning as a framework

⁴⁵Interview with Frederic Robinson, March 15, 1994.

⁴⁶George B. Ford, “Technical advice in city planning.” In *City Planning Procedure* (Washington: American Civic Association), Series III, No. 1 (1926):15-18.

for regulatory action, the coordination of multiple activities through the oversight of a single municipal body with the advice and expertise of competent planners.⁴⁷

For this reason, Bartholomew continuously emphasized the need for city governments to establish planning commissions that might help to keep the plan “alive.” But even the existence of a commission was inadequate assurance of success in city planning, since the active process of planning required the continuing insights and support of a trained professional. Bartholomew urged that every city planning commission should employ “a technically trained person to be known as the city planning engineer.”⁴⁸ Some cities did establish internal staffs independent of their relationships to consulting firms, but the dominant trend was reliance on consultants for work in this field of expertise that was just beginning to gain recognition as a necessary function of municipal administration.⁴⁹ In the Midwest and South, as evidenced in Figure 1.6, that person was often an employee of Harland Bartholomew and Associates.

By dispatching a field representative to the established city, Bartholomew not only achieved his ambition of ensuring that a plan not be considered a “fixed and static thing,” but also assisted measurably in the development of the planning function as a centralized municipal activity. Bartholomew acknowledged that among his motives for dispatching a field representative, usually a newer associate of the firm, was to advance the latter's prospects for permanent employment in the field. Originally, this ambition was a subtle, unstated aspect of the city planning contracts executed by the firm, which typically required that the city government treat the field representative as it would any employee of a consulting firm. The field representative would undertake the planning work, but ultimately, the results of the city planning process would be delivered by Harland Bartholomew and Associates from St. Louis. In turn, these contracts would then be satisfied by the payment of the contract amount to the firm.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Robert Averill Walker, *The Planning Function in Urban Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), p.220; Johnston, 285.

⁴⁸Harland Bartholomew, “Securing results in city planning,” in *City-Planning Procedure*, edited by Franklin A. Delano, et. al. (Washington: American Civic Association, 1925), p.11.

⁴⁹Walker notes several important exceptions, including Boston, Detroit, St. Louis, Portland, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Nashville. Walker, p.212.

⁵⁰Johnston, p.238; Lovelace, p.74; Walker, p.212.



Figure I.5. Existing topography, Kansas City, Kansas, September 1947. (From *Growth of the Community: A Part of the Revised Kansas City, Kansas Comprehensive Plan*, Kansas City, Kan.: City Planning Commission, February 1954.)

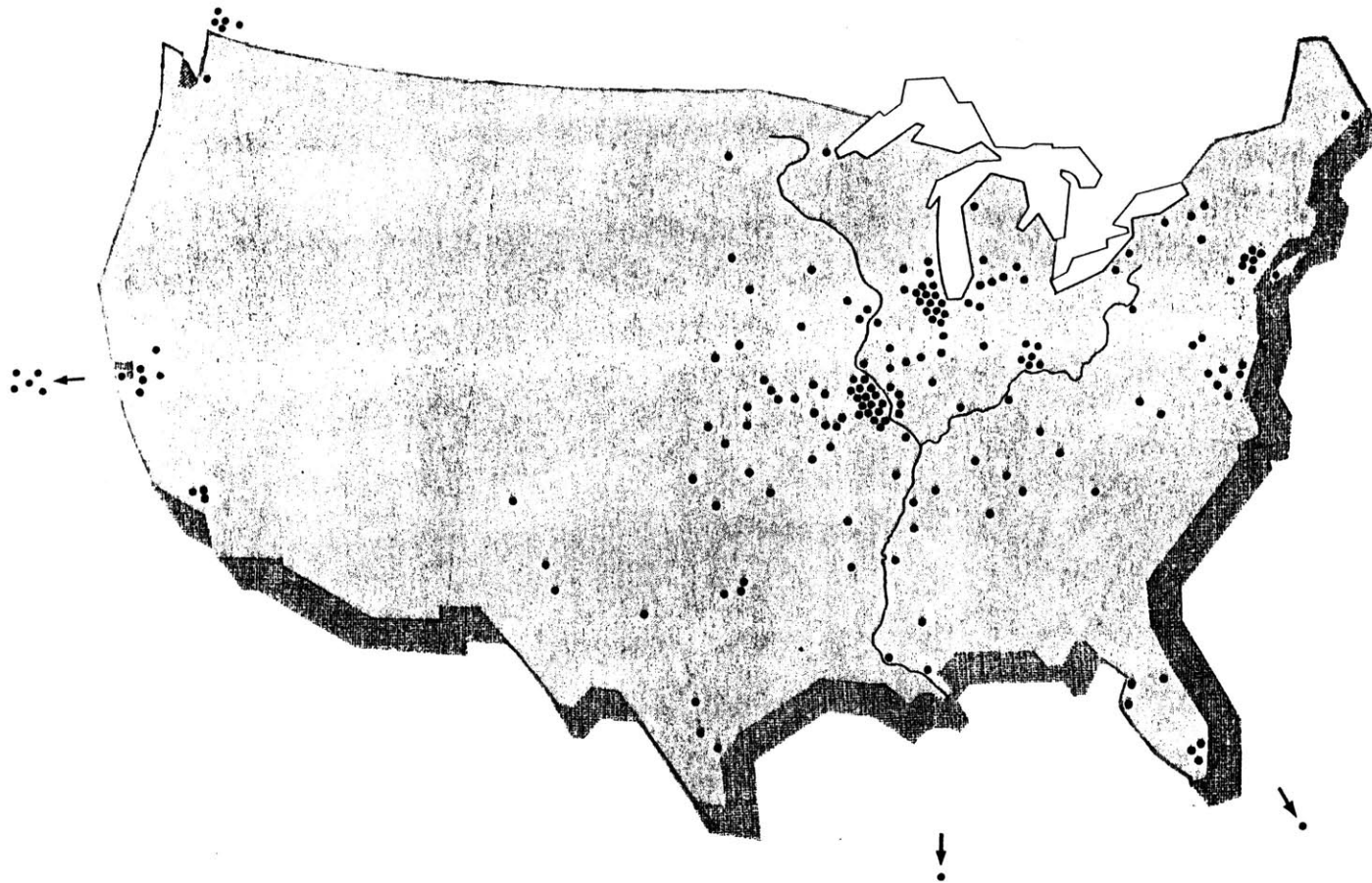


Figure 1.6. Geographical Extent of Consultant Planning by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1920-1950. (From *Harland Bartholomew and Associates*, firm brochure c.1950, Hare and Hare Company Records, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Kansas City, Missouri.)

By the mid-1930s, however, the financial process embodied in the contracts was modified. The city government would pay the field representative's salary directly; as cities became accustomed to the presence of the HBA field representative on its administrative staff, they became increasingly dependent on his work. The result was predictable: by 1941, five HBA planners had been permanently employed as the city planning engineers in Cincinnati, Louisville, Kentucky; Memphis; Oakland, California; and Portland, Oregon.⁵¹

Of course, the supply of planning expertise meant little without an equivalent demand which created opportunities for planners within the field. While the stature of professional planners had been established during the 1920s, only after the end of World War II did planning emerge as a meaningful component of municipal administration. While growth in professional opportunities in city planning had been steady since the advent of the Real Property Inventories, along with wartime housing projects and other defense-related programs, much of the work was still conducted on a consultancy basis. After the War, city governments rapidly increased their budgets for planning activities, reflecting the impact of federal housing subsidies on the administration of zoning ordinances. On the whole, however, city governments continued to rely on consultants, rather than full-time staff. From 1941 to 1948, aggregate municipal expenditures on planning increased more than three-fold, while only a handful of cities employed technical staffs to support the activities of their planning commissions.⁵²

The effective result of this practice was that the consultant planner was offered substantial leeway in defining the terms of the field. In many cities, the HBA approach to comprehensive planning, zoning, and the development of the city plan, applied with regularity and consistency by the manpower of the Bartholomew firm and carefully coordinated through the supervision of the firm's partners in St. Louis, indelibly shaped

⁵¹Walker, p.211.

⁵²Walker (1950) interpreted this development as something of a threat to the status of the profession. Walker, 219-220. Nonetheless, there was some increase in employment by city governments, as evidenced in the near doubling of membership in the American Society of Planning Officials (ASPO) during the War. Thomas W. Hanchett, "Federal incentives and the growth of local planning, 1941-1948," *APA Journal* 60,2 (Spring 1994):197-208, 205.

the basis for comprehensive planning in a plurality of American cities. Bartholomew himself was confident of this point, as he explained to Norman Johnston in 1962:

“It is difficult to say how far the objectives of our office have been achieved because, of course, there have been many others in the field. I do believe, however, that the work of our office has made an impression. I believe also that city planning as practiced today by the many competent staffs in numerous cities more or less follows the practice conceived and followed by our office.”⁵³

Having legitimized the City Efficient ideal as an important consideration in municipal reform and management of a city's fiscal affairs, consultant city planners like Bartholomew moved aggressively during the 1920s and 1930s to embed the ideology into the professional ranks of public administration. Doing so would require the development of a comprehensive city plan, which provided the empirical rationale for administration of zoning and the efficient provision of city services and physical infrastructure. Only competent planners, apprenticed within an evolving structure of professional practice, would be capable of undertaking such a task; while the use of consultants might offer some short-term benefits to a city government, only the permanent installation of planning practice as an ongoing part of municipal administration would effectively achieve the broader goal of ensuring the economic and fiscal stability of American cities. The practical and social consequences of planning process would not unfold, however, until the period after World War II, when the 1949 Housing Act would provide cities with the financial resources necessary to carry to fruition the processes and ambitions delineated through the process of comprehensive city planning.

⁵³Harland Bartholomew, 25 January 1952, as quoted from an unidentified letter by Johnston, 6.

Chapter Two

Order, Nature, and the Place of the Slum

The emergence of city planning in Kansas City, Kansas heralded the application of Bartholomew's techniques of analysis to the examination and modification of the use of land and the modification of a physical environment and the social conditions it fostered over a period of nearly fifty years. While offering a lens of analysis that suggested certain characteristic planning interventions, Bartholomew's methodology would alter the basic urban forms established during the industrial era. In order to understand the interaction between established forms and Bartholomew's city planning ideals, I outline in this chapter the historical evolution of the built environment of the Armourdale district, from the period of its initial settlement to its establishment as an industrial and residential adjunct to the Kansas City Stockyards in the early 1880s and the first half of the twentieth century. My emphasis is analytical rather than merely descriptive. My objective is to describe the original planning of the town, and its influence on evolving market and social processes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The convergence of geography, place, and built form created the distinctive character of the district, which city planners would ultimately attempt to unseat.

The Emerging Pattern

The land that became the Town of Armourdale was first settled by Native Americans relocated from the Ohio River valley to a designated Indian Territory, lands in the Louisiana Purchase considered unproductive and unsuitable for white settlement. In December 1843, the United States concluded negotiations with the Wyandot nation, a sect within the Huron tribe, to relinquish their established settlements in Ohio and Michigan, and relocate to approximately thirty sections of land in the tongue of land between the Missouri and Kansas (Kaw) Rivers at the eastern edge of the Indian Territory, just beyond the western edge of established frontier (Figure 2.1). Situated in the center of lands deeded some twenty years earlier to the Shawnee and Delaware Indians, twenty miles south of Fort Leavenworth, the Wyandotte Purchase was approved by the President in 1848, and was held in joint tenancy by the tribe until 1851, when Congress permitted individual

ownership on a fee-simple basis. The Wyandots established homesteads on the prominent bluff overlooking the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, and farmed land in the floodplain.⁵⁴

The Wyandots were “civilized,” as they had been living in and among white settlers in Ohio for over a hundred years, and With the purchase grant, the Wyandots agreed to dissolve their tribal government and become United States citizens under the protectorate of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Wyandot established homesteads on the prominent bluff overlooking the confluence of the two rivers, and farmed the lands in the river bottom. Transportation within the area was difficult, due to the rugged topography (the bluffs towered some 200 to 300 feet above the river bottoms) and the need to employ ferries and skiffs to cross the meandering waters of the Kaw. The 600 members of the tribe travelled frequently to the Missouri River landing in the nearby Town of Kansas (the predecessor of Kansas City, Missouri). The Wyandots also relied on the trading posts which outfitted the Santa Fe trade at the nearby town of Westport, Missouri, some six miles to the southeast. Under the Bureau's protectorate, a number of Indian agents, usually Christian missionaries, were designated to administer regular allotments of cash as part of the exchange for the land vacated by the tribes. Among these agents, the Wyandots traded regularly traded with Thomas Johnson, a Methodist missionary to the Shawnee Indians, who established a flour mill, trading post, and hospital manned by the Shawnees in 1823 on the hills four miles south of the Kaw River. The Shawnee Mission served as an important local source of foodstuffs and agricultural staples and the location of a flour mill, and Johnson also educated a number of the Indian children.⁵⁵

In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened Kansas Territory to white settlement, and through the 1870s, the Wyandot lands were subdivided and sold to German immigrants

⁵⁴Perl W. Morgan, *History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and its people* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1911); William Elsey Connelley, ed., *The provisional government of Nebraska territory and The journals of William Walker, provisional governor of Nebraska territory* (Lincoln, Nebr., State journal company, printers, 1899). The variation in spelling of the name Wyandotte reflection vernacular conventions. Most early reporters omit the second t and e, although this has become the accepted appellation.

⁵⁵“Wyandot and Shawnee Indian lands in Wyandotte County, Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Collections* 15 (1919-1922):103-105; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1844-1845* (Washington: Office of the Commissioner, 1844), pp.32-37, 149-150, 559-561; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1855* (Washington: Office of the Commissioner, 1856), 93-95.

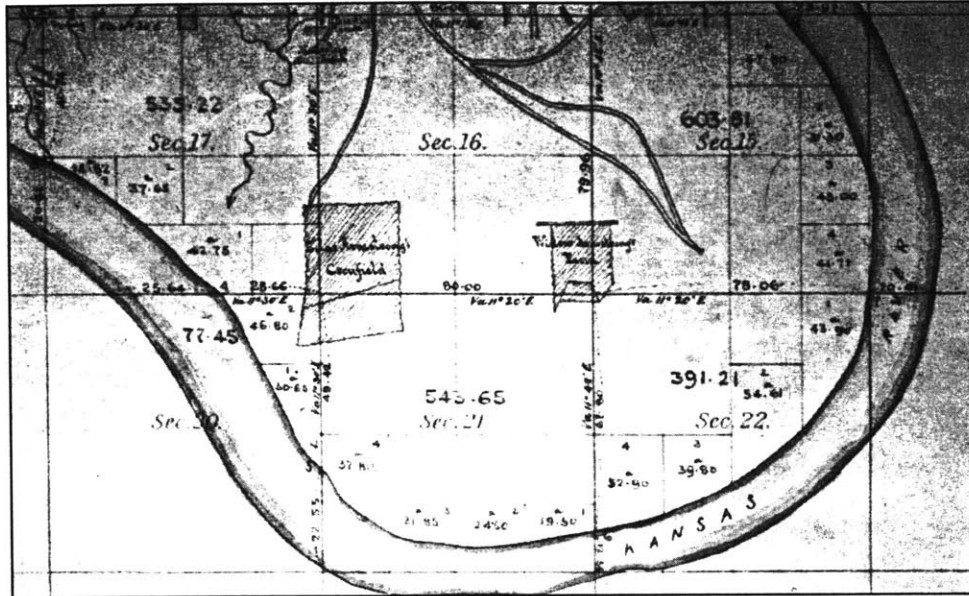


Figure 2.1. Survey of Wyandott Indian Lands near mouth of Kansas (Kaw) River, 1856. The Wyandotte Purchase was held in joint tenancy by the tribe until 1851, when Congress permitted individual ownership on a fee-simple basis. The Wyandotts established homesteads on the prominent bluff overlooking the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, and farmed land in the floodplain. (*Survey of Township 115, Range 25 East, Kansas Territory*, by Samuel Parsons, Surveyor General's Office, LeCompton, Kansas Territory, 5-17 April 1856. Cartographic Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.)

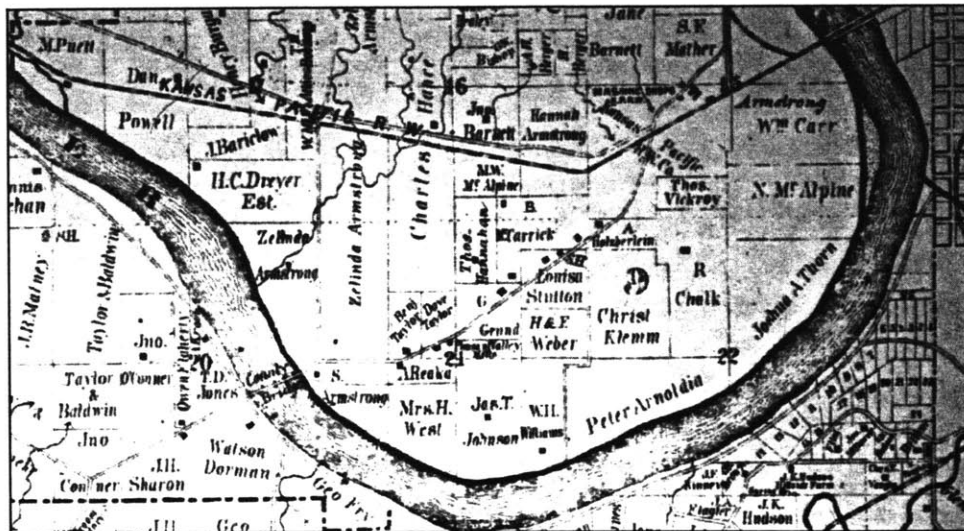


Figure 2.2. Wyandotte County, Kansas 1870 (detail). In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened Kansas Territory to white settlement, and the Wyandotte lands were subdivided and sold to German immigrants and abolitionist settlers arriving in Kansas City. In 1859, the County government built a road across the Kaw river bottom to service overland trade with posts to the South and West. (From Heisler and McGee's *Map of Wyandotte County 1870*, in possession of Murray Rhodes, Wyandotte County Surveyor, Kansas City, Kansas.)

and abolitionist settlers arriving in Kansas City, who settled their families onto small farms and homesteads.⁵⁶ In 1859, the recently organized Wyandotte County constructed a road across the Kaw river bottom, meandering to the southeast and eventually reaching a wooden pile bridge across the Kaw (known as the Old Southern Bridge). This road served as an important local route on the Santa Fe trail along a principal path to the old Methodist Mission, and also serviced overland trade with posts to the South and West⁵⁷. Along with the large Wyandotte farms and those of the newcomers, these roads and paths marked the first urban patterns in the broad flood plain, and linked the bottom lands to the Town of Wyandotte, established in 1855 on the bluffs some two miles to the North (Figure 2.2).⁵⁸

A Town Plan

In 1879, as part of a pattern of speculative investments in Midwestern railroads and industry, a group of Boston capitalists began purchasing land in the Kaw Bottoms for the development of a new industrial town. These investments had been spurred by the growing influence of Eastern-backed railroads, beginning in 1865 with the construction of the Kansas Pacific, Eastern Division, and the Missouri Pacific Railroads, both eventually a part of the larger Union Pacific system. In 1869, the Boston syndicate extended a small regional railroad to a bridge across the Missouri River at Kansas City, forming a link in a regional chain emanating from Chicago, Illinois.⁵⁹ The construction of the Hannibal Bridge over the Missouri River has been recognized as a pivotal event in the development of the Kansas City region, and over the next two decades, a massive boom, punctuated by occasional downturns, would transform the hilltop towns in the region into a sprawling bistate metropolis.

⁵⁶Patent, Competent Class "A", June 1, 1859, United States to Lucy B. Armstrong, Wyandotte County, Patent Record Book, p. 44.

⁵⁷Morgan, p.97.

⁵⁸Grant W. Harrington, *Historic Spots, or Milestones in the Progress of Wyandotte County* (Merriam, Ks.: Mission Press, 1935), pp. 237-238; George A. Root, "Ferries in Kansas, Part II, Kansas River," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 2,3 (August 1933): 251-293, 252.

⁵⁹Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community policy and the growth of a regional metropolis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), pp.161-172; Arthur M. Johnson and Barry E. Supple, *Boston Capitalists and Western Railroads: A study in the nineteenth-century railroad investment process* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp.225-240.

The concentration of railroad and distribution facilities in Kansas City led in 1871 to the establishment of the Kansas City stock yards, the most important of the various subsidiary enterprises which sprung up near the railroad terminals in the West Bottoms, the Kaw River flood plain abutting downtown Kansas City, Missouri. In 1869, several railroads established a receiving point for livestock in the West Bottoms, and two years later, these yards were consolidated into a single facility by the Boston group. Over the next decade, a cohort of Eastern investors, led by the Charles Francis Adams, Jr., reorganized and expanded the operation as the Kansas City Stock Yards Company of Kansas.⁶⁰ In 1879, Adams engaged Charles F. Morse, a wartime compatriot, to manage his investments in Kansas City. Among the primary tasks Adams assigned to Morse was the expansion of the stockyards across the Kaw River onto the floodplain originally deeded to the Wyandot nation. In late July 1879, Morse and a group of local partners, with backing from Adams and other Bostonians, chartered a townsite and bridge company to plat a new town opposite the railroad and stockyard facilities.⁶¹

During the period of rapid Western expansion, railroad companies commonly platted towns as lines were extended westward. Often, these paper towns, as they became known, consisted of little more than squatter shacks and tents for railroad workers. Once local construction was completed, the town would literally pack up and leave the site for a location further down the line.⁶² The expansion of the nation's railway infrastructure from Chicago to the Southwest through Kansas City fueled speculative investments in real estate that were manifested in the peculiar patterns of land subdivision common to western towns. A gridiron pattern of land subdivision, based on rectangular lots of

⁶⁰ Adams, a member of the fourth generation of America's most prominent political family, was drawn to the West, like others of his generation, by the promise of great wealth attached to the development of Western railroads. The role of Adams and other New England capitalists in the development and expansion of railroad and associated industrial developments is described in Daniel Serda, *Boston Investors and the Early Development of Kansas City, Missouri*, MidContinent Perspectives Lecture Series, No. 98, January 23, 1992 (Kansas City: Midwest Research Institute, 1992).

⁶¹Charles F. Morse, *A Sketch of My Life* (Cambridge, Mass., privately printed, 1927), pp.50-53; Charter, Kaw Valley Town Site and Bridge Company, 22 July 1879, filed for Record, 1 August 1879. Copy of Charter filed 24 July 1912, Volume 492, Page 405, Office of the Secretary of State, Topeka, Kansas; A.T. Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), 1241; Federal Writers' Project, Work Projects Administration, *Kansas: A Guide to the Sunflower State* (New York: Hastings House, n.d., republished 1978 by Scholarly Press, Inc., St. Clair Shores, Michigan), 209-210.

⁶²John W. Reys, *Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 526-533.

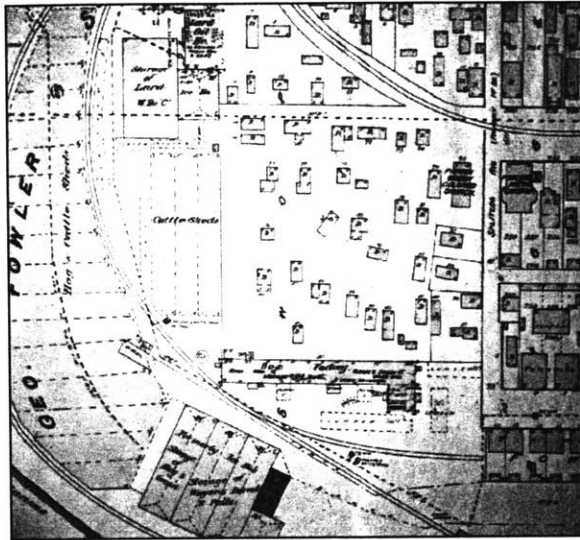


Figure 2.3. Fowler's Row, West Bottoms, Kansas City, Kansas, 1889.

During the late 1860s and 1870s, rapid industrial development attracted unskilled laborers to the railroad yards, meatpacking houses, and distribution facilities established in the bottoms between the City of Wyandotte and Kansas City, Missouri. Little provision was made by industry or private builders for worker housing, resulting in congestion that led to chronic health and environmental problems. Fowler's Row, a settlement of African-American squatter huts occupied by laborers from the

adjacent Fowler Packing House, was among the more notorious of these settlements. (*Sanborn's Illustrated Atlas*, Kansas City edition, 1889, Plate 2, from original in Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence, Kansas.)

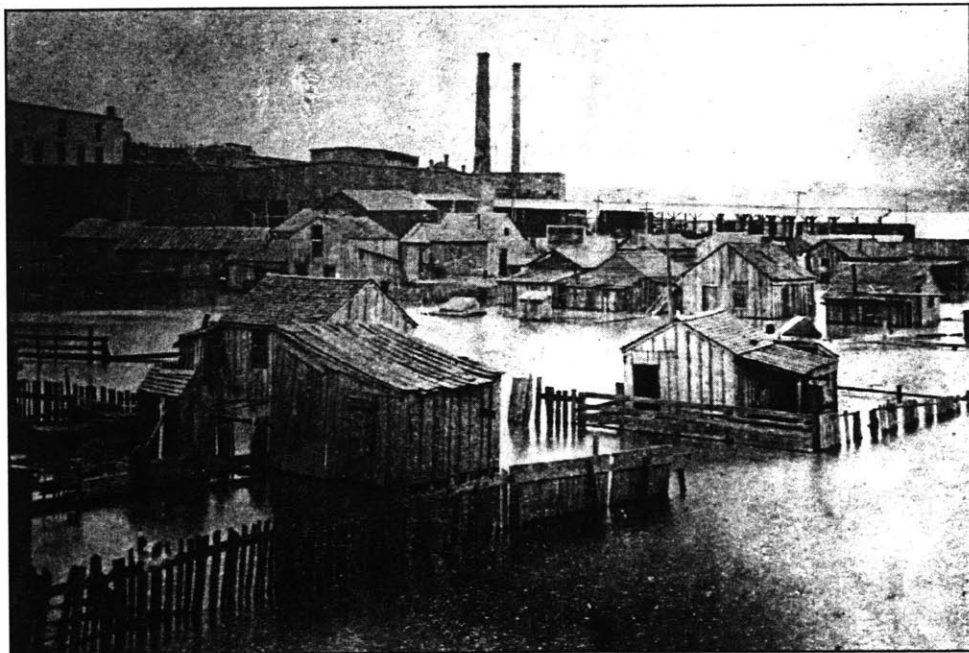


Figure 2.4. Fowler's Row, July 1881 Flood. Fowler's Row was not only haven to disease and filth, but was particularly prone to flooding. On several occasions, the district was inundated by the heavy spring rains common to the Midwest, as the Kaw River reclaimed its now-developed floodplain in the West Bottoms. (From the Archives of the *Kansas City Star*, Kansas City, Missouri.)

regular width and depth, permeated the geography of the city with little regard for topography. Streets were regularly levelled through the rolling terrain to accommodate the systematic subdivision of land from quarter-sections into quadrangled subdivisions. Guided by the assumption that land uses would vary over time, platting land in such a manner allowed investors to exploit dramatic increases in land prices by simply building structures on the lots with little regard for their situation within the property boundaries. Plats of land were cut irregularly, especially in the West Bottoms, where a haphazard mix of industry, commerce, and neighborhoods sprang up during the 1870s (Figure 2.3).

The least habitable environments quickly became among the most populated, as thriving industry attracted greater numbers of skilled and unskilled laborers to the railroad yards, packing houses, and warehousing and distribution facilities in the bottoms. Provisions for housing workers were scant; significant housing problems existed throughout the industrial areas. The problems were chronic in the area behind the Fowler Packinghouse known as Fowler's Row, a settlement of squatter huts occupied principally by African-American immigrants from the rural south, who constituted the primary labor force on the factory killing floor. Fowler's Row was not only haven to disease and filth, but was particularly prone to flooding, and was considered among the worst of the city's squatter settlements (Figure 2.4).

Being familiar with these circumstances, and concerned about the viability of the townsite venture, Adams and Morse were keenly aware of the need to introduce an order altogether absent from the West Bottoms. To do so, they employed the talents of Kansas City surveyor William B. Knight, a New York-born civil engineer who trained at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Figure 2.5). Knight was typical of the civil engineers whose surveying techniques laid the technical basis for much of the town planning conducted during the boom years of the 1880s. Knight's engineering background consisted primarily of railroad surveying: in addition to work on several regional railroads in New York and Connecticut, Knight had served as supervising and assistant engineer on railroads in Florida and Panama, was for two years City Surveyor of New York, and

platted some of the first subdivisions in Westchester County and Staten Island, New York.⁶³

Knight conceived an expansive pattern of subdivision and development that would proceed incrementally through the early 1880s. Knight carefully devised an expansive development pattern for the new town, dubbed Armourdale in honor of the Chicago meatpacking family, which would become the largest single townsite development in the Kansas City area during the nineteenth century. Beginning in 1880, Knight filed several plats subdividing lands in the Kaw River Bottom into a regular grid of H-shaped blocks, with clear references to the urban patterns established in the preindustrial era. Far from being simply the maligned “surveyor town,” Knight’s plan for Armourdale demonstrates consideration for aesthetics, internal circulation, and through connections between the district and the Kansas City Stockyards (to the East), the Town of Wyandotte (to the North), and the Town of Argentine (to the Southwest), the terminus of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway in Kansas City. Knight set out a regular grid system of rectilinear blocks, cut through by an H-shaped grid of alleys. Despite the adherence to the standard gridiron, Knight's plats conformed in a minor way to existing developments, such as the Old County Road, which now crossed a bridge from Armourdale into the city of Argentine (Figure 2.6).

The dominant feature of Knight's plan for Armourdale is the reliance on the twenty-five foot lot of depths varying from 115 to 130 feet. The rectilinear blocks were oriented north and south lengthwise, with a regular pattern of through streets 60 feet in width, further bisected by 15-foot wide feeder alleys running in an H-shaped configuration through each block. These alleys were intended not so much to permit circulation of air and light as they were intended to maximize usable frontage, with building filling the full

⁶³Knight was a partner with Charles Morse's brother-in-law and electrical engineer Daniel Bontecou. Theo S. Case, *History of Kansas City* (Syracuse: D. Knight, 1888), p.534-536. As one of two partners in the firm of Knight and Bontecou, Knight would play an influential role in the development and expansion of the Metropolitan Street Railway system in Kansas City, the city's major street railways, and also conducted engineering surveys for several major railroads and acted for served for three years during the mid-1880s as city engineer of Kansas City, Missouri. In December 1890, while traveling from Kansas City to Chicago, Knight was severely burned in a major railroad accident on the Chicago and Alton Railroad in central Illinois which claimed the life of approximately 43 passengers. Although he seemed to be recovering, after approximately a week he died of his injuries. *Railroad Gazette* 22 (26 December 1890): 902; *Engineering Record* 23 (13 December 1890): 22.

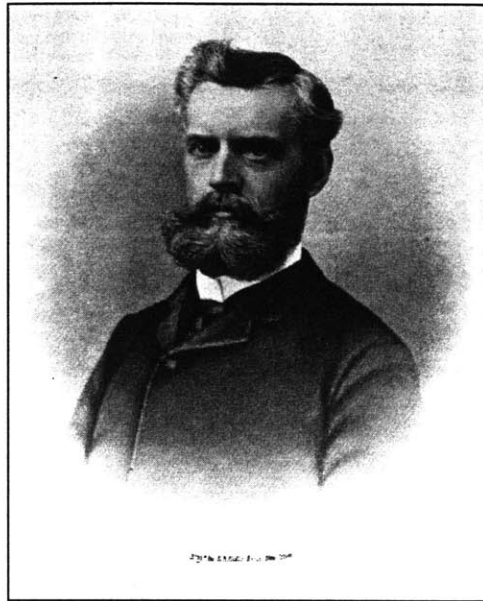


Figure 2.5. William B. Knight, a New York-born civil engineer who trained at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, was retained in 1880 by Bostonian Charles Francis Adams, Jr. to develop a plan for the Town of Armourdale. Knight co-founded a Kansas City-based engineering firm with Daniel Bontecou, an electrical engineer and relative of Charles F. Morse, Adams' agent in Kansas City. In addition to work on several regional railroads in New York and Connecticut, Knight had served as supervising and assistant engineer on railroads in Florida and Panama, was for two years City Surveyor of New York, and platted some of the first subdivisions in Westchester County and Staten Island, New York. (From Theo S. Case, *History of Kansas City*, Syracuse: D. Mason, 1888.)

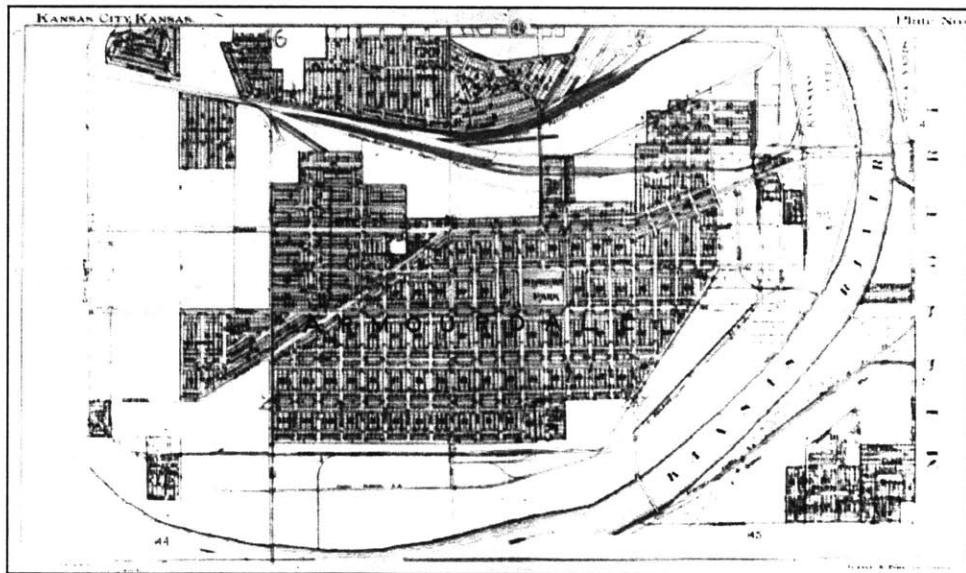


Figure 2.6. Survey of Armourdale, 1900. Beginning in 1880, Knight filed several plats subdividing lands in the Kaw River Bottom into a regular grid of H-shaped blocks, with clear references to the urban patterns established in the preindustrial era. Far from being simply the maligned "surveyor town," Knight's plan for Armourdale demonstrates consideration for aesthetics, internal circulation, and through connections between the district and the Kansas City Stockyards (to the East), the Town of Wyandotte (to the North), and the Town of Argentine (to the Southwest), the terminus of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway in Kansas City. (Plate 43, *Atlas of Kansas City and Vicinity*, Tuttle and Pike, Civil Engineers, 1900.)

depth of each lot; each lot was therefore serviced not only by street frontage, but also by a rear alley, while each block contained a central alley that formed a shared point of interior access. Like most real estate speculators, Adams and his backers merely platted land into streets and lots of varying sizes, and sold these lots to builders and individuals, who in turn constructed improvements on the land. No effort was made to construct sidewalks, pave streets, or to develop sewage or water supply systems. Even Shawnee Park required public improvement before it could be effectively used.⁶⁴

The Kaw River bridge extended west from Kansas City, Missouri to meet Kansas Avenue, the town's principal thoroughfare, an 80-foot avenue dividing commercial and light industrial uses along the Union Pacific tracks to the north from the residential sections to the South. Osage Avenue, a second commercial artery 80 feet in width, ran parallel to this street; while the minor bisecting streets ran east and west to the Kaw's bend at the South. North/south routes were numbered successively from the eastern end of the town, with First Street fronting the Kaw, as was the established tradition in railroad towns. In addition to Kansas and Osage Avenues, named for the two largest pre-American native tribes of Kansas and Missouri, respectively, the other east/west routes were named for the Indian tribes relocated to the vicinity of the townsite, beginning at the north end of the town (and appearing successively in the order in which they settled in the Indian Territory) with Delaware Avenue, Shawnee Avenue, Miami Avenue, Cheyenne and Pawnee Streets. Argentine Boulevard, another 60-foot street, emerged from Kansas Avenue as a diagonal connection to the southwest and generally followed the Old County Road, reaching the Old Southern bridge. As the name indicates, however, the route now served as an important connector to the terminal facilities of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad opposite Armourdale, along with the industrial developments in Argentine that grew up near the yards.⁶⁵

⁶⁴*Ordinance Book*, City Clerk's Office, City of Kansas City, Kansas, 1882.

⁶⁵The town of Argentine itself was named after a silver smelter and refinery built there in 1879 by a syndicate headed by August R. Meyer, a German-born metallurgist from St. Louis, who owned several silver mines in and near Leadville, Colorado. Meyer would later become well-known as the head of Kansas City, Missouri Board of Parks and Boulevards Commissioners.

Knight's plan for Armourdale not only expressed functional and economic requirements, but did reveal aesthetic and civic motives as well. In the center of Armourdale the Town Site Company left an open expanse for a public park, much like the central commons of New England villages and the public square of the emerging railroad towns of the West. A separate reservation in the south central part of the town set aside by Lucy Armstrong for a local public school was preserved in the town company's plans. In these respects, Armourdale departed dramatically from the way-stations and slipshod plats which comprised typical speculative investments in and around Kansas City. Although the industrial town has been vilified since the nineteenth century for its obeisance to speculation over aesthetics, Adams and the civil engineers in his employ conveyed a clear vision for a specific urban form in the town. Unlike the railroad towns, Armourdale was conceived on the order of a New England industrial city, and together, the development of these nearly seven hundred acres certainly constituted the most significant town development in the region during the late nineteenth century. Thus, Armourdale was much closer in form to its earlier Eastern-inspired counterparts in the region. Like Lawrence and Quindaro, Armourdale contained a central town square, as much a common civic space as a form of lungs for the gritty industrial town.

In 1886, the collection of small Kansas towns near the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers were consolidated into the new city of Kansas City, Kansas by proclamation of Governor John A. Martin. Intended to unify commercially several distinct residential and commercial enclaves and better enable city government to provide municipal infrastructure, the consolidation assembled communities with distinct interests and divergent character. Unlike the Town of Wyandotte, long home to the city's prosperous merchant class, Armourdale had, since its establishment, been a working-class town. The creation of Kansas City, Kansas, therefore forced a single municipal administration to deal with the efficient provision of services to physically separated and socially distinct communities.

On the whole, while still a somewhat dingy western industrial outpost, Armourdale counted among its residents some of the most prosperous merchants in Wyandotte County. From a preindustrial population of a few dozen, Armourdale became home to

nearly 1,500 merchants and skilled laborers and their families, enough to be classified as a second-class city in 1882. Armourdale developed its own schools, churches, banks, retail and wholesale merchandise houses. Soon German, Irish, and Swedish immigrants arrived to work in the packing houses and associated industries, including a cooperage, soap factories, and desiccating works.⁶⁶ The city was home to active labor organizations, including a brotherhood of railroad workers who organized a local chapter of the Knights of Labor.⁶⁷

Less than twenty years after it was consolidated into Kansas City, Kansas, Armourdale was visited by its earliest trial, the Great Flood of 1903. The flood devastated Armourdale, with water five to twenty feet deep drowning the district's residential core. One observer reported that some houses could not be found after the flood, and some found later had not been there beforehand.⁶⁸ As a result of repeated flooding over the next five years, Armourdale's merchant class relocated to higher ground, leaving behind the few substantial homes unscathed in the 1903 deluge. The dominant presence of Mexican-American, African-American and Eastern European immigrants who settled in the district after World War I, along with pronounced intermingling of dwellings and industry, and air- and waterborne pollution, would mark Armourdale as the prime district for redevelopment.

Reclaiming the Slum

The persistence in American cities of working-class and poor residential districts like Armourdale proved a troublesome issue not only for private relief agencies and reformers, but also created dilemmas for city governments. In order to execute the powers delegated to them by their respective states, municipal administrations required guidance in the formulation of long-term planning interventions. As discussed in Chapter One, municipal reform efforts helped to generate an important source of activity and

⁶⁶Manuel C. Elmer, "Armourdale: A City within a City," *Bulletin of the University of Kansas* 20,12 (15 June 1919), p. 8.

⁶⁷Edith Walker and Dorothy Leibengood, "Labor Organizations in Kansas in the Early Eighties," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 4,3 (1935), pp. 284-285.

⁶⁸*Kansas City Star*, 1 June 1903.

employment for consultant planners, while reshaping some of the fundamental emphases of the profession.

In order to respond to the social stagnation prevalent in the cores of American cities, reformers and social scientists advocated the systematic analysis of city neighborhoods and reform of municipal services. Such a process would not only identify problem areas, but offer social workers, municipal governments, and consultant planners sufficient data from which they could formulate appropriate interventions. The first major survey of this type was conducted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1907 to 1909, with funding from the Russell Sage Foundation. Publication of the study in reform-era journals generated lively discussions among city planners and municipal officials.⁶⁹ In 1915, Frank W. Blackmar, Professor of Sociology at the University of Kansas, urged Kansas cities to undertake surveys on the basis of the Pittsburgh model, in order to pinpoint problematic social conditions and a promote a conscientious understanding of all areas of city life. Blackmar proposed that these surveys be conducted by committee of community representatives, working under the guidance of an expert sociologist.⁷⁰

Under Blackmar's guidance, KU sociologists conducted three such surveys of Kansas towns during the following three years. These studies focused on three central problems identified by reformers: inadequacy of housing; the transmission of disease, especially from contaminated foodstuffs and milk; and the provision of adequate recreational spaces for moral uplift.⁷¹ In 1919, at the urging of the Kansas City, Kansas Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Manuel C. Elmer, a University of Kansas sociologist, visited Kansas City, Kansas with a team of graduate sociology students, and turned his attention to the city's most prominent industrial neighborhood.

⁶⁹Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp.93-95.

⁷⁰F.W. Blackmar, "The purpose and benefits of social surveys," *Kansas Municipalities* 1,10 (September 1915): 3-4.

⁷¹The KU sociologists conducted in Belleville, Lawrence, and Minneapolis, Kansas. Ernest W. Burgess, et al., *Belleville social survey: a report* (Belleville, Kansas: s.n., 1915); *Report of F.W. Blackmar, director, and E.W. Burgess, field surveyor, University of Kansas, to the Lawrence social survey committee, Lawrence, Kansas* (1917); Manuel C. Elmer, *The Minneapolis survey: report of Manuel C. Elmer, director of survey, University of Kansas, to the Minneapolis social survey committee, Minneapolis, Kansas* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1918).

Elmer noted that while the basic social institutions in Armourdale, including churches, schools, and voluntary associations, seemed adequate and promising, the physical conditions of residences, rates of infectious disease, and lack of public amenities were disturbing. Elmer was dissuaded by the poor sanitary conditions in the district, resulting largely from the inadequacy of storm sewers and the fact that many roads remained unpaved. Social conditions in Armourdale suffered significantly after the 1903 flood, due largely to the district's lack of basic infrastructure. Homes were poorly maintained, streets drained poorly, and there was a visible lack of open recreational space, with the exception of Shawnee Park (Figures 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9). According to Elmer's research, Armourdale was of a distinctly different character sixteen years after the flood of 1903.⁷² How and whether the city government acted upon Elmer's recommendations, however, remains unclear.

Pressures for municipal reform and city planning also emanated from ongoing annexation and haphazard subdivision of land in and around Kansas City, Kansas. Before the turn of the century, Kansas City, Kansas annexed the industrial district of Argentine, and after World War I, the City of Rosedale, which lay nearly two miles to the south. Like the original consolidation, the annexations were urged primarily to enable the new districts to better provide municipal services and infrastructure. But the annexation of physically disparate communities posed logistical problems for infrastructure and transportation. The only way to travel from Wyandotte to Rosedale, for example, was to journey by motor or streetcar to downtown Kansas City, Missouri, and then along a major boulevard to the southwest. To overcome this circuitous route, the city government in 1926 undertook construction of Seventh St. Expressway, a major arterial intended to connect downtown Kansas City, Kansas to Rosedale through Armstrong and Armourdale. The decision to drive the expressway along this particular route was made after consideration of several alternatives, but downtown commercial

⁷²Manuel C. Elmer, *Armourdale: A City within a City; the report of a social survey of Armourdale, a community of 12,000 people living in the industrial district of Kansas City, Kansas* (Topeka: University of Kansas Extension, 1919), pp.9, 33-35.

interests prevailed. As a consequence, the artery was graded through the center of Armourdale's Shawnee Park.

The result was a tangible physical division of Armourdale into two sections, which tended to reinforce already prevailing patterns of ethnic and racial segregation in housing. Political and material conditions in Armourdale were indeed changing, and, now divided into two sections by a major traffic artery, Shawnee Park stood less to represent the ideal town square than to serve as a potential spot for danger with the oncoming traffic. During the Depression, a baseball diamond was graded into the Southwest corner of the park, and regular games between rival teams sponsored by local factories and meatpacking were a popular source of entertainment. Despite the popularity of these contests, many outside the city regarded them as further evidence of the decline of the area, especially when brawls erupted after the games on several occasions during the 1930s.⁷³

Nonetheless, the evolving character of the district's population since the 1903 flood, coupled with the ongoing decline of physical infrastructure, and the infiltration of industry into the residential district, seems to have buttressed the view that the district suffered from a distinct social pathology.⁷⁴ After the Depression, Armourdale's reputation would be translated into an agenda for action by a rejuvenated process of comprehensive planning. In 1935, the city entered into new arrangements with Harland Bartholomew and Associates to craft a new comprehensive city plan. Bartholomew dispatched Frederic Robinson, a native of Willamette, Illinois, a Chicago suburb, who had just received his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from University of Illinois - Urbana. Robinson knew Bartholomew from the latter's frequent appearances as a guest lecturer and visiting faculty member at Illinois; like many other Illinois graduates, he found this association helpful in securing employment upon graduation.⁷⁵

⁷³Kansas City clipping file, Parks-Kansas City, Kansas, 1926, MVSC.

⁷⁴"Residence of People Helped (for the month of December 1930)," Kansas City, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce, Bureau of Governmental Research. Welfare (Poor Relief) Activities of Wvandotte County, Kansas (March 31, 1932), 14.

⁷⁵Interview with Frederic Robinson, 15 March 1994. The trend was common, as evidenced in the fact that some 20-30% of the firm's young associates in the period were graduates of the University of Illinois, one of the most important schools providing an education for those who would become the professional corps of planners in the Midwest. At the time, only three universities offered degrees in city planning—Harvard, which established the nation's first planning program in 1923; MIT, whose program was established the same year; and Cornell (1935). In

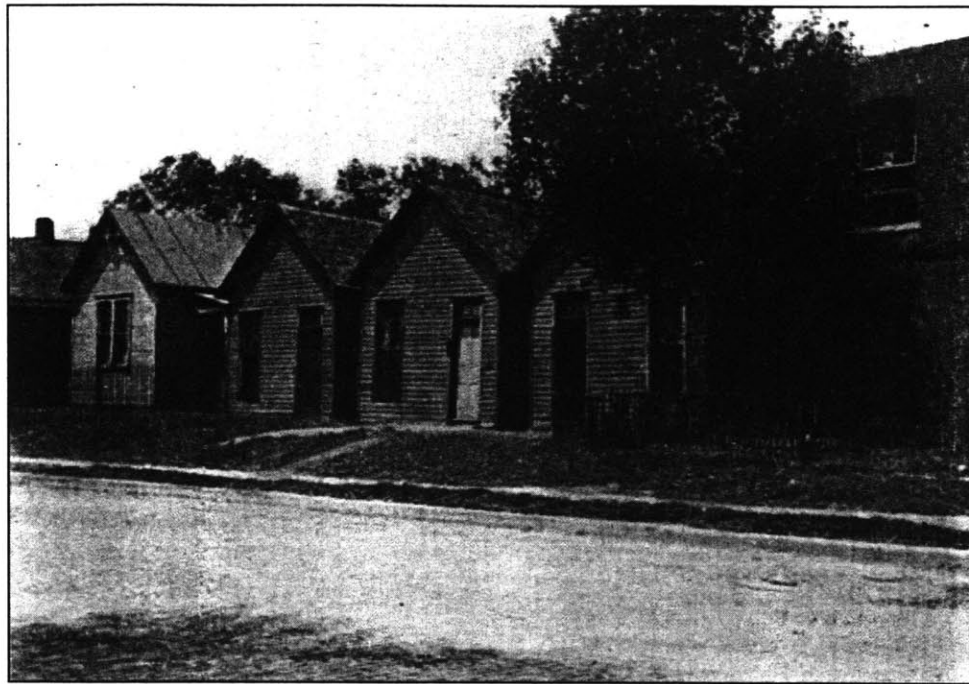


Figure 2.7. Homes of Factory Workers, Armourdale, and **Figure 2.8, A Good Residence Section, Armourdale, c.1918.** Despite their slate grey finishes, these houses provided shelter and security to the laboring poor, while reflecting the meager earnings of tenants. The much larger, multi-story brick homes shown below reflect the social diversity of Armourdale's 19th century population. After the 1903 Flood, these homes were subdivided into multiple rental units, a practice that endured through the 1940s due to permissive zoning, which designated most of Armourdale's residential core for two-family use. (From Manuel C. Elmer, *Armourdale: A City with a city*, Lawrence: University of Kansas, Dept. of Sociology, 1919.)

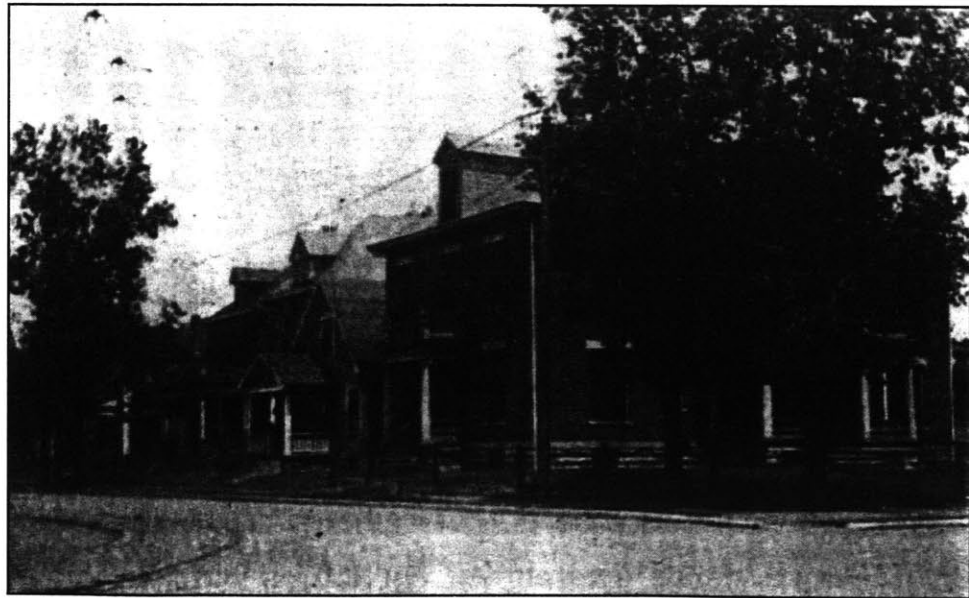




Figure 2.9. Shawnee Park, Armourdale, Kansas City, Kansas, c.1915. Reserved for public use in the original plan of Armourdale established by the Kaw Valley Town Site and Bridge Company, Shawnee Park quickly took on the accoutrements of the central town square prominent in earlier Eastern-devised plans of nearby towns like Lawrence and Quindaro, Kansas. The bandstand was constructed in the 1890s by the city government, while the park's landscape features and paved promenades were devised by a landscape architect after the turn of the century. (From Wyandotte County Historical Society, Accession No. 1985-5046-33.)

Beginning in 1936, Robinson revised the city's original plan by conducting a series of surveys funded by the Works Progress Administration. Known as the Real Property Inventories, these studies, conducted in some 84 American cities, played an influential role in expanding professional opportunities for consultant planners after the Depression.⁷⁶ Robinson undertook the standard surveys suggested by Bartholomew's framework: land use characteristics, housing conditions, and indicators of fiscal health. With these data, Robinson produced a series of reports over the next five years, which he then circulated to the City Planning Commission for approval. The revised studies formed the basis of the city's comprehensive plan, which was adopted by the city commissioners in 1942.⁷⁷

In formulating the plan, Robinson was drawn on several occasions to the problematic social and physical conditions in the Armourdale district. In one of his first reports, the 1937 *Scope and Objectives of the City Plan*, Robinson noted that "dwellings within the older areas have not been replaced or repaired, although people continue to live in them." Robinson seemed less concerned about the habitability of these residences than the dilemma that dereliction posed for efficient provision of municipal services within each neighborhood. These districts, he noted, "are unattractive and unhealthful . . . property values are beginning to depreciate, tax delinquencies are high, and the cost of governmental services is usually greater than the amount returned in taxes (Figures 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12). In short," Robinson concluded, "they are blighted and slum areas." These problems were particularly acute in Armourdale, where Robinson noted "a pronounced intermingling of industry and obsolete dwellings." Low property values in the district stemmed, in Robinson's analysis, from the scale and character of housing in the area, and

1937, Columbia established its own planning degree. The ambiguity among formal fields and professional credentials persisted to a substantial degree until at least the 1960s, and there are certainly those who would question whether the issue of professional certification has ever been resolved. Albert Z. Guttenberg, "What's in a name change? City planning and landscape architecture at the University of Illinois," pp.421-432 in *First National Conference on American Planning History* (13-15 March 1986, Columbus, Ohio), *Proceedings* (Hilliard, Ohio: Society for American City and Regional Planning History, December 1986).

⁷⁶Johnston, 197; Peyton Stapp, *Urban Housing: A summary of real property inventories conducted as work projects, 1934-1936* (Washington: GPO, 1938).

⁷⁷Kansas City, Kansas, City Planning Commission, *The comprehensive city plan, Kansas City, Kansas. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, city planning consultants* (Kansas City, Kan.: The Commission, 1942).

the ways in which the infiltration of the area's residential core by industry was undermining property values and encouraging speculative behavior.⁷⁸

As a remedy, Robinson proposed the replatting of the basic grid pattern in Armourdale to conform to contemporary norms suggested by the Neighborhood Unit approach (Figure 2.13). The H-shaped alleyway block is consolidated, and recentralized through the addition of a cul-de-sac. The individual parcels of land are enlarged and reoriented toward a central focus in the cul-de-sac. This would improve light and air circulation, and accommodate the automobile. Major cross streets are narrowed to reduce through traffic, while overall density is reduced. (Curiously, Robinson does not offer any suggestions as to how the replatting might be accomplished.) The central concern exhibited by this proposed redesign is not adherence to a specific aesthetic model, but a reorientation of the essential elements of landscape planning and land use in a way that conforms to the more efficient use of land, and a higher degree of social segregation and enhancement of individual ownership of property. The subtle implication, of course, is that physical form and the nature of the underlying legal basis for property ownership, had served as a causative factor in the social stagnation of the residential district.

Despite Robinson's pessimistic view of Armourdale's social vitality, there is some evidence to suggest active social and community organization in the district. During the 1940s, the Armourdale Neighborhood Council, a resident organization, began voluntary efforts to improve physical and social conditions in the area. The group launched cleanup campaigns, lobbied for improved housing for residents, and argued against the expanding infiltration of industrial uses into the residential section of the district. Basing its efforts in part on a nostalgic attempt to recall a bygone era when the district was known as the "garden spot" of the city (presumably a reference to the period before the 1903 Flood), the Neighborhood Council moved vigorously to promote improved environmental and sanitary conditions in the neighborhood. A primary motivation for the campaigns was the feeling of many residents that the district did not compete on an equal footing with other neighborhoods in the city. In 1942, the Council hosted a

⁷⁸Ibid., 2,3.

KANSAS CITY K A N S A S

CITY PLANNING
COMMISSION

HARLAND BARTHOLOMEW & ASSOCIATES
CITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS
SAINT LOUIS MISSOURI

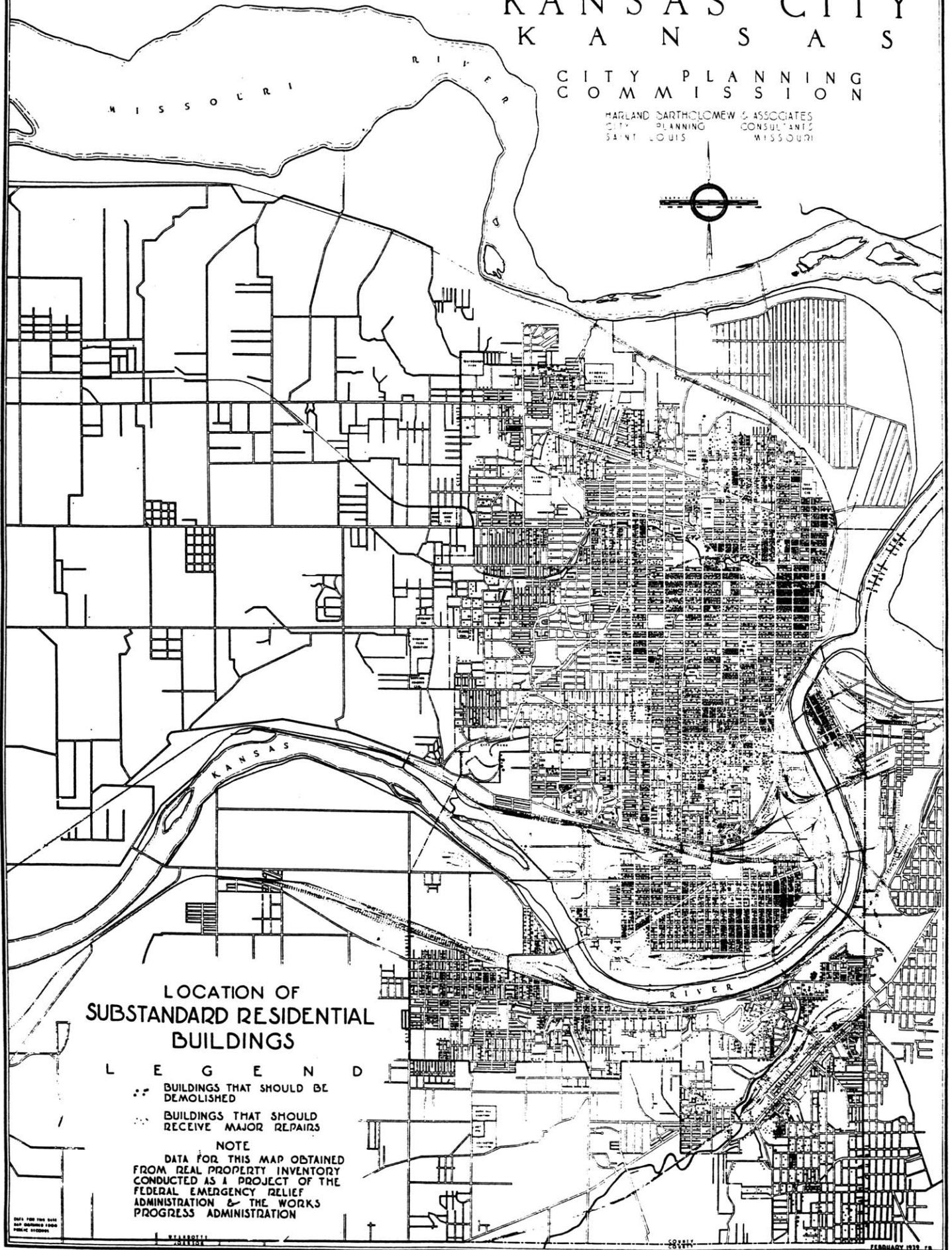
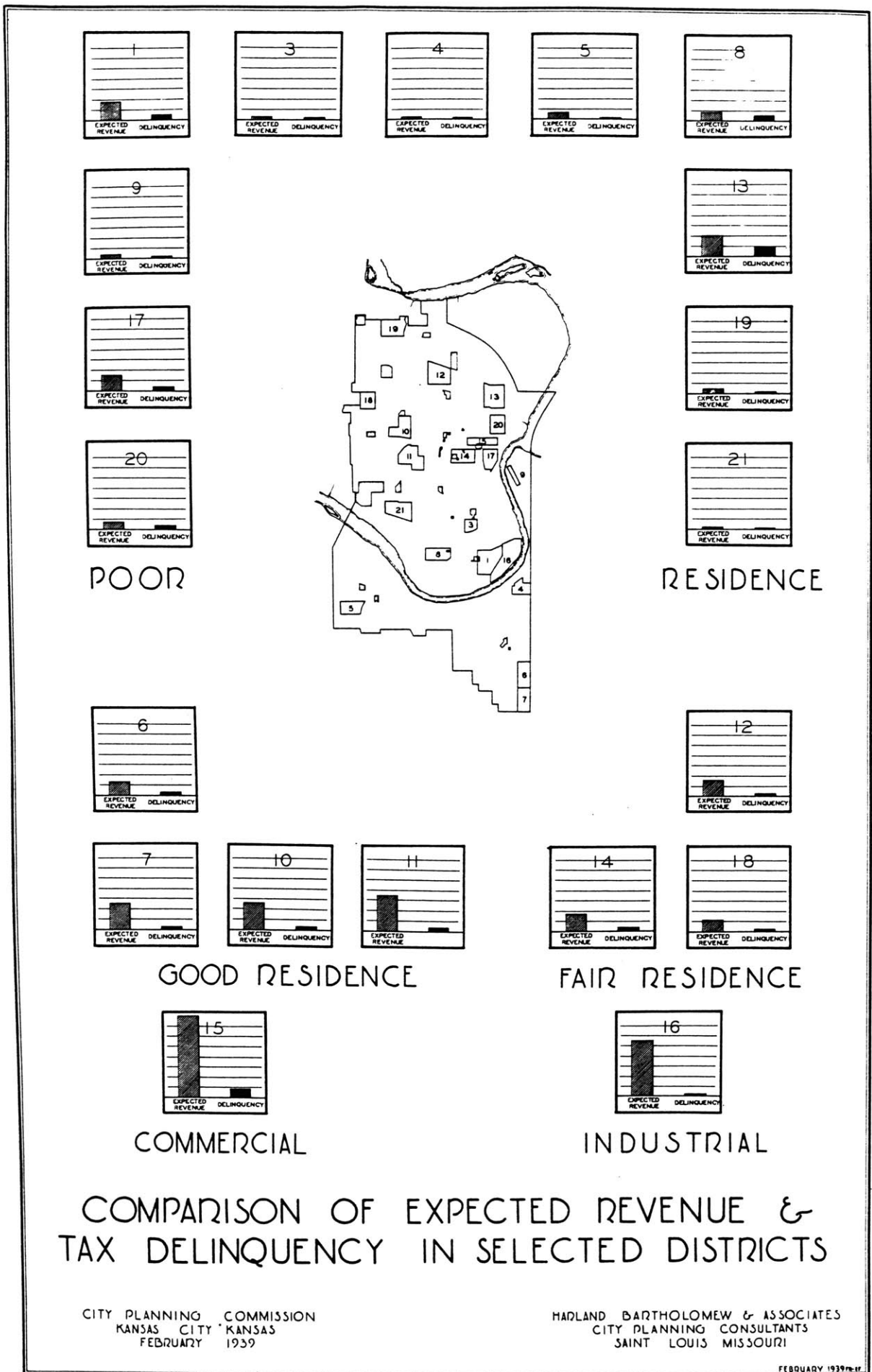


Figure 2.10. Location of Substandard Residential Buildings, 1939. (From *The comprehensive city plan, Kansas City, Kansas*. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, city planning consultants. Kansas City, Kan.: The Commis-



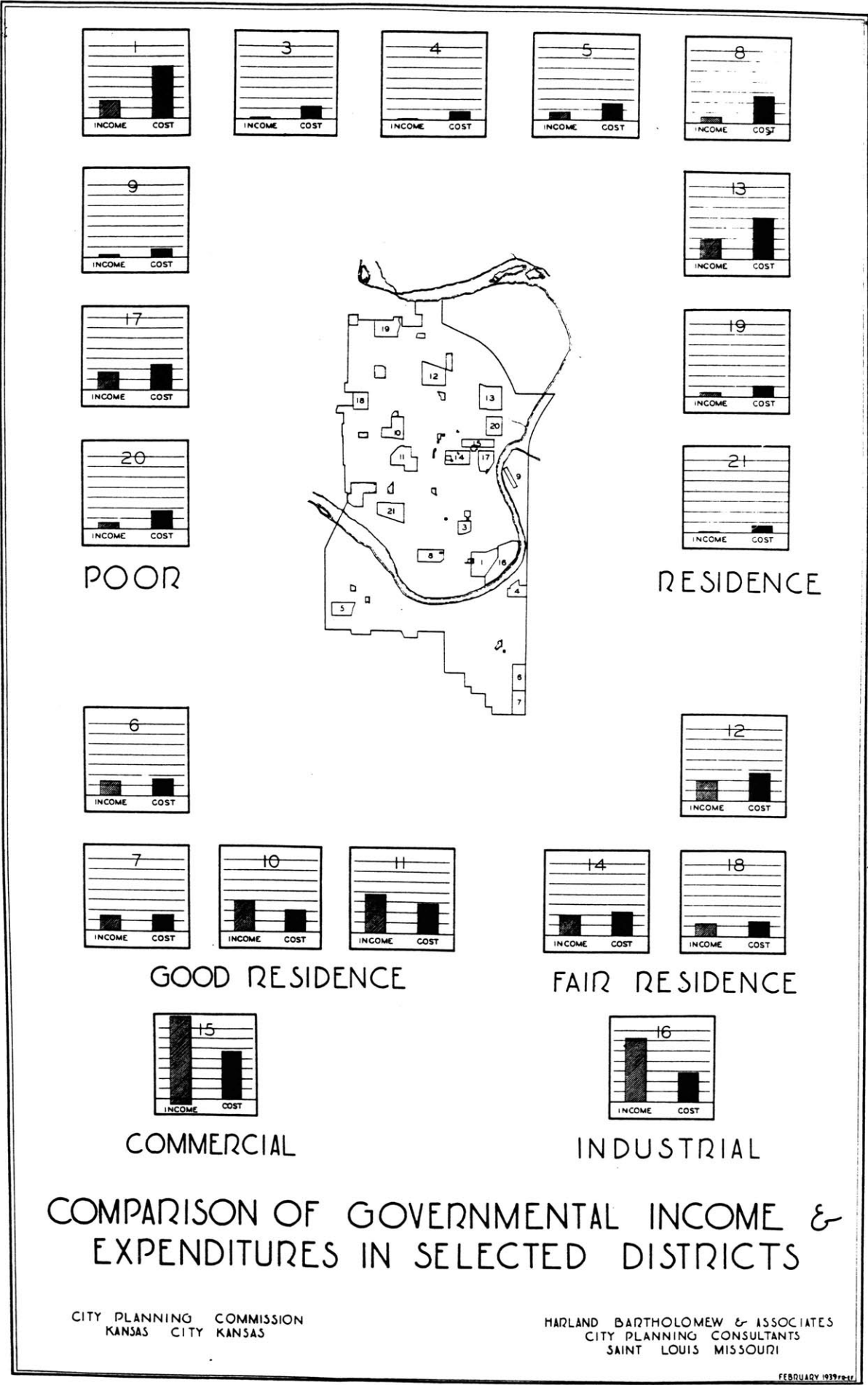
COMPARISON OF EXPECTED REVENUE & TAX DELINQUENCY IN SELECTED DISTRICTS

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
 KANSAS CITY KANSAS
 FEBRUARY 1939

HADLAND BARTHOLOMEW & ASSOCIATES
 CITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS
 SAINT LOUIS MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 1939-11

Figure 2.II. Comparison of Expected Revenue and Tax Delinquency in Selected Districts, 1939. (From *The comprehensive city plan, Kansas City, Kansas*. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, city planning consultants. Kansas City, Kan.: The Commission, 1942.)



COMPARISON OF GOVERNMENTAL INCOME & EXPENDITURES IN SELECTED DISTRICTS

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
KANSAS CITY KANSAS

HARLAND BARTHOLOMEW & ASSOCIATES
CITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS
SAINT LOUIS MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 1939

Figure 2.12. Comparison of Governmental Income and Expenditures in Selected Districts, 1939. (From *The comprehensive city plan, Kansas City, Kansas*. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, city planning consultants. Kansas City, Kan.: The Commission, 1942.)

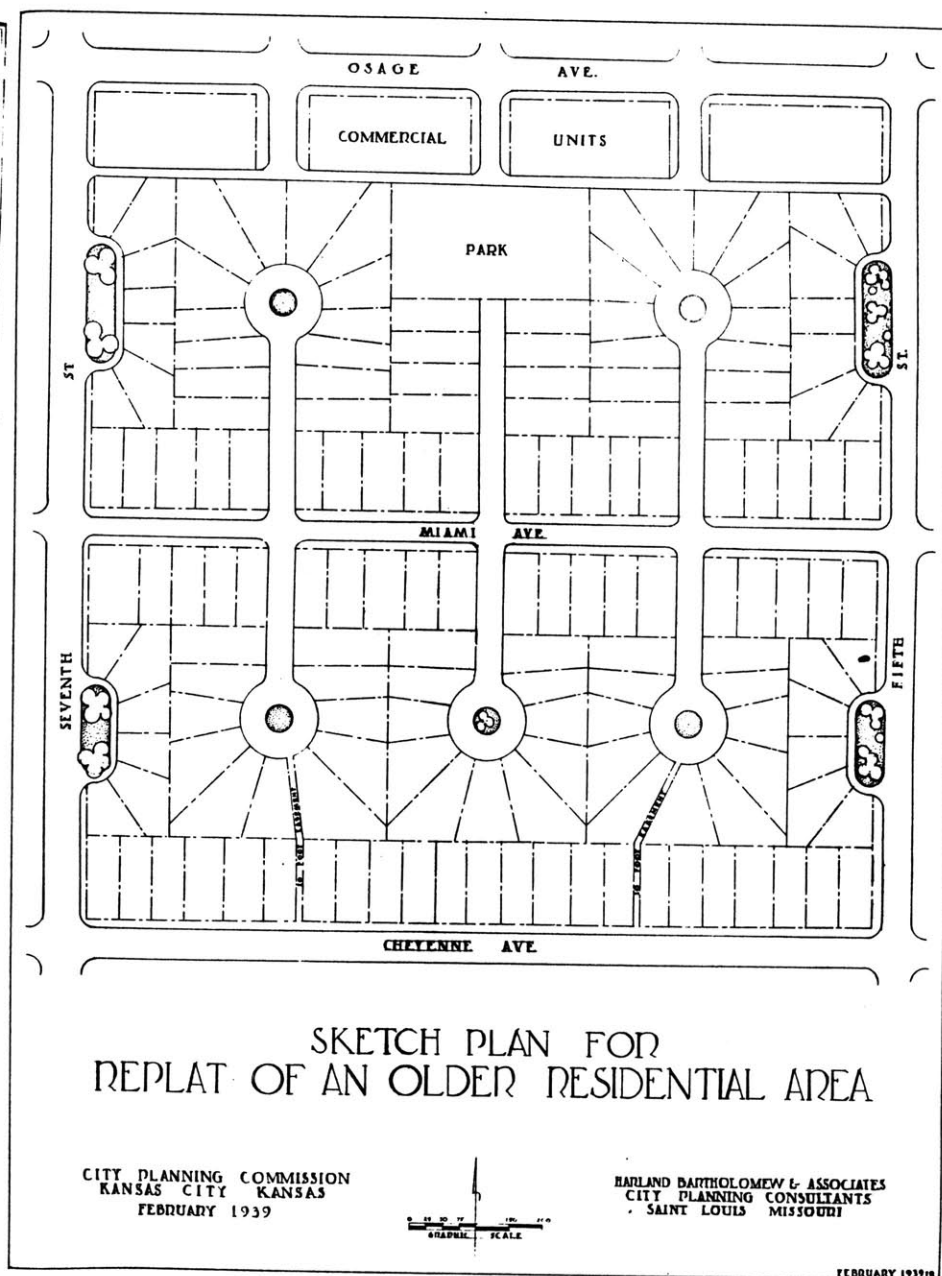
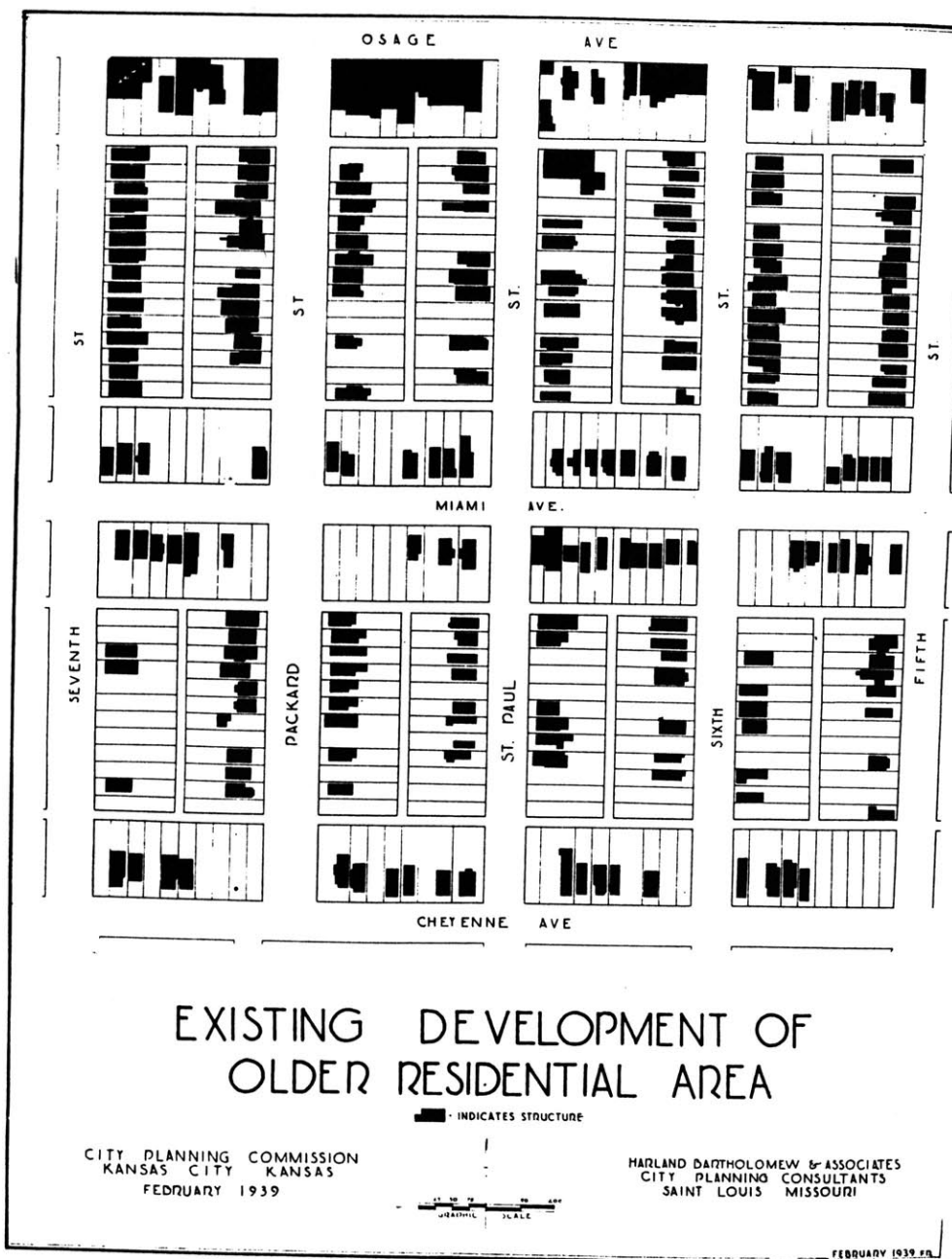


Figure 2.13. Sketch Plan for Replat of an Older Residential Area, 1939. (From *The comprehensive city plan, Kansas City, Kansas*. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, city planning consultants. Kansas City, Kan.: The Commission, 1942.)

speaking engagement for Sol Alinsky, whose Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council had succeeded in uniting a number of contending factions within Chicago's stockyards neighborhood. Despite its efforts, the Neighborhood Council was short-lived. Like several predecessors and successors, the Council would find it impossible to unite the disparate group of homeowners and businessmen with a stake in the community.⁷⁹

Black Friday

Despite Robinson's persisting concerns, neither municipal pressures nor public reserves would permit any substantive redevelopment projects. In 1949, however, the passage of the Federal Housing Act offered some intriguing possibilities for slum clearance and housing construction. These possibilities would unfold two years later, when the Kaw River again reclaimed its floodplain from the industrial developments and workers' housing in Armourdale. At 5:15 a.m. on Friday, July 13, the Kaw overtopped the levee on its left bank just past the Colgate-Palmolive Company in Armourdale. Within two hours, water from 12 to 30 feet engulfed the entire district (Figure 2.14). The incredible current that swept over Armourdale eventually reached the West Bottoms. Ironically, the East Armourdale levees, built to hold back the Kaw, actually contained the water within the district. Engineers were aghast the following day, when water inside the levee flowed, like a waterfall, back into the Kaw. Up to three feet of silt were deposited throughout Armourdale, totally some 18 million tons throughout the flood bottoms (Figure 2.15).⁸⁰

Most residential structures in Armourdale were woodframe houses, and were washed into the streets and alleys. When the water finally receded, estimated damages in Armourdale exceeded \$120 million. Frederic Robinson was helping patrol the levee on the night of July 12, and watched in amazement as the Army engineers scurried and fell back to safe positions. As city planning engineer, Robinson was responsible for

⁷⁹Steven A. Collins, "Goin' down to 'L.A.'": *Domestic processes among the poor in Armourdale*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1984, citing unpublished report by Lloyd B. Murphy, executive secretary of the Armourdale Neighborhood Council from 1943-1945, 1974; Susan D. Greenbaum, *The historical, institutional and ecological parameters of social cohesiveness in four urban neighborhoods*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas, Anthropology, 1981. Alinsky's activities in Chicago are discussed in Thomas J. Jablonsky, *Pride in the Jungle: Community and everyday life in Back of the Yards Chicago* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp.134-146.

⁸⁰Area Engineer Flood Report, Armourdale Unit, 12-13 July 1951. Progress Reports, Box 3, 1951 Flood - Kansas City Area. Records of the Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District Office, Records Group 77. NARA-CP.

monitoring the impact of the flood on the city's physical infrastructure – the streets, water, gas, and electrical utilities, and streetcar lines. The police department had accepted responsibility for evacuating residents, and with the National Guard, would patrol the area to prevent the possibility of looting. It was much less clear, however, who would determine when and whether residents would be allowed to return. Now, in the aftermath of the disaster, Federal, local, and nonprofit agencies would have to share responsibility for coordinating repair and rehabilitation of the area.



Figure 2.14. Aerial View, 1951 Kaw River Flood from near West Kansas Avenue Bridge, view East-Southeast. The initial break in the Armourdale levee occurred 200 yards downstream (to the right) of the bridge, which appears in the foreground. The wooded area in the upper center portion of the photograph is the residential section of Armourdale. (Floods-1951-Aerial #29, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.)



Figure 2.15. Kansas Avenue, Armourdale, View West, early August 1951. Only when the floodwaters finally receded did the full extent of the damage become apparent. Most homes were destroyed, while basic infrastructure and public utilities, including electricity, telephone, electric streetcars, and storm sewers, required substantial repair. (Kansas City, Kansas Police Department Photograph, Kansas State Historical Society, Collection K.2.W7.K.4, #42.)

Chapter Three

To stir men's blood

The 1951 Flood offered Bartholomew and the City of Kansas City, Kansas, an important opportunity to demonstrate the application of HBA's methods and objectives to the rehabilitation of a blighted urban district. This chapter examines in detail the formulation of the redevelopment proposal, the mounting local opposition, and the development of alternative scenarios by local architects at the behest of the Armourdale Activities Association, a neighborhood commercial club and citizens' council. The comprehensive city planning process in Kansas City, Kansas, will be outlined, with particular attention to specific proposals made by Robinson for the Armourdale district during the 1930s and 1940s. My primary focus is on the logic of the competing proposals, and the intellectual and pragmatic underpinnings of each plan. The chapter concludes by describing the legal challenges to the plan, which ultimately not only thwarted the plan itself, but undermined the legal basis for redevelopment planning throughout the state.

The Methods Lay in Waiting

When the West Armourdale levee failed on the morning of July 13, it not only unleashed the devastating force of nature onto the river bottom community, but also set into motion the logical conclusion of a planning process that had been underway for 15 years. The flood itself liberated city planners from two important political constraints that would surface in various communities over the next decade. First, it required the evacuation of residents and commercial activity from the district, albeit at a much more frenzied pace than would ever be seen in any relocation strategy. Second, it acted with brute force to destroy the physical fabric of the community. The flood destroyed the weakest and most derelict of the homes and businesses in the district, primarily in the eastern section of the district, an area populated principally by Mexican-American and southern European immigrants. The pre-flood development pattern in Armourdale consisted of a high degree of intermingling among uses, although the penetration of industry and commercial uses into the residential core occurred in piecemeal slivers

(Figure 3.1). Having effectively reduced property values in the district to nil, nature also simplified the process of valuing the individual parcels of land and improvements (or what was left of them) and offering payments to owners in exchange for their seizure and clearance by power of eminent domain.

On July 17, Frederic Robinson apprised HBA partner Eldridge Lovelace of the extent of flood damage and urged prompt action to seize the opportunity for redevelopment of the district. Robinson was discouraged, however, by the groundswell of pressure for displaced residents to return to Armourdale. "Already as you predicted," he wrote, "the Red Cross is attempting to relocate the people back into their homes in as near the original conditions as possible. I doubt that we will be able to assemble the property to accomplish any planning but will proceed as I told you before."⁸¹ Despite the debris impeding traffic and the horrible stench of the waterlogged neighborhood, by July 25 the Army Corps had successfully cleared enough of the major streets that residents were beginning to return home. "[T]he homes and small businesses are still a jumbled mass of wreckage," the *Kansas City Star* reported, but "work is going ahead and there are tangible signs that commercial life will soon be back to something close to normal."⁸²

Robinson moved quickly to coordinate his actions with the firm's St. Louis office. He promptly requested that the firm send him planning studies underway for other communities, which might prove suggestive in formulating a redevelopment plan. Within a week he had received from another Earle H. Franke, an HBA planner working in Norfolk, Virginia, plans for two defense-related projects. HBA had provided site planning services for the Alexander Park Housing and Trailer Developments in Portsmouth, built as temporary defense housing during World War II under the federal Lanham Act, which underwrote housing for workers in defense industries. HBA was also acting as site planner for Broad Creek Village, a large medium-density public housing project in

⁸¹Letter from Frederic Robinson to Eldridge H. Lovelace, 17 July 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri; Hubert Kelley, jr., "Disaster rehousing," (1952):3; "No differences as to housing, says official; Red Cross Director asserts agency is in no way at odds with other groups as to disaster grants," *Kansas City Kansan*, 12 August 1951, p.1,c.1; "Spearhead return to Armourdale," *Kansas City Kansan*, 2 September 1951, p.1,c.6-7.

⁸²"Swift in cleanup," *Kansas City Star*, 2 August 1951.

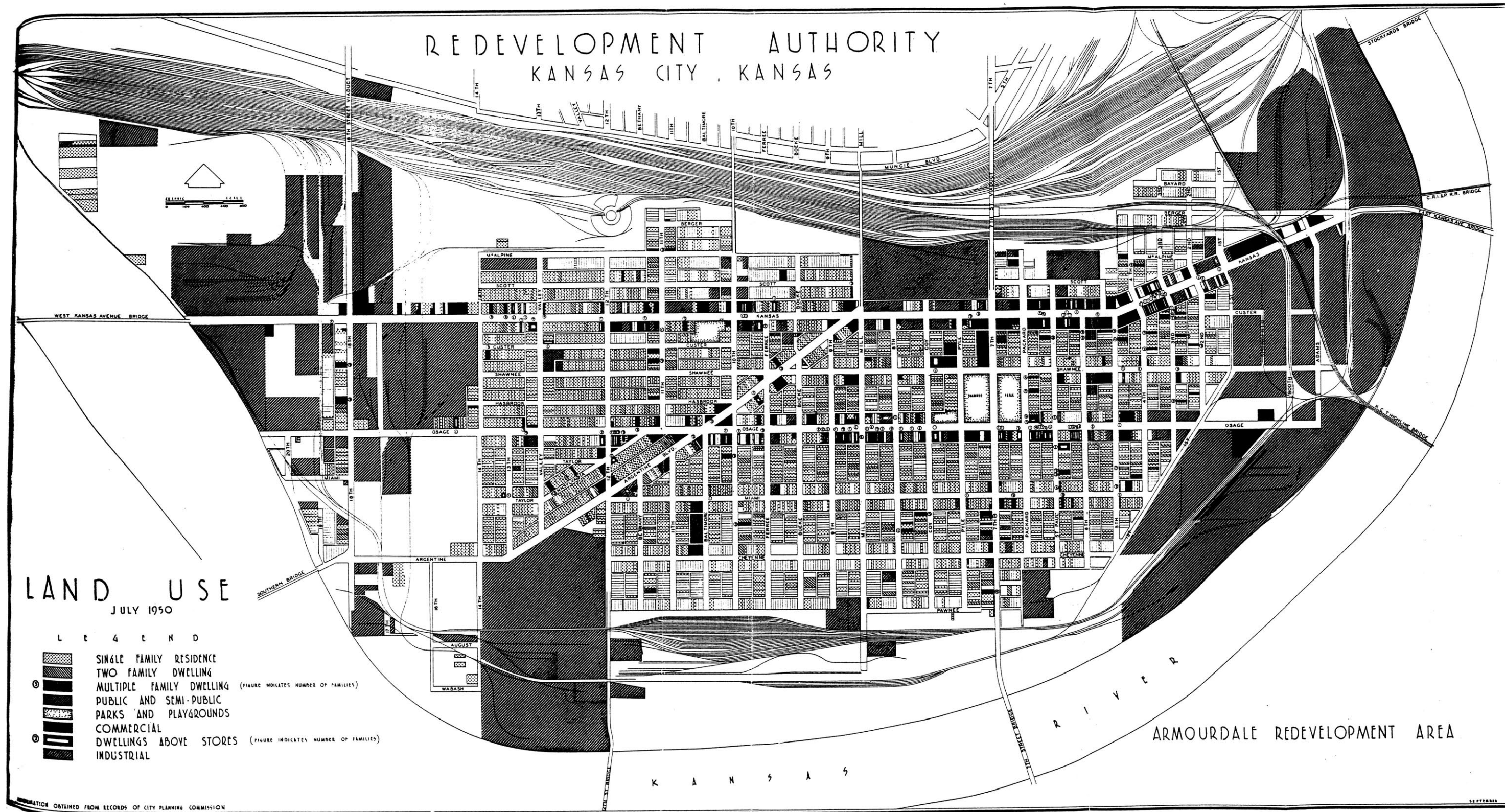


Figure 3.1. Land Use, Armourdale Redevelopment Area, July 1950. (From Preliminary report on the proposed development of a portion of the Armourdale District of Kansas City, Kansas, Kansas City, Kan.: Redevelopment Authority, October 1951.)

Norfolk, Virginia. These projects served as prototypes both for the contemplated redevelopment of the district and for the temporary housing being considered to the south of the neighborhood.⁸³

On July 31, a separate disaster recovery process was initiated by a metropolitan group of civic leaders, who were concerned about the slow pace of recovery work, principally in the Central Industrial District, the area opposite Armourdale and adjacent to downtown Kansas City, Missouri. Dubbed the Coordinating Committee for Area Flood Relief and Rehabilitation, the group selected Kansas City businessman Harry Darby as its chairman, and appointed another twelve members to its executive committee, including Mayors William E. Kemp and Clark E. Tucker of Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas, respectively. The group also appointed an advisory council of some 84 members, including an impressive roster of local businessmen and civic leaders, including representatives of local charities and trade groups.⁸⁴

On July 24, the Kansas City, Kansas City Commission exercised authority granted it by a 1951 amendment drafted by Robinson to the 1943 Kansas urban renewal law, and established a redevelopment authority. State Senator Joseph H. McDowell, a Kansas City, Kansas attorney and Democratic politician who had been influential in steering the legislation through the Kansas Senate, was appointed chairman of the authority. Attorneys Claude F. Pack and Lewis H. Brotherson, along with businessman Clarence H.

⁸³Letter from EHF to Frederic Robinson, 24 July 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri. Portsmouth-Norfolk County Committee for the Disposition of Public War Housing, *Plan for disposition of Temporary Public War Housing* (July 1945); Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *Redevelopment plan for project I* (Norfolk: The Authority, 1951); Portsmouth (Va.) Housing Authority, *Housing study: Portsmouth - Norfolk County area (area south of Elizabeth River)* (Portsmouth: The Authority, 1945); Portsmouth (Va.) Housing Authority, *Accomplishments, Objectives, 1938-1945* (Portsmouth: The Authority, 1945).

⁸⁴"Rehabilitation committees for area are named," Kansas City *Kansan*, 31 July 1951, p.1,c.2. The group quickly establish two non-profit relief agencies, one in Kansas and one in Missouri, dubbed Disaster Corps Inc. These agencies would concentrate their efforts principally on the rehabilitation of the flood-stricken commercial properties in the Central Industrial District, the extreme eastern end of Armourdale, the Fairfax Industrial District on the north side of Kansas City, Kansas, and the industrial areas surrounding the Kansas City Municipal Airport near downtown. The frustration over the continuing impacts of the disruption in local transportation and commerce were evident in the jubilation of the local press over the appointment of Darby to chair the committee. "There is no person in the Kansas City area," the Kansas City *Kansan* editorial page read, "better qualified to head up the group which has for its purpose the restoration of the stricken areas." "Darby the right man," Kansas City *Kansan*, 1 August 1951, p.6,c.1.

Waring and Armourdale resident Paul Mitchum (who was also a member of the city's housing authority and the Kaw Valley Drainage District) filled out the remainder of the authority's roster.⁸⁵

At the same time, Robinson committed himself to undertaking redevelopment planning for Armourdale in his capacity as consultant to the City Planning Commission. To handle the architectural aspects of the redevelopment plan, Robinson called on the services of local architect and longtime friend and associate John Maultsby, whose Brotherhood Building on Minnesota Avenue in the city's downtown was the city's newest and finest commercial building, only a year old and the location the Redevelopment Authority's new offices. On Monday morning, July 30, Maultsby and Robinson began a grueling 48-hour marathon of architectural design and site planning. Like a 57-hour stint he served on duty station during the Allied invasion of Southern France in World War II, Robinson remained committed to seeing the initial planning work to its conclusion. The urgency was fueled not only by Robinson's ambition to see the plan succeed, but also by the tremendous sense of urgency conveyed by the civic community, responding in turn to the pressing need for residents to return to their homes or find temporary housing elsewhere.⁸⁶

By Tuesday afternoon, Robinson and Maultsby had produced both a preliminary perspective view of the redevelopment, and an architectural model of the apartment house prototype (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). While the men drew on their respective skills, the need for prompt action required that they improvise in the particulars. Robinson's perspective site plan was little more than paper cutouts pasted onto a topographic map of the district, while Maultsby's model was built from cardboard, and decked with trees fashioned from pipe cleaners and steel wool.

The proposed redevelopment scheme was striking, and reflected central ambitions and concerns of the Bartholomew method of rehabilitation planning. The project area itself

⁸⁵"Urban Redevelopment Corporations in cities having a population of more than 125,000 and less than 150,000," Chapter 206, Session Laws, 1951 (Topeka: State Printer, 1951); Kansas Statutes Annotated, Chapter 17, Article 47. "Asks \$102,489 for staff to study flood," *Kansas City Kansan*, 15 August 1951, p.1,c.5.

⁸⁶"Clocks are set aside," *Kansas City Times*, 2 August 1951; interview with Frederic Robinson, March 1994.

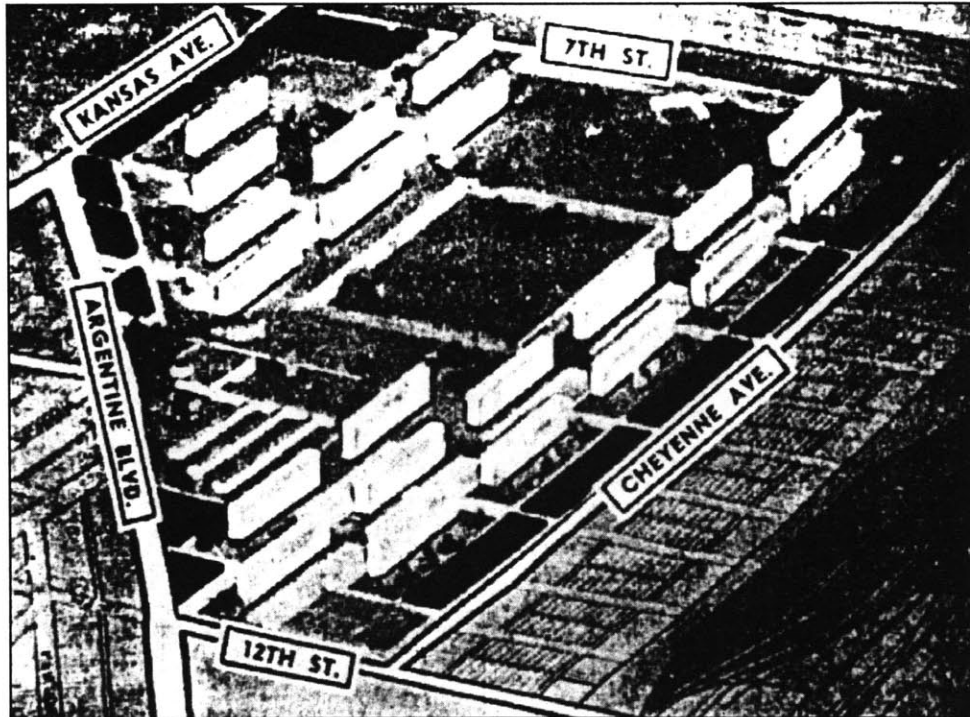


Figure 3.2. Perspective View, Preliminary Armourdale Redevelopment Proposal, August 1951. Robinson's initial plan would condemn nearly all of the residential properties in Armourdale, with the exception of an area west of Twelfth Street, and redevelop those properties east of Seventh Street for industrial use. Nearly all interior streets would be vacated, and 22 eleven-story, monolithic apartment towers, built with FHA or RLC financing, would be constructed in the residential district. The scheme elicited a strong reaction from residents, who shruggingly acknowledged the difficulty of their position. (From *Kansas City Star*, 2 August 1951.)

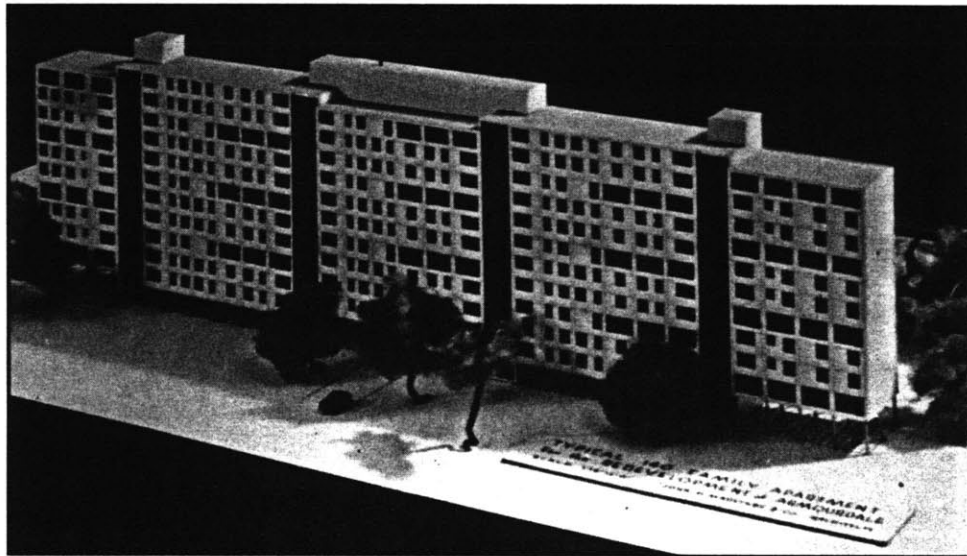


Figure 3.3. Typical 140 Family Apartment Building, Armourdale Redevelopment Proposal, John Maultsby, architect, August 1951. Maultsby's design was clearly influence by Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation scheme, which had been well-advertised and discussed in the architectural literature since its unveiling in 1945. Like Minoru Yamasaki's maligned towers at Pruitt-Igoe, the Armourdale apartment buildings would include skip-stop elevators, shared utilities, and recreational space below the building. The structure would also be elevated above the 100-year flood plain by the pilotis suggested in Le Corbusier's original design. (From Maultsby firm brochure, c. 1955, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Kansas City, Missouri.)

was bounded by Kansas Avenue on the north, Argentine Boulevard on the northwest, Twelfth Street on the west, Seventh Street on the east, and Cheyenne Avenue on the south. All residential property within *and outside* the project area would be condemned and cleared, with the exception of the area between Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets, which were larger, more substantial homes that had not been as severely damaged by the flood. Most institutional buildings, including churches and schools, would be rebuilt on their existing sites. Land cleared outside the designated project area would be sold by the Redevelopment Authority to industries to facilitate expansion. In the cleared residential land, twenty-one eleven-story, 140-unit apartment towers would be constructed. Robinson's plan placed these at regular intervals throughout the project area, with open space generously provided between each building. Most interior streets would be vacated, with the exception of three streets intended to provide interior circulation.

The plan attempted to retain, to the extent possible, the level of population previously residing in the district, a feat accomplished without the presumed blighting influences of density by providing substantial open space between the high-density apartment towers. An important objective of the site plan, like the other Neighborhood Unit-influenced developments, was to permit pedestrians to travel from home to school, work, and the retail establishments on the perimeter of the project area without crossing any major thoroughfares. The site plan carefully segregated land uses, insulating the residential area against the potentially blighting influences of adjacent industry both through consolidation of housing development and through the use of landscape and transportation buffers at the district perimeter. As a whole, however, the neighborhood unit would retain a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential space comparable to that existing prior to the flood, although at different densities and strict levels of functional segregation.

The apartment tower design was selected to provide efficiency in design and cost. With standardized designs, the units could be constructed at a rapid pace and moderate expense. The prototype unit designed by Maultsby (Figure 3.3) would be built to contemporary construction standards and was intended to provide modern amenities while remaining cost efficient. Each unit would be supplied its own kitchen appliances,

including stoves, garbage disposals, and refrigerators, in addition to standard plumbing and electrical utilities. Physical plant would be placed on the building roofs to permit venting of the building boilers directly to the external air without need for a vent stack through the height of the structure. All finishes would be of low-cost, but durable materials, such as steel-frame doors and sash.

Superficially, at least, the Armourdale redevelopment plan bore a striking resemblance to Bartholomew's site planning work for the DeSoto-Carr district in St. Louis, which would eventually become the infamous Pruitt-Igoe public housing development. Although the two projects were conceived during an overlapping time frame, the similarity was not fully accounted for by the rigid use of a pattern book design, but instead resulted from the application of an identical set of planning methods and objectives, as suggested by Bartholomew's Neighborhood Unit approach. In details, however, the housing prototype was clearly inspired by Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation outside Marseilles, France, whose design had been publicized by the architect in the mid-1940s. Like the Unité, the Maultsby apartments would be set on pilotis, stilts that elevated the structure to provide additional space for air and circulation beneath the towers. Maultsby provided an enclosure that would permit the space to be used as a terrace and children's play area. Conveniently, the pilotis would also elevate the buildings above the 100-year flood stage, an important consideration, especially in light of Federal concerns about the wisdom of redeveloping the district.⁸⁷

Confident of their finished work, Robinson and Maultsby called an emergency meeting of Harry Darby's Flood Coordinating Committee. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Brotherhood Building, and in attendance were not only the members of the redevelopment authority and the flood coordinating committee, but also

⁸⁷"OK long-range housing plan for Armourdale," *Kansas City Kansan*, 1 August 1951, p.1,c.5-6; p.2,c.3. The use of pilotis was a symbolic device utilized to great effect by Le Corbusier in several influential designs, including the Ville Savoie. The stilts were intended to serve as a playful reflection on the capabilities of technology; like the branches and foliage of a tree, the mass of the structure would unfold from a much smaller trunk, thus permitting pedestrians to regain control of the ground, which became a large uninterrupted park. The socialistic ambitions of Le Corbusier's design were secondary, however, to Bartholomew's objective of retaining urban densities to avoid continuing decentralization. Harry Antoniadis Anthony, "LeCorbusier: His ideas for cities," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 32,5 (September 1966):279-288.

nearly two dozen residents and property owners from the Armourdale district. Kansas City, Kansas Mayor Clark E. Tucker presided over the meeting, and introduced Senator McDowell, who outlined the basic objectives of the redevelopment plan. While touting the advantages of retaining a residential district for workers of the nearby industries, McDowell was careful to characterize the plan as tentative. "I want to emphasize that this body has made no hard and fast decisions as to the type of housing to be provided in Armourdale," McDowell said.⁸⁸

Individual units would consist of one to four bedrooms, and would be offered for sale or lease. Based on a rough estimate of \$1 million per building, Robinson projected that monthly rents would be in the range of \$40 per month, and sale prices for individual units would be around \$7,000.⁸⁹ Despite several concerns voiced by residents and property owners at the meeting, the Redevelopment Authority was able to persuade most to go along with the idea of redevelopment, if not the plan itself. The following morning, the Authority formally voted to approve the project.

The proposal prepared by Robinson with help from Maultsby reflected the outcome of a planning process that had originated in his initial surveys of the city prepared for the 1941 City Plan. The underlying logic remaining consistent throughout was predicated upon a designation of Armourdale as a slum, defined characteristically on the basis of whether the district was able to "pay its own way," as measured by the ratio of property tax income from the residential properties relative to the cost of city services provided to the area. But in formulating a proposal that sought to subvert the established pattern of social organization and ownership reflected in the physical characteristics of the district, Robinson had unleashed a wave of profound resistance and skepticism.

⁸⁸"March on homes," *Kansas City Times*, 2 August 1951, p.1.

⁸⁹An estimate obtained later from a local builder indicated that each unit could be built for approximately \$1.3 million. Letter from Frank Quinlan Construction Co., Kansas City, Missouri, to John Maultsby, 12 September 1951, obtained from John D. Maultsby III, March 1994 (in author's possession); "Give details of proposed housing units," *Kansas City Kansan*, 5 August 1951, p.1,c.3.

An unbelievable attachment

When the floodwaters finally receded during the last week of July, the extent of the damage and the time and expense that would be required to rebuild the neighborhood finally became apparent. Of the single-family dwellings in the district, some 85% had been entirely destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. The remainder had not only suffered significant water damage, both from the standing flood waters and from the current of the flood itself, but were now caked in two to three feet of mud. Even as the Army engineers attempted to make passable the major traffic arteries, homeowners reclaiming their properties compounded the difficulty of the task by shoveling the mud directly into the streets.⁹⁰

While the flood had destroyed most of Armourdale, however, there still remained an important sense of attachment among the residents. For some, the connection was real: before the flood, some 50% of the homes in the district were owner-occupied. For the remaining tenants, proximity to their places of work and the regularity of life in the district served as important anchors. At the meeting where Robinson and Maultsby unveiled the proposal, some twenty Armourdale residents responded “with incredulity.” The proposal bore so little resemblance to the established development patterns that residents insisted on simply being allowed to return and rebuild on their own, although many acknowledged they lacked the resources to do so.⁹¹ Nonetheless, on Wednesday morning, August 1, the Redevelopment Authority formally voted to approve the Maultsby/Robinson plan, and to authorize Robinson to submit a financing application to the HHFA. That weekend, Robinson was formally installed as managing director of the Redevelopment Authority.⁹²

The new plan infuriated not only local homeowners, but the merchants along Osage and Kansas Avenues, whose brick storefronts would similarly be displaced. After the

⁹⁰U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Report on flood-fighting, rescue and rehabilitation work in the Kansas City District, 1951* (Kansas City, Mo.: Office of the District Engineer, December 1951), pp.93-103.

⁹¹“Go along with idea; an Armourdale group realizes it is best plan,” *Kansas City Star*, 1 August 1951.

⁹²“Housing for Armourdale flood victims,” *Kansas City Times*, 1 August 1951; “Plan huge homes area,” *Kansas City Star*, 1 August 1951; “OK long-range housing plan for Armourdale,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 1 August 1951, p.1,c.5; “To a rebuilding helm,” *Kansas City Times*, 4 August 1951.

meeting, a coalition of the property owners present formed the Armourdale Activities Association, a group (like the earlier Armourdale Neighborhood Council) would attempt to coalesce otherwise disparate forces to create a unified resistance to the redevelopment plan. Represented by attorney Lee Vaughan, the AAA engaged the Kansas City, Missouri landscape architecture firm Hare and Hare to develop an alternative development plan. As Vaughn explained, the alternative plan would achieve two objectives. It would permit residents to have their own yards, and residents would be allowed to return to the original sites of their homes. Residents would not be displaced forcibly, but could return provided that they could buy new homes or afford new rentals.⁹³

The flood had washed away everything, Robinson would later acknowledge, “except an unbelievable attachment of the people to the piece of land that they had owned.”⁹⁴ This attachment would prove among the more significant obstacles to Robinson's work. While acknowledging that he didn't entirely understand this attachment, Robinson nonetheless would be confronted by it in several important ways.⁹⁵

On August 9, HBA partner Russell Riley notified Robinson that, in accordance with Robinson's recent request, the firm had formally decided to give Robinson a temporary leave of absence from HBA so that he could be employed as director of the Redevelopment Authority of Kansas City, Kansas. Riley anticipated that the arrangement was provisional, and intended only to permit Robinson to direct the redevelopment work immediately at hand. “It is hoped,” Riley wrote, that “it will not be necessary to extend this leave of absence for more than one year.”⁹⁶ While the leave of absence essentially

⁹³“Another plan for rebuilding Armourdale,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 3 August 1951, p.1,c.8; “Work on housing plan,” *Kansas City Times*, 8 August 1951, p.1.

⁹⁴Interview with FR.

⁹⁵Marc Fried, an urban sociologist who worked with planner Chester Hartman on assessing the impact of relocation on the residents of Boston's West End, would a decade later examine the economic, emotional, and psychological dimensions of attachment between slum dwellers and their lost homes. Even during the 1960s, these costs were a consideration alien to planners and policymakers, but certainly existed before the era of formal slum clearance. “Grieving for a lost home,” in *The Urban Condition*, edited by L. J. Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963); “Some sources of residential satisfaction in an urban slum.” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 27 (1961):305-315.

⁹⁶Letter from Russell H. Riley to Frederic Robinson, 9 August 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

freed Robinson from his obligations to the city under the planning contract, permitting him instead to act as a municipal employee on behalf of the Redevelopment Authority, the leave did not sever his important connections to the resources and expertise of the Bartholomew firm. Maintaining regular contact with the supervising partners in St. Louis, Robinson not only was able to seek their advice when political obstacles surfaced, but also could call upon the firm to supply information and personnel as necessary to the completion of specific tasks on the redevelopment project. Robinson's continuing correspondence with partners Russell Riley and Eldridge Lovelace attested also to their influence with the city government and federal agencies.

On Friday, August 10, at Robinson's suggestion, the City Planning Commission met in special session in order to consider a resolution designating the areas to be studied by the newly created Redevelopment Authority. The resolution was intended as the first of several steps to ensure that the designation of the study area passed sufficient legal muster to make it clear that the policy being adopted was being offered the full support and backing of the city government. The resolution defined the areas to be redeveloped as all of the areas impacted by the flood: the developed section of Armourdale, the section of Kansas City, Kansas, lying in the West Bottoms, and the section of Argentine lying in the floodplain. "The areas must be redeveloped," the resolution pledged, "so that they will become modern, valuable, and integral portions of the city." The resolution reasoned that despite the provision of emergency housing for former residents at the trailer park, the resolution urged the development of permanent facilities; in light of the earlier findings of the City Planning Commission regarding the substandard conditions of housing in these areas, the resolution concluded by urging a formal study of redevelopment needs and authorized action by the Redevelopment Authority, including the acquisition and clearance of the project sites.

The rationale offered resounded clearly with the principles developed by the Bartholomew firm and formulated in Robinson's work on the city plan. The redevelopment work, the resolution stated, should be taken in a manner consistent with the City Plan, "a sound basis for establishing standards, principles, and basic considerations so that the redevelopment can conform to modern requirements and

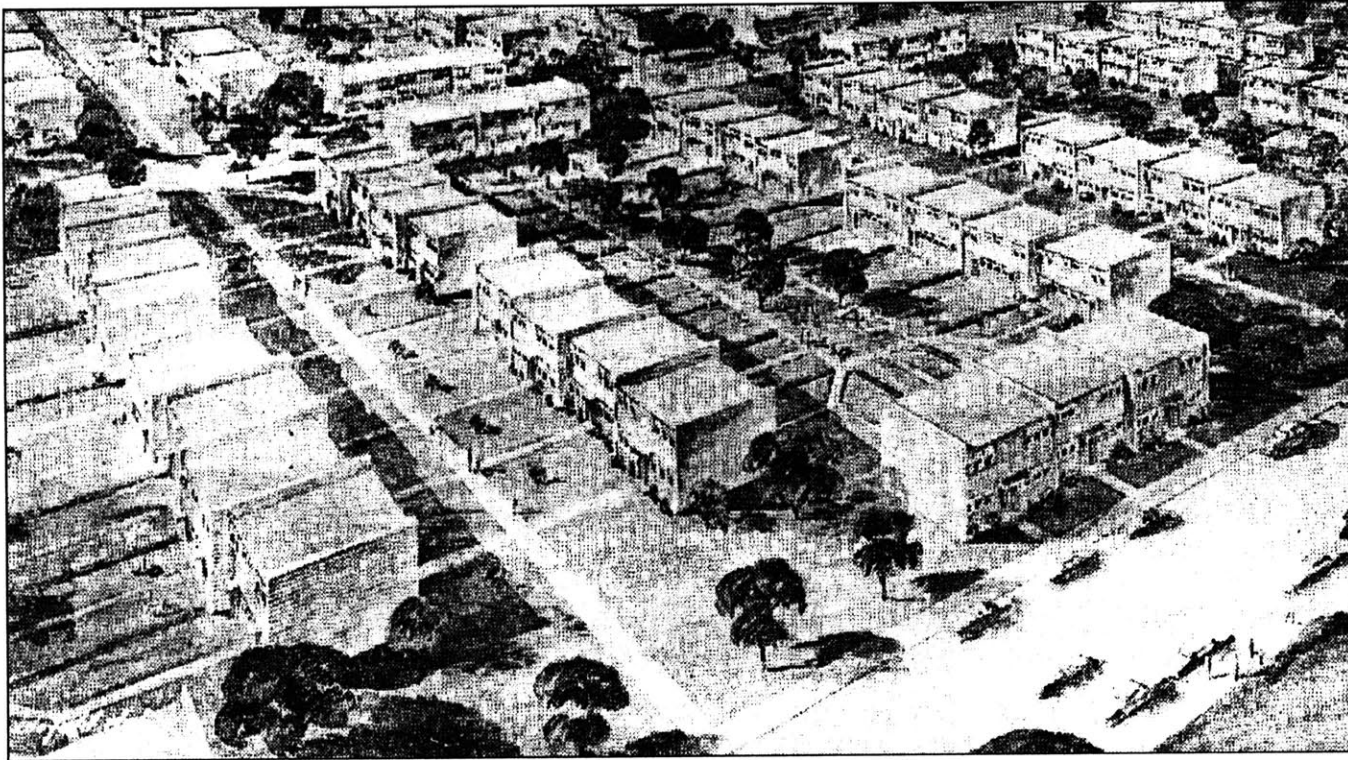
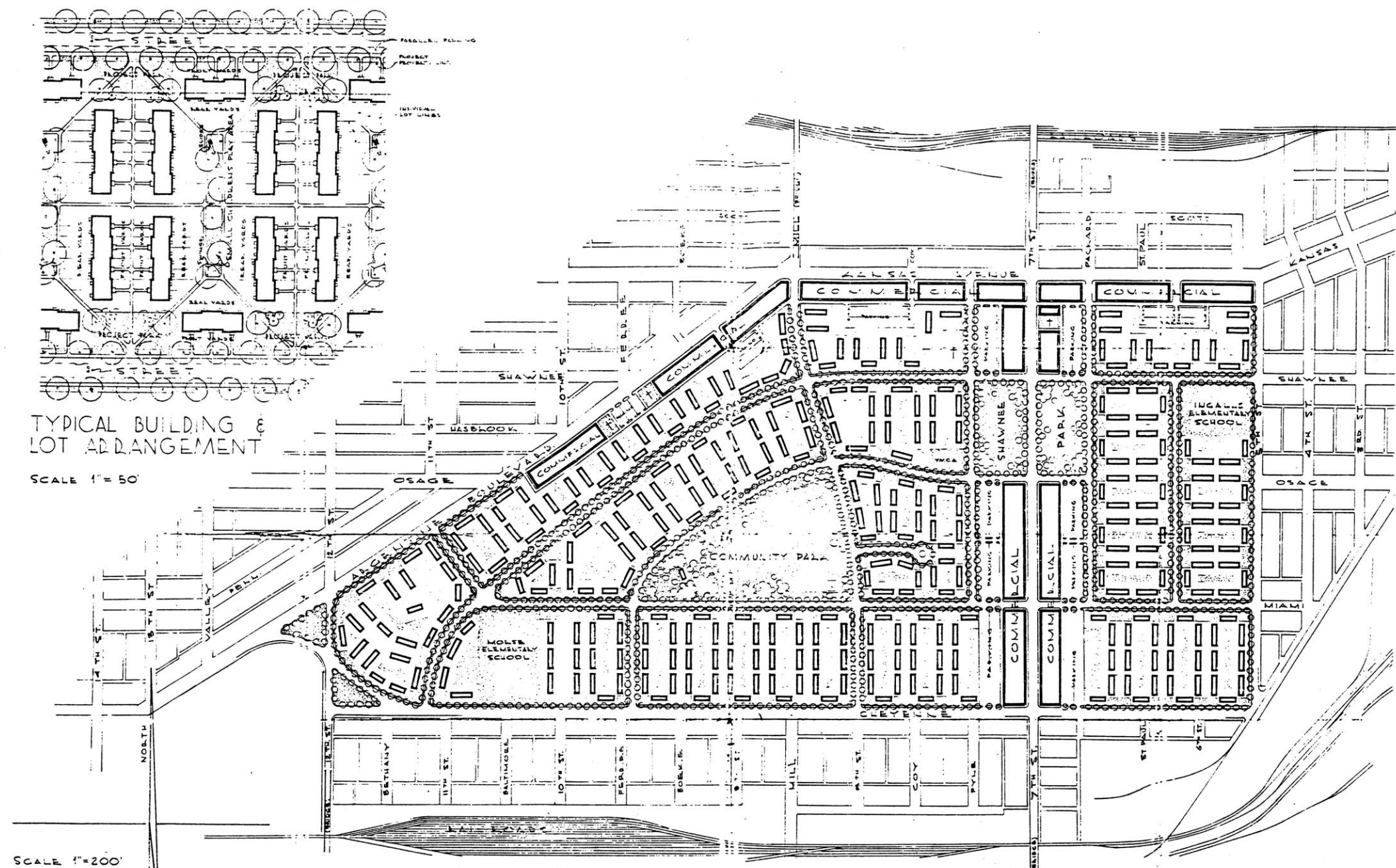


Figure 3.4. Perspective View, Armourdale Housing Redevelopment, Associated Architects for Armourdale, Hare and Hare, Site Planners, August 1951. The alternative plan contained 295 buildings, each accommodating six to eight families. Though attached, individual units would be built on 25-foot frontages, thus respecting pre-flood development and ownership patterns while recalling the scale and character of the original residential district. Minor streets would be vacated, however, in favor of limited automobile circulation and greater emphasis on pedestrian access, much like Perry's formal neighborhood unit. The archetypal grid also would be modified to reorient dwelling units and social activity away from the streetscape and towards Radburn-esque central greens, arranged as interior courtyards and through pedestrian routes. (From the *Kansas City Star*, 19 August 1951.)



GENERAL SITE PLAN
 ARMOURDALE HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT
 KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS FOR ARMOURDALE
 JACK CRUTE • ROBERT E. EARNHEART • CHARLES E. KEYSER • RAYMOND E. MEYN
 CHARLES E. MULLIN JR. • JOSEPH W. RADOTINSKY • EARL R. WILSON
 HARE & HARE — SITE PLANNERS

Figure 3.5. General Site Plan, Armourdale Housing Redevelopment, Associated Architects for Armourdale, Hare and Hare, Site Planners. This schematic reflects the social concerns embedded in the alternative proposal. Like the Mautsby/Robinson plan, green space is considered a premium, and forms the central organizing device for the public realm. Besides scale, the principal distinction between the alternative and official redevelopment schemes is a focus on individual proprietorship and differentiated private spaces. Individual units contain household utilities and amenities such as individual basements and laundry facilities. While the buildings are modern in finish and appearance, densities are much closer to those found in the neighborhood before the flood. (From Hare and Hare Company Records, KC206, Folder 63.3, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Kansas City, Missouri.)

become an integral and coordinated portion of the entire city.”⁹⁷ With this resolution in hand, Robinson was able to formally submit an initial draft of the redevelopment proposal to the HHFA.⁹⁸

A few days later, Hare and Hare presented their alternative plan (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). Working with a local team of architects, Hare and Hare had devised a Radburn-influenced development containing 295 buildings, each accommodating six to eight families. Though attached, the individual units would conform to the earlier 25-foot frontages, thus preserving the look and feel of the earlier residential character of in the district. Side streets through the district would be vacated, however, in favor of limited automobile circulation and greater emphasis on pedestrian access. The district’s archetypical block grid would also be modified in the reorientation of dwelling units and social activity away from the streetscape and towards central courtyards, replacing the earlier bisecting alleys.⁹⁹

The Hare and Hare schematic reflected the social concerns embedded in the alternative proposal. Like the Maultsby/Robinson plan, green space is considered a premium, and forms the central organizing device for the public realm. Individual units contain household utilities and amenities such as individual basements and laundry facilities. While the buildings are modern in finish and appearance, densities are much closer to those found in the neighborhood before the flood.¹⁰⁰

The boat is beginning to leak

After a late August meeting with the HHFA in Washington, Frederic Robinson brought back mixed news regarding the Federal response to his proposal. HHFA officials were considered about the wisdom of redeveloping a district threatened by repeated flooding, and were ambivalent about the prospects for approval. On August 31, Eldridge Lovelace wrote a memorandum to Riley regarding two telephone conversations with Robinson,

⁹⁷Minutes, 10 August 1951, City Planning Commission, Kansas City, Kansas, in possession of City Planning Department, Kansas City, Kansas City Hall.

⁹⁸“Asks \$102,489 for staff to study flood,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 15 August 1951, p.1,c.5.

⁹⁹“Add homes plan,” *Kansas City Star*, 17 August 1951, p.2,c.1; “Development group will study plans,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 17 August 1951, p.1,c.5; “New homes idea,” *Kansas City Star*, 19 August 1951, p.1,c.1.

¹⁰⁰“Proposed Armourdale housing,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 19 August 1951, p.1A,c.3; “Floor plans for housing units,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 19 August 1951, p.6A,c.2;

“today and yesterday,” expressing the latter's frustration with the slow pace of approval from Washington. “He is experiencing the usual difficulties with the Washington people in getting the redevelopment project underway.”¹⁰¹

In particular, the HHFA insisted that Robinson assemble a professional staff before seeking funding, a proposition made difficult by the lack of general funding for planning activity on the redevelopment proposal. In order to expedite the request, and smooth the process of approvals, Lovelace dispatched Claire Avis, HBA's senior designer, to reformulate the proposal (Figure 3.6). Avis, a graduate of the architecture program at Washington University in St. Louis, had joined the Bartholomew firm upon graduation ten years earlier.¹⁰² Avis' skills complemented those of draftsman Jack O'Reilly, and helped Robinson reformulate the proposal and deflect political opposition by reducing the scale and enhancing the social character of the proposed redevelopment.

While concerned about the Bartholomew firm's ability to provide planning services to the city planning commission and the Redevelopment Authority simultaneously, Robinson was also preoccupied with identifying means by which the economy and financing of the project would be assured.¹⁰³ Robinson requested and received from HBA partner Eldridge Lovelace information regarding a new and promising technological development in the production of low-cost, pre-fabricated housing. Lovelace sent Robinson information on IBEC Housing, a technology being used in conjunction with the firm's landscape planning work in Norfolk, Virginia, and advised Robinson to contact

¹⁰¹“Vital interest at Capital in flood needs,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 29 August 1951, p.1,c.8; Letter from Eldridge H. Lovelace to Russell H. Riley, 31 August 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri; “Robinson to capital on housing mission,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 20 August 1951, p.1A,c.3.

¹⁰²*Who's Who of American Women*, Fourth edition, p.51 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1966-67). I was not able to contact Avis prior to her death in March 1994.

¹⁰³Memorandum, Eldridge H. Lovelace to Russell H. Riley, 13 September 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri. The International Basic Economy Corporation was a New York City firm which produced prefabricated housing. IBEC Housing Corporation, *The IBEC Method of Construction* (New York: International Basic Economy Corporation, March 1950). The IBEC method had been utilized in the Norfolk, Virginia projects referred to above. “Houses go up fast—costs come down,” *Engineering News Record* (17 November 1949):32-34. IBEC had produced modular units for the Norfolk Housing Authority, and the IBEC housing prototype was being considered for a public housing development in St. Louis. “We were anxious to get financing,” Robinson later said. “At that time, there was no consideration that there would not be the population in Armourdale in the future that there was now, or before.” Interview with Frederic Robinson, 15 March 1994.

the IBEC firm. At the same time, Russell Riley provided Robinson with copies of new draft ordinances for minimum building standards developed by the firm to prevent the reemergence of slum conditions in redevelopment areas.¹⁰⁴

While the approval of the \$66,000 planning grant relieved the Redevelopment Authority from the necessity of filing a preliminary plan with the Slum Clearance Division, Robinson elected to do so anyway. Given the urgency to move the project forward and the persisting local opposition, airing out the plan in Washington would offer the Redevelopment Authority feedback that would let the members know whether the plan would be approved in final form. Robinson especially thought it important that the HHFA offer a tentative measure of support for the project, to ensure that the Authority did not proceed too far with its planning work on the project. In particular, Robinson was concerned about announcing that the properties in the area were to be condemned while there was any lingering possibility that the project would have to be suspended.¹⁰⁵

Avis site planning modified the redevelopment proposal to achieve some of the objectives outlined in the AAA scheme (Figures 3.7 and 3.8). Avis' reformulation would come closer to respecting established development patterns by scaling back the number of apartment towers while permitting the creation of garden-type apartments. The renewal boundaries would be extended East to Fifth Street in order to capture more of the immigrant section of the district, and provisions would be made for future extension of the Neighborhood Unit-based intervention. As Robinson continued work on these details, the Kaw Valley Drainage District seemed to be making progress in the repair of the Armourdale levees. Bids for work on flood walls. This was an important development, as Robinson was scheduled to confer with HHFA in early October on the revised

¹⁰⁴Letter from Eldridge H. Lovelace to Frederic Robinson, 14 September 1951; Letter from Russell H. Riley to Frederic Robinson, 1 October 1951. Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁰⁵Robinson to Riley, 16 October 1951 (two-page letter), HBA Papers, WULS.

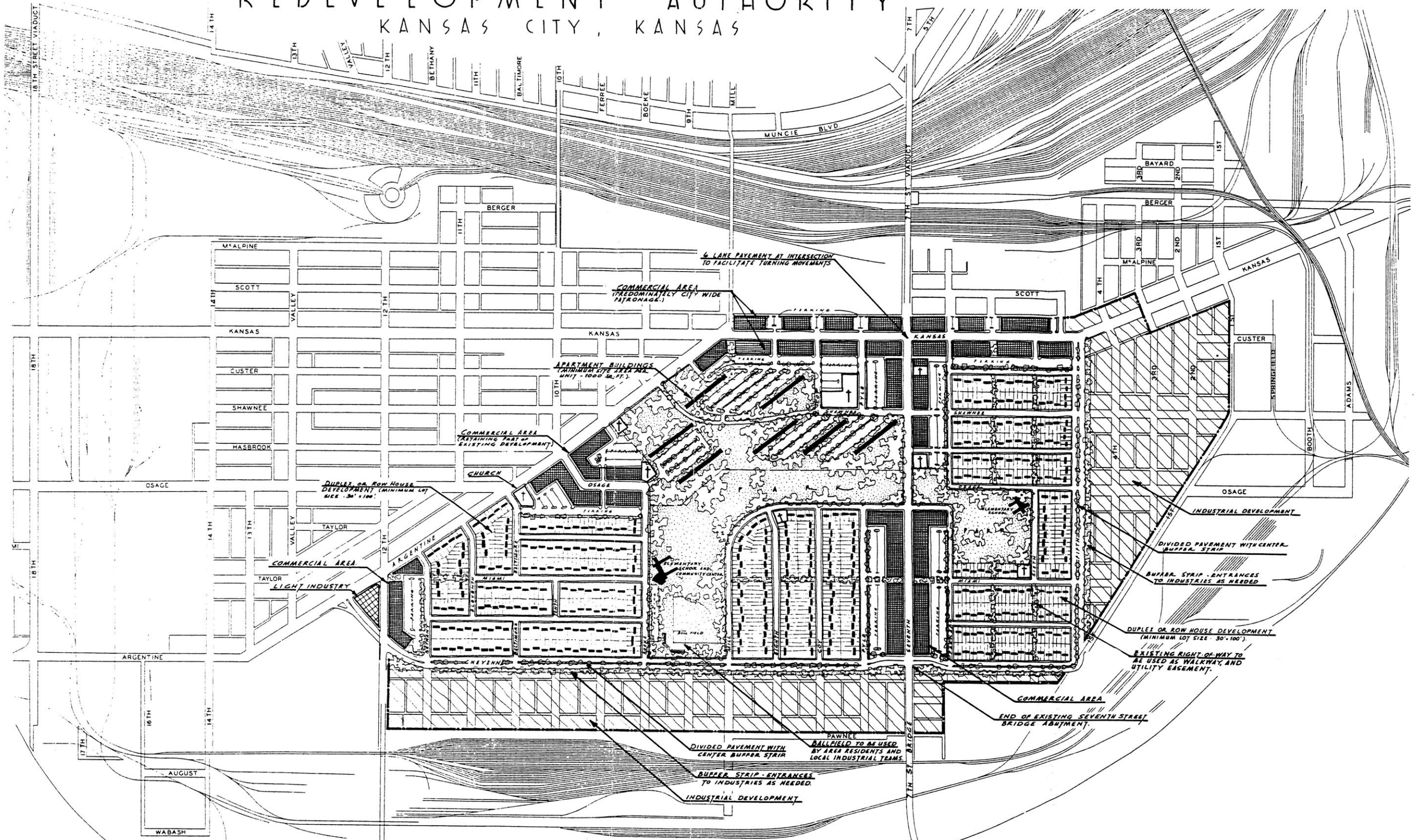
development proposal. Specifically, Voigt was still concerned about obtaining reasonable assurances that the district would be protected against the possibility of future floods¹⁰⁶

The HHFA Program Review Committee, consisting of the regional directors of the HHFA, met on October 8 to consider the Redevelopment Plan. The committee considered four primary issues: the persisting flood threat to the district; the conformance of the project to the general objectives of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949; whether the project could actually produce housing at the rents and prices proposed in the program, given the available local market for housing; and the availability of FHA and FNMA financing for the redevelopment itself. The commissioners were skeptical about whether adequate flood protection could be provided for the district, now or at any time in the foreseeable future. Given the likelihood that appropriations by Congress for the construction of upstream protection would not result in construction in less than five years, and the urgency of the project, the commissioners worried about the wisdom of redeveloping the area.

Nonetheless, the Committee was clearly aware of Robinson's concern that land in the district be acquired promptly to forestall the return of residents to the district and the likely impact of that action on the acquisition costs and the need to relocate the local population while the project was under construction. One commissioner recommended that the HHFA make funding for acquisition and clearance available immediately, and then wait to approve permanent construction until flood protection was adequate to ensure that the district would be protected against another flood of the same magnitude. Two other commissioners rejoined, however, that debt carrying costs for temporary housing on the cleared site would probably exceed revenue from such developments, and might be complicated by local taxes, depending upon whether the local housing agency were required to pay property taxes (if not, then the loss of revenue would be a problem). Another commissioner questioned the wisdom of developing residential properties in the district, given not only the heavy industry located nearby and the airborne pollution that

¹⁰⁶“Bids opened for work on flood walls,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 4 October 1951, p.1,c.5; “Bids opened for levee restoration,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 10 October 1951, p.1,c.1; “To Washington for word on rehabilitation,” *Kansas City Kansan*, 29 September 1951, p.2,c.1.

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS



PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN
PROJECT AREA No. 1
U.R. KAN. A1

K A N S A S

Figure 3.7. Preliminary Site Plan, Project Area No. 1, U.R. Kan. A1. (From Preliminary report on the proposed development of a portion of the Armourdale District of Kansas City, Kansas, Kansas City, Kan.: Redevelopment Authority, October 1951.)

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

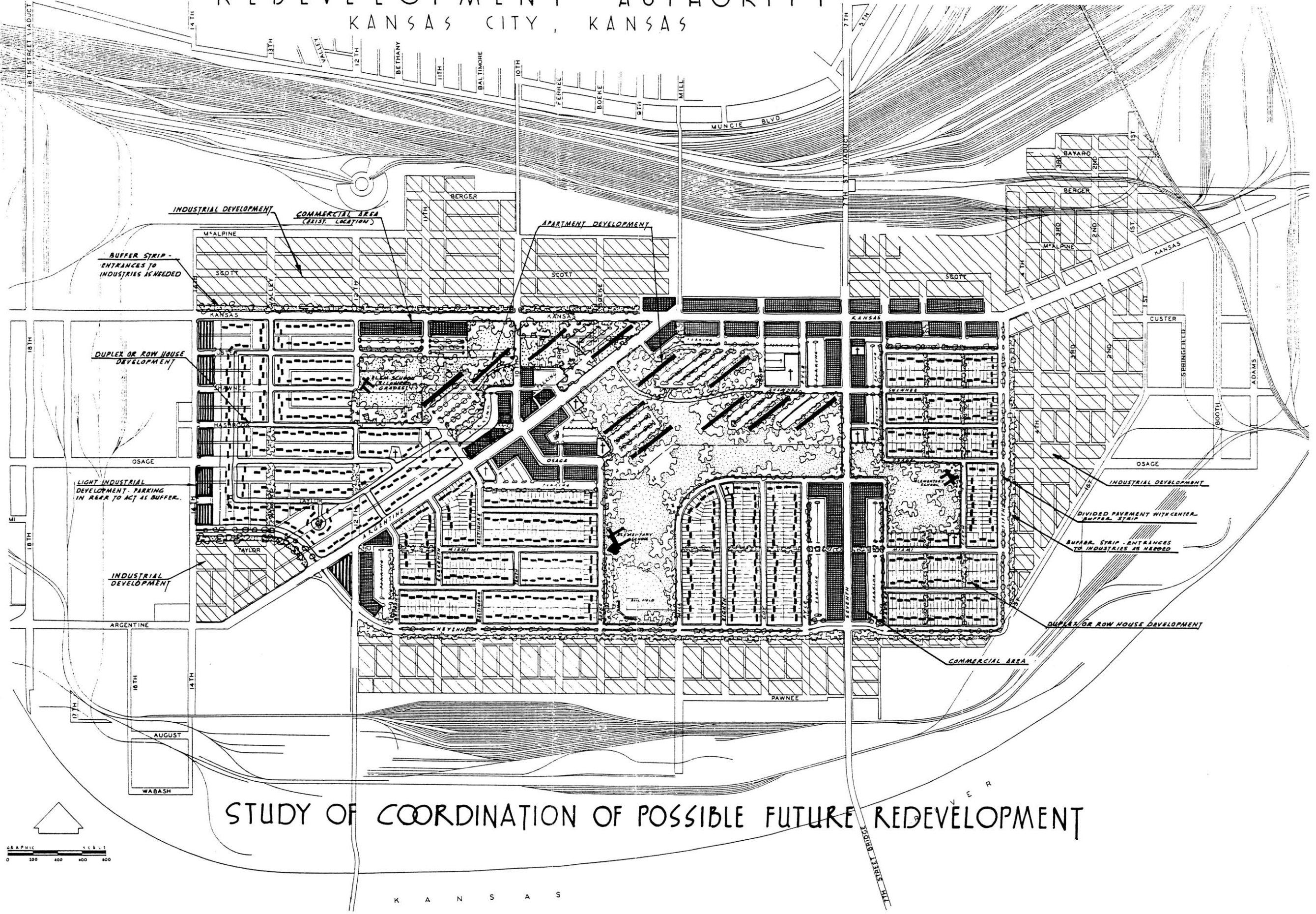


Figure 3.8. Study of Coordination of Possible Future Redevelopment. (From Preliminary report on the proposed development of a portion of the Armourdale

the factories created, but also the fact that the western end of Armourdale might continue to deteriorate and hence pose a blighting influence on the new developments. Given the lack of public housing legislation in Kansas, the commissioners also questioned the ability of the city government to actively house low-income families in the area.

Still, the commissioners recognized Robinson's argument that residential development would actually complement nearby industries, given the need for a localized workforce, and that non-residential use of the district would likely meet with heavy local resistance. Because Robinson's plan required FHA financing and potentially called for FNMA subsidy, and given the other serious concerns, the commissioners thought it likely that final approval of the project would have to be made by HHFA Administrator Raymond Foley himself. They therefore deferred a final decision until he could be consulted.¹⁰⁷

In relaying to his superiors the Committee's analysis, and the response he received during his own discussions with the HHFA, Robinson was pessimistic. The committee sought to excuse itself from the entire matter due to the possibility of flooding, he told Russell Riley, and had expressed sentiments that the district should be redeveloped exclusively for industrial uses. The HHFA seem convinced that those displaced by the flood would have to be permanently relocated, Robinson continued, and had generally concluded that the Redevelopment Authority would find it impossible to get financing for the project. Robinson discussed the matter at length with Foley, who confirmed that he alone would make the final decision, regardless of the details of Robinson's planning or the views of his subordinates. After Foley declined to specify what assurances he would accept as evidence that the district could be protected against further floods, Robinson concluded that Foley was disposed to decline the project.

Upon returning to Kansas City and discussing the matter with the Redevelopment Authority, Robinson decided to have local officials apply political pressure on Foley to approve the project. The Redevelopment Authority drafted two amendments to the flood relief legislation before Congress directing the HHFA's Slum Clearance Division to

¹⁰⁷"Program Review Summary," 8 October 1951, HHFA, Office of the Administrator, File 7-20, HHFA Archives, NARA.

undertake redevelopment in the designated flood areas. Robinson returned to Washington with Mayor Tucker, and together they delivered the bills to the Kansas Congressional delegations, who supported their passage. Mayor Tucker met privately with Foley to encourage him to approve the project, but Robinson was unsure of the results. Ultimately, Robinson was discouraged, and thought that work on the site plan would have to be discontinued. "The rapid timing so well begun," he wrote to Riley, "was pretty thoroughly stopped until we can hear from Washington."¹⁰⁸

The pressure to rehouse residents was clearly mounted. While Robinson was busy conferring with Washington officials, the Wyandotte County Planning Board was busy approving subdivisions in undeveloped areas outside the city limits to be developed with RFC financing. On October 8, the City Planning Commission voted to approve the plats of the subdivisions lying outside of the city limits that the county had already voted to approve.¹⁰⁹

Having just relayed this news in a letter to Riley, Robinson was shocked to learn that Paul Gibbs, one of the young local planning staff, had received his draft notice. He quickly related the news to Riley. "The boat in Kansas City is beginning to leak," he wrote. "The redevelopment work has slowed to the point where it may take many months to accomplish anything useful." Gibbs would probably have to leave in less than a month, and while he could work during the interim, Robinson thought it likely that the commission's position had been seriously compromised. "All I can say," Robinson concluded, "is that a flood is a hell of a catastrophe."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Robinson to Riley, 16 October 1951 (two-page letter); Letter from Frederic Robinson to Russell H. Riley, 16 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁰⁹"County planners approve three housing sites," *Kansas City Kansan*, 11 October 1951, p.1,c.2; "Plats of three residential developments for rural Wyandotte County to be constructed for flood victims thru housing and home finance agency allocations were given final approval by the Wyandotte county planning board in a special meeting yesterday". Spears Crest (negro); Willows addition; Villa Novo; Washington Homes (negro), tentative. Minutes, 8 October 1951, City Planning Commission, Kansas City, Kansas, in possession of City Planning Department, Kansas City, Kansas City Hall. (Plaza View, Crestview Homes, Friendship Heights, Spears Crest, Villa Nova, and Willows Addition were all approved. Wyandotte Village was approved due to the emergency subject to agreement by the county and the city engineer's office.)

¹¹⁰Letter from Frederic Robinson to Russell H. Riley, 16 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Compromise Unraveled

On Saturday, October 20, Robinson submitted his revised report to Nathan Keith, director of the Slum Clearance Division of HHFA. Still concerned about the prospects for its acceptance by the bureaucrats in Washington, Robinson had spent a great deal of time ensuring that the redevelopment plan was sound on all fronts, from the provision of relief housing to flood victims, the prospects for the Redevelopment Authority to obtain adequate private financing and identify a private developer for the project, and the assurances from the Army engineers about the ability of local flood protection to prevent another disaster of the magnitude seen that summer.

Preoccupied with these details, Robinson was therefore oblivious to the possibility that other factors might undermine implementation on the project. Within a few days, his worst fears would be borne out. On Tuesday, October 24, the State Supreme Court ruled on the test case filed by the Redevelopment Authority to assert its powers as granted under the 1951 amendment to the state redevelopment law. In a decision tinged by the controversy surrounding the relocation of residents from the district, and pessimism about the wisdom of permitting municipal corporations to exercise powers of condemnation in order to obtain land for private redevelopment, the Supreme Court dealt a resounding blow to the Authority, ruling that the 1951 amendment violated a provision of the State constitution forbidding the passage of legislation intended to apply only to narrow classes of individuals, corporations, or municipalities. The blow was all the more severe because this provision of the law represented the persisting compromise between Senator McDowell and rural interests in the legislature, who had blocked passage of the bill because they did not agree with the exercise of such authority by municipal agents. The compromise therefore restricted operation of the amendment to cities of the first class with population of 100,000 to 150,000 persons, a designation which applied effectively only to Kansas City.¹¹¹

¹¹¹*Redevelopment Authority of the City of Kansas City v. State Corporation Commission*, No.35,574, *State of Kansas v. State Corporation Commission and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Kansas City*, No. 38,575, consolidated (236 P.2d 782). "A flood unit out," *Kansas City Star*, 24 October 1951, p.1,c.1, p.2,c.3.

While McDowell and other members of the Redevelopment Authority vowed to push for a rehearing of the matter, the local resistance of the AAA and the opposition likely to resurface from rural interests made the granting of such a rehearing unlikely.¹¹² Robinson spared no time in assessing blame for the decision. "It should be comforting to them [AAA]," Robinson told Riley, "that they have prevented a decent, clean, liveable community from developing, and when the doubts of the wisdom of the action begin, they will be responsible for the explanations."¹¹³

The impact of the decision on the work of the Redevelopment Authority was final and swift, as Robinson worriedly informed Riley. "Following the adverse Supreme Court decision," Robinson wrote, "the Slum Clearance Division, HHFA, has ordered that all expenses other than those concerned with terminating the business of the Authority and with completing the lawsuit be stopped."¹¹⁴ Ultimately, of the \$66,300 planning grants allocated to the project by the HHFA's Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment, only \$52,218 was permitted as proper expenses. The agency had reserved a capital grant for the project of \$1,102,570, but at the time the remainder of the planning work was suspended, this amount became little more than a ledger entry.¹¹⁵

Robinson was especially concerned about the narrowness of the issue on which the case was decided. "As you may see," Robinson told Riley, "the case was decided solely on the legal technicality which affects so many Kansas laws including the county planner law."¹¹⁶ The basic compromise restricting the exercise of city planning, municipal zoning, and now redevelopment powers to Kansas City and Wichita, had unraveled. With the compromise defeated, the prospects for undertaking any substantial planning interventions in the city as a whole, let alone in Armourdale, were dashed. Riley tried to

¹¹²"Fight for homes," *Kansas City Times*, 25 October 1951, p.8,c.1.

¹¹³Letter from Frederic Robinson to Russell H. Riley, 25 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹¹⁴Letter from Frederic Robinson to Russell H. Riley, 30 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹¹⁵Program Directory as of 30 September 1953, in *Report of Operations*, 21 October 1953, Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment, HHFA, p.17. HHFA Archives, NARA.

¹¹⁶Letter from Frederic Robinson to Russell H. Riley, 30 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

console Robinson, suggesting that Robinson attempt to piece together minor improvements to trafficways and provision of recreational space. But Riley was nonetheless resolved to the outcome, especially as the controversy over the proposal, the problems with assembling an adequate staff, and the HHFA's resistance mounted. "I am not trying to be 'Pollyanna-ish'," he told Robinson, "but as you say, it may be that this is the best solution to the whole matter."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷Letter from Russell H. Riley to Frederic Robinson, 31 October 1951, Reel 25, Harland Bartholomew and Associates Papers, Washington University, Olin Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

C o n c l u s i o n

Lay plans as if we were to be immortal¹¹⁸

This study has represented an ambitious attempt to place the rational calculus of planning analysis and practices into the broader context of professional organization and the institutional basis for planning practice. My analysis has suggested that a number of important features of planning methodology and principles fundamentally shaped the outcomes of the urban renewal and redevelopment process in Kansas City, Kansas. To improve our understanding of where the process went wrong, and how efforts to avoid the grand planning failures of urban renewal, the profession must move beyond the focus on aesthetic and political issues to grasp the basic processes of planning analysis and practice. My findings suggest that city planners should revisit our understanding of historical modes of practice and action in order to ensure that contemporary trends are matched to appropriate methods of analysis. Moving beyond this predicament will ultimately require that planners recognize the limitations of their influence, and the need to plan to suit dynamic, rather than fixed, needs in society.

The Primacy of Process and Method over Aesthetic

The literature of planning history and theory has tended to emphasize the inappropriateness of specific aesthetic models and intervention strategies for urban renewal as exclusionary or class-biased. Plans and planners have been criticized for their inattention to community participation, while architects have been attacked for promulgating modernist ideals without regard to the social dimensions of community. This case suggests that these two threads are by no means distinct, and that additional factors explain their interaction.

The Armourdale redevelopment proposal represented the culmination of a planning process that began with Robinson's initial surveys prepared for the 1941 City Plan. Robinson's analysis, based on Bartholomew's planning criteria as outlined in Chapter

¹¹⁸William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, lecture 2 (1902).

One, designated Armourdale a slum, an area of marginal physical conditions characterized by high social heterogeneity, declining infrastructure, and relatively high ratios of public expense to tax receipts. In Robinson's analysis, low property values in the district stemmed from the scale and character physical development in the area, and the infiltration of the area's residential core by industry.

While Maultsby's design of the Armourdale housing prototype was certainly influenced by the prevalence of Le Corbusier's Unité, a separate set of teleological considerations encouraged Frederic Robinson to suggest the appropriateness of the prototype. Although Le Corbusier may have intended his designs to maximize the availability of land for through traffic and the passage of nature, a grand aesthetic statement, the embrace of these stylized forms by Robinson and Maultsby merely reflects to consolidate urban populations in a way that maintained critical densities while promoting efficiencies of cost. Faced with inordinate time pressures, Robinson himself gave little thought to the design of the individual units, while Maultsby improvised by suggesting the Unité prototype. Significantly, despite opposition from local homeowners, public officials seem to have had little influence on the selection of the prototype, although they clearly played an important role in advocating renewal.

Robinson's proposal and Maultsby's apartment house prototype, while designed to accomplish Bartholomew's City Efficient ideals, provoked significant outcry among displaced Armourdale residents. The looming towers of the new Ville Radieuse bore little semblance to the modest woodframe dwellings swept away by the Kaw; indeed, the overall scheme presented at the public meeting on August 1 could have been the plan for a new town. Though the buildings were sited with careful attention to the location of extant infrastructure, the scheme obliterated existing property boundaries and the 25-foot lots, the trademark urban design tools of the industrial past. While the social consequences of this development pattern proved perplexing to Robinson, they nonetheless reflected an established way of life and sense of proprietorship over individual space. Even after the flood, sentimental attachments as well as underlying patterns of land ownership remained, reflecting basic assumptions about the relationship of resident to neighborhood.

Several factors influenced planners' determination of appropriate scale, social objectives, and suitable morphology for urban redevelopment projects. The "City Efficient" movement, an outgrowth of Progressive Era municipal reform, reoriented planners from aesthetic to economic, social, and fiscal concerns, while legitimizing their status as professional experts. The consultant/client relationship between professional planners and city governments permitted planners to formulate redevelopment plans based on non-aesthetic, professionally determined, social and economic objectives. Working within an institutional framework of comprehensive planning, Harland Bartholomew and Associates attempted to stem urban decentralization and remedy urban blight by reshaping declining areas into socially cohesive neighborhood units. The morphology of their proposals reflected the consistent application of several City Efficient ideals, rather than the imposition of prevailing aesthetic archetypes.

The evolution of the Armourdale Redevelopment plan demonstrates that a number of non-aesthetic, City Efficient ideals and methods served as the fundamental underpinnings of remedies proposed for housing conditions in Armourdale. The use of an idealized modernist prototype was much more a matter of stylistic convenience than a reflection of dogmatic insistence on the accomplishment of specific aesthetic ends. Charles Jencks' protestations notwithstanding, the promulgation of superficially Radiant City ideals through the postwar redevelopment and public housing programs may owe much more to the Neighborhood Unit concept, a fact that has largely escaped the attention of planning historians and theorists.¹¹⁹

The Implications of Historical Analysis for Practice

The work of professional planners in Kansas City, Kansas suggests a close interrelationship among the process of analysis, the apprehension of the built and social environments, and the remedies prescribed as outcomes of comprehensive planning processes. While my conclusions are based only on the analysis of a single case, the framework established in the Introduction and Chapter One provide points of departure for research on the planning methods and approaches that led to the disastrous

¹¹⁹Silver 1985.

consequences of American urban policy during the postwar period. The relevance of this plan to other processes has been established on the basis of several factors, including the professional methods adopted and promulgated by the Bartholomew firm as consultant to a wide array of American cities, and attest to the influence of the consultant planner on the fundamental logic of urban renewal. Each of these points are discussed in detail below.

The planning process in Kansas City, Kansas, reflects the institutional context of municipal planning practice before the advent of professional city planning departments. Prior to the 1960s, firms like Harland Bartholomew and Associates worked on a consultant basis with city governments, serving as expert analysts to politically-constituted City Plan Commissions. Individual associates of the firm (usually recent graduates of planning and architecture programs in the Midwest) were dispatched as contract planners to specific municipalities. By assigning young associates to residence and employment with specific city governments, Bartholomew not only furthered their careers, but his ambition that city governments make concrete their commitment to comprehensive city planning.

The plan was formulated as the outcome of an analytical process which is representative of the firm's approach to planning. The Armourdale Redevelopment plan was predicated on a set of City Efficient principles developed by Bartholomew himself during the 1930s and adopted as the basis for the firm's work in other city plans. These methods were conceived, in part, with the intent of dealing with several fundamental issues in American cities, including decentralization, suburban sprawl, the resulting erosion of the municipal tax base, declining maintenance of urban infrastructure, and the use of neighborhoods as a building block for comprehensive planning. The format, arrangement, logic of the planning analysis, and the resulting prescriptions in the Armourdale plan were therefore quite similar in composition and form to comprehensive plans and redevelopment proposals prepared by Harland Bartholomew and Associates for other American cities.

Bartholomew's embrace of the large-scale project paradigm was not intended merely to reattract suburbanites, nor to serve as a medium independent of other social needs in the district. Bartholomew's assumptions about the ideal composition of the neighborhood unit served as the determining factor in the attempt to consolidate population and segregate uses in a scheme that superficially resembled modernist aesthetics. Nonetheless, the process of planning analysis was not objective. Value-laden assumptions regarding the ideal allocation of different types of functions and space reflected not only the prevalence of technocratic analysis, but also normative judgments regarding the appropriate scale and character of urban neighborhoods, with little regard for the established social and economic patterns of use.

This case is relevant to planning processes elsewhere due to the vast geographical scope of the firm's work. Over a forty year period, Harland Bartholomew and Associates prepared comprehensive plans for some three hundred American communities, primarily in the Midwest and South. Despite variation in regional economic and physical conditions, these plans were predicated on essentially the same planning approach. The articulation of these principles required an abandonment of existing form in favor of stylistically consistent (though not necessarily aesthetically-determined) models that accorded with the outcomes of Bartholomew's methodology. The Bartholomew plans thus constituted an evocation of identical principles, independent of the specific aesthetic idioms adopted and local conditions encountered. This case therefore offers interesting insights to the most pervasive work of any American planning firm.

The influence of the consultant planner in Kansas City, Kansas suggests that the political dynamics underlying the adoption of city planning may have differed depending upon the scale, population, and density of the affected city. The focus in the literature on the political influence of civic elites and the adoption of planning to protect private capitalist interests is based primarily on the study of large metropolitan centers. By focusing on a mid-sized community,

the exogenous influence of local political elites on the process of planning analysis and implementation may be minimized, permitting a more appropriate examination of the limitations of the analysis and underlying teleological theories themselves.

These conclusions suggest a number of important implications for planning history and theory. This study demonstrates that the planner-as-expert wielded considerably greater influence over development regulation, and the formulation and adoption of specific visions for community growth. This is a crucial area for future exploration, since this case suggests that the small- to mid-sized communities in which Bartholomew and Associates' work predominated were more receptive to the reform-oriented, City Efficient basis of comprehensive planning.

How Far Have We Come

Despite the limitations of her historical analysis, Jane Jacobs still offers one of the most compelling renunciations of the City Scientific ideals. Drawing largely on a 1958 report by outgoing Rockefeller Foundation vice president Warren Weaver, a noted mathematician, Jacobs analogizes progress in city planning to progress in the physical and biological sciences. In the first centuries after the Renaissance, Jacobs asserts, science grew able to describe simple bivariate relationships, that is, relationships where a simple direct or inverse correlation could be shown between two phenomena. Relationships such as that between the pressure exerted upon a gas and its volume of that gas, constitute a *problem of simplicity*. At the opposite extreme, science had identified numerous *problems of disorganized complexity*, that is, relationships in which one cannot predict the outcome of a single event due to the seemingly haphazard randomness of the phenomena being studied. In a billiards game, for example, one is hard-pressed to predict, with reliable accuracy, the behavior of any single ball on the table. But through the application of probability theory and inferential statistics, one can indeed predict the likelihood of any particular outcome.

Jacobs relates these ideas to the analysis of urban phenomena by planners in a very compelling way. "The theorists of conventional modern city planning," she writes, "have consistently mistaken cities as problems of simplicity and of disorganized complexity, and

have tried to analyze them and treat them thus.” Howard's Garden City was based on the simplistic ideal, Jacobs argues, where one community need, say for housing, or park open space, is directly and simply related to another variable, such as number or density of the population. At the opposite extreme, planning theorists like Bartholomew dealt with what they conceived of as problems of simplicity (such as the appropriate allocation of urban land based on various economic and social factors) and problems of disorganized complexity, such as the relationships among decentralization, population growth, density, and the fiscal health of the metropolis. Rather than treat these issues in their fullness, Jacobs argues that conventional city planners treated these problems as one or another of these two extremes of analysis. Le Corbusier's Radiant City, Jacobs argues, serves as “a celebration, in art, of the potency of statistics and the triumph of the mathematical average.”

Jacobs makes a compelling argument that the phenomena in cities lie within a newly emerging domain of scientific thought, the idea of *organized complexity*. Such problems, while superficially disorganized, instead reflected complex, intricate relationships among factors that tend to vary simultaneously. But planners have not only misapprehended the nature of the problem, Jacobs asserts; they have reasoned about these problems in a way that encourages erroneous conclusions. Rather than applying deductive logic to cities, working from the general to the specific, Jacobs advocates the use of inductive reasoning, working from particulars to the general, gradually untangling the complex interrelationships among the various facets of urban life. Had planners proceeded in this way, Jacobs concludes, the pain wrought by the dramatic dislocation and relocation of the working poor in the era of urban renewal would not only have achieved more salient results, but it would have avoided the issue of dislocation in the first place.

The chief failing of the earlier simplistic notions was that they treated people, rather tritely, as statistics would treat any large group of seemingly random phenomena. In Jacobs view, “citizens were no longer components of any unit except the family, and could be dealt with intellectually like grains of sand, or electrons or billiard balls. The larger the number of uprooted, the more easily they could be planned for on the basis of

mathematical averages.” Seen as problems of disorganized complexity, planners sought to reinstate order by converting them into problems of simplicity.

Jacobs' message is of fundamental importance to the ways that planners should attempt to act and understand the urban context. The social sciences, and urban planning in particular, have long drawn on scientific analogies. Supposing, however, that the city is a problem in engineering, or at the opposite extreme, an exercise in arbitrary judgment, planners will inevitably craft remedies poorly suited to the circumstances and richness of city life. The analytical insights offered by science are useful only in the ability of planners to appropriately reason about the nature of fundamental issues of urban life. As Jacobs argued in 1961, this insight has escaped currency among planners and urban designers. While planners have turned their attention to broader political issues, such as community participation and environmental concerns, the essential framework of planning analysis has changed little. The conception of planner as expert remains central to contemporary practice in both the public sector and private consulting practice, while the profession seems preoccupied with retrofitting large-scale urban projects with more appropriate aesthetic morphologies without recognizing the inability of the large-project paradigm to suit the dynamic social and moral needs of urban life.

The focus on great plans in the literature of planning history derives in no small part from the focus of researchers on large cities, a phenomenon that may overlook important dynamics at work in other urban areas. While Chicago, Boston, New York and Philadelphia were certainly influential in setting the national tone and parameters of public and professional discourse about planning, the assumption that the planning processes in each of these cities explains the dynamics of planning elsewhere remains to be demonstrated. Few of the neighborhoods razed by urban renewal resembled Manhattan's Lower East Side, characterized by abandoned, graffiti-strewn and gutted multistory brownstones, the epitome of overcrowding and tenement life. Much more common were the 20-foot tarpaper shotgun shacks of Houston's Third Ward, the dilapidated woodframe workers housing of Richmond, Virginia, and the three-story Victorian homes of St. Louis' DeSoto-Carr district. Planners and historians need to comprehend the vast array of mid- to small-sized cities, many of which have grown in

recent decades through regulatory and political planning frameworks established during the early postwar period. Understanding the consequences of recent growth or decline in such areas therefore requires some understanding of how such frameworks were originally devised.

Epilogue

The Uncertainty of Place

Despite the Armourdale Activities Association's successful bid to overturn the Kansas redevelopment law, community control over city planning functions and the process of redevelopment planning in Kansas City, Kansas has yet to materialize. By the same token, Armourdale has never recovered from the effects of the 1951 Flood. From a peak of approximately 18,000 in the early 1920s, Armourdale had declined to around 10,000 by the 1951 flood, and today the population numbers less than 3,500. With this massive displacement came the disintegration of social institutions, the abandonment of churches and schools, dozens of homes, and the relocation of hundreds of residents, most of whom were Mexican-American.

In 1952, Senator McDowell again attempted to obtain enabling legislation to permit Kansas City, Kansas to exercise renewal powers. Rural interests in the state legislature remained staunchly opposed to the exercise of redevelopment authority by local governments, however, and only permitted passage of the new law when its effects were limited to cities of the first class at least 70 years of age, a distinction that again applied only to Kansas City, Kansas. Within a year, the State Supreme Court ruled this legislation invalid as well, on the same basis that it struck down the 1951 Act. In 1953, however Senator McDowell finally prevailed. The Kansas urban renewal law was passed, and despite another challenge from the State attorney general, questioning the legitimacy of state action against private property, the law was upheld as an appropriate general act in support of the public exercise of the police powers. In 1954, the Kansas City, Kansas City Commission organized the an Urban Renewal Authority, which quickly moved to revisit the question of redevelopment in Armourdale, as well as the clearance of slum districts nearer the city's downtown.

Despite the continued support of the City Commissioners, the Kansas City, Kansas Urban Renewal program was plagued by public opposition and infighting over the clearance of several neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the program was substantial: nearly 800 acres in four major projects, including Gateway, Armourdale East, Argentine Heights, Silver City, and

University/Rosedale.¹²⁰ In Armourdale, renewal efforts remained stalled, but this actually worked to the detriment of the community. After the flood, few residents were able to return. The stagnant conditions of the residential areas buttressed the local view that the district was suitable for no uses other than heavy industry and retail supporting the adjacent industrial and warehousing districts. A later report of the city's Urban Renewal Agency would even claim that Armourdale's problems had emerged principally as a result of the 1951 flood itself.¹²¹

As a result of the dramatic decline of Armourdale, and the city's inability to adequately repair or service the district's damaged and now severely deteriorated infrastructure, the Urban Renewal Agency turned its attention to Armourdale again in 1957. In what would become the first of three major urban renewal projects, the city acquired and cleared the entire area between Cheyenne and Osage Avenues east of Seventh Street. Approximately 800 residents of the neighborhood were relocated to other parts of the city, and streets were reconfigured to create three superblocks. The entire clearance project was reserved for industrial uses, and with federal assistance and urban renewal obligation bonds issued by the city, the Urban Renewal Agency financed the construction of four large warehouses and industrial facilities, along with three major freight handling facilities for truck shipping. The renewal project was largely instigated and supported by the Armourdale Association, Inc., a successor of the Armourdale Activities Association representing a number of commercial property owners in the neighborhood, including influential local businessman Cyrus Long.¹²²

With the continuing support of Armourdale businessmen, and largely in response to the obsolescence of industrial buildings abandoned by the declining meatpacking industry, the city began a second urban renewal project in 1966. Dubbed Armourdale East, the project included the area north of Osage Avenue and east of Fourth Street, bounded by Kansas Avenue on the north and the Union Pacific right-of-way on the east. This 81.8-acre project emphasized "industrial rehabilitation," a mixture of total clearance of some parcels of land and retention of industrial developments in active use. The project included substantial investments in infrastructure development, including resurfacing and widening of most streets, and the

¹²⁰"City on the move...Kansas City, Kansas; many fail to realize scope of urban renewal program." *The Modern Builder* [Kansas City, Missouri] 18,2 (February 1965): 5-7, 17.

¹²¹1971 *Annual Report*, Urban Renewal Agency, Kansas City, Kansas, p.13.

¹²²"The Armourdale Industrial Park," *change* 2,1 (July/August 1966): 6-9; "A new heart for Armourdale," *op cit.*, 10-11.

installation of new sanitary and storm sewers. A number of commercial structures on the north side of Kansas Avenue were retained, but nearly all of the once-lively and now declining commercial district on the south side of Kansas Avenue was cleared.¹²³

The third Armourdale urban renewal project was initiated in 1972, when the City Commission designated the entire district as a priority area for urban renewal. Due to continuing community resistance to the use of urban renewal for the total clearance of neighborhoods, the city had by this time recharacterized the projects as Neighborhood Development Projects (NDP). Nonetheless, the objectives of most of the NDP areas remained identical: the total clearance of areas of mixed use for industrial use. The Armourdale NDP area was designated as the remaining area east of Seventh Street that had not already been designated an urban renewal project. All of the residents of the area were eventually relocated, nearly all of the commercial structures were cleared, with the exception of structures built since 1951, and the John J. Ingalls elementary school and other community facilities were abandoned for clearance.¹²⁴

In 1979, Armourdale residents won a symbolic reprieve when the City Planning Commission adopted a new long-term Armourdale Land Use Plan, which essentially agreed to maintain existing conditions in the district while abandoning the former pledge to clear the entire neighborhood. The 1979 Plan also pledged community development resources to the rehabilitation of housing in Armourdale's residential core. Despite these pledges, however, the city government has continued to approve zoning variances for non-conforming uses, and the promised community development resources disappeared after a year of an organized program.¹²⁵ During the Great Flood of 1993, the Kaw River crested just a foot below the tops of the Armourdale levees, forcing residents to evacuate the district for nearly a week. Despite the tenacity of neighborhood residents, man and nature still prove formidable obstacles to active community life and attachment to place.

¹²³"Armourdale East," *change* [Kansas City, Kansas Urban Renewal Agency] 2,6 (November-December 1966): 10-13.

¹²⁴1972 *Annual Report*, Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas, p.9.

¹²⁵Kansas City, Kansas, City Planning Commission, *Armourdale Land Use Plan, November 1977 - May 1979* (Kansas City, Kan.: The Commission, 1979).

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