

## THE MASTER PLAN

**O**NE hundred and eighteen years ago, or just after the fire destroyed the city of Detroit, the Governor and Judges obtained from Congress authority for the laying out of a new city. Detroit was a fur trading post, its population was 1400, and its area one-third of a square mile. Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties were part of a wilderness of forest, lakes, hills and swamps.

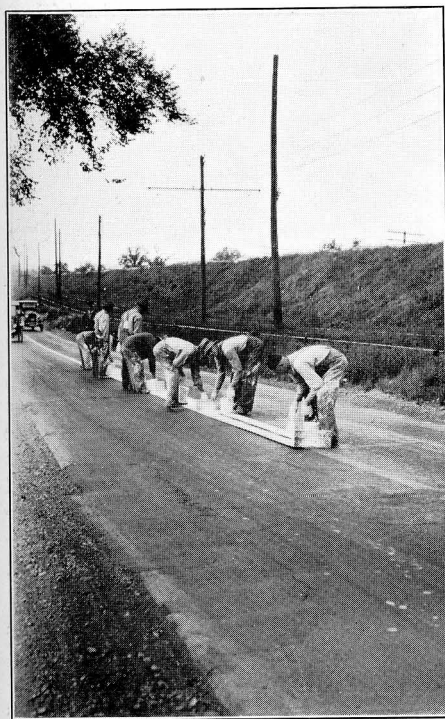
The plan adopted was based upon three standards of right of way width—

- (a) 22 feet for major thoroughfare running north and south, and east and west:
- (b) 120 feet for secondary radial arteries:
- (c) 60 feet for residential streets.

It was the intention to have all of these widths observed in the planning of future additions to the city, but subsequent generations failed, except as to Jefferson Avenue, to conform to the plan.

Washington Boulevard, Madison Avenue and Cadillac Square are parts of the 200-foot main streets of that time, while Bagley, lower Wood-

ward, Broadway, Monroe and Jefferson Avenues are all examples of the 120-foot secondary radial arteries.



In 1824, or just a century ago, Governor Cass obtained Congressional authority and appropriations for the laying out of Michigan's five great radial thoroughfares leading from Detroit to Perrysburg, Ohio; Fort Dearborn at Chicago; to the mouth of the Grand River; to Saginaw, and Fort Gratiot. These were all established as military roads 100 feet in width, but they also have been encroached upon by succeeding generations, until the State is today obliged to buy back right of way that rightfully belongs to it.

Michigan's history shows the most rapid development has always followed the lines providing easiest transportation. Governor Cass' radial roads opened up great areas of formerly inaccessible land, to settlement, usefulness and value.

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Neither the Governor and Judges, Governor Cass nor the public spirited citizens who laid out and dedicated the 150 to 200-foot Grand Boulevard around the outskirts of the city of Detroit in 1880, had any means of foreseeing the coming of the automobile, or of the great demands it would place upon the right of way they established. Their plans were made primarily for man and horse transportation conditions, and yet they were sufficiently generous so that had they been carried out they would go a long way towards meeting our needs today.

The automobile and the requirements of rail rapid transit are so new that very little constructive planning to adequately meet their needs has yet been done in this country. More of our large cities impose the enormous concentrations of the present time upon horse and buggy facilities, laid down a century ago. What is needed today is the character of foresight and forethought evidenced in the Governor and Judges' Plan of 1806, in Governor Cass' radial roads of 1824, and in Detroit's Grand Boulevard of 1880. Our conditions are changing so rapidly that plans made for today only will be inadequate tomorrow. Knowing something about the ever-growing requirements of the automobile as well as what must be provided for in the way of rail transit, we can begin our planning for the future with reasonable intelligence.

Three things are of the utmost importance to every township, village and city in this Detroit area:

- 1—They should make a master plan of roads and streets to meet the needs of the present, so as to provide for the maximum future development of all of the property within their border.
- 2—They should adopt standards of width to be applied to their thoroughfares. The widths applied in each case to be dependent upon the importance of the road or street in the local area, as well upon its relations to through routes of travel of which it may be or may become a part.
- 3—They should acquire the necessary widths or right of way, or at least make plans so that major structures will not be erected where they will later prevent this acquisition by condemnation or otherwise.

The importance of these three elements cannot be over-estimated. No matter how remote may be the township or other political subdivision, the best interest of the territory itself, and of the property owners within its boundaries, demand that such a master plan be drawn and adopted, and lived up to. Most of the blighted areas in large cities that have had to be abandoned by business and industry for other better planned and more favorable districts, are rarely the result of unwise planning, but are almost altogether the result of no planning at all.

The automobile is the greatest distributor of land value the world has ever seen. Land that is inaccessible to man is of no value, regardless of what it may contain in fertility, minerals and other things ordinarily useful to him. If he cannot reach the land, he cannot make use of the things

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it contains. Accessibility, therefore, is one of the most important elements affecting the value of land. All other things being equal, that which makes land more accessible to more people, adds directly to its value.

Within the automobile is compressed the speed of the railroad train, together with a tireless capacity for travel. The motor car has justly earned its world-wide popularity because it has given to the people an entirely new and hitherto undreamed of mobility. It has established new standards of time and distance, has brought the inaccessible close to hand, and by increasing the range of action of the individual, has increased his capacity to earn, and that of his family to enjoy life.

When Woodward Avenue was first paved with concrete all the way to Pontiac, it was generally thought that this would be adequate provision for the traffic of all time. In less than ten years the traffic desiring to use that important thoroughfare had increased so far beyond its capacity that the overflow filled every available alternate route to full capacity on Sundays and holidays. While a hard surface was the first essential to be supplied, increased width went almost hand in hand.

Age-old standards of street width and highway right of way for man and horse transportation, have long since proven themselves to be hopelessly inadequate to meet the requirements of this new mobility of the individual. New standards of street width and highway right of way must be established and used wherever conditions will permit. What is field and farm land today becomes a thickly settled section tomorrow, and may be the center of a great metropolis a century hence. Whatever individual or authority establishes the width of a main artery of travel determines to a very large degree the usefulness, potential development and value of the land served by that artery for all time.

The automobile is only a means to an end. It is a temporary medium for making remote places more accessible. It is the individual who rides that is all important. He is potentially a buyer of every class of property and commodity that exists. The occupants of a mile of motor vehicles represents a fairly accurate cross section of society, with all its manifold tastes, needs and capacities for purchase. The newspaper carries your ad to the prospective purchaser's home, but the motor brings the customer to your door.

Every political subdivision in Oakland County should co-operate with the County and State Highway Commissions in the preparation of a master plan for its territory. Such plan should be made to fit in perfectly with the larger plans of State and County. All future development should be made to conform to that plan, dangerous angles eliminated, bad grades avoided, offsets and bad alignment corrected, and the necessary widths of right of way obtained and preserved. The first, most essential and yet most difficult step is the making of the Master Plan.

All of the careful consideration that must go into its preparation and the discussions that precede its adoption, will generally win half of the battles toward its accomplishment.