
Zoning: Its Historical Context and Importance in the Development of Pittsburgh

By Janet R. Daly

THE modern industrial city of the early 1900s owed much of its structure to two concurrent, opposing forces: centralization and decentralization. Municipal reformers looking at the city saw fragmentation and chaos. In response, they sought to end the domination of local government by ward-based political interests and to consolidate authority. They turned to the corporation as a model and strove to apply its strong ethos of rationalization and centralized decision-making mechanisms. At the same time, the reformers — business and professional elites — took steps that decentralized the city, moving from the core to the suburbs to establish and enjoy their own schools, clubs and churches and other organizations built around shared interests. Municipal reformers, thus, often fought to enhance centralization in politics and government, while pursuing decentralist ends in their private lives.¹

Centralizing “innovations” developed included a city-wide school board, city councils elected at-large, and mayors with strong executive powers and functions. That centralizing impulse also involved a campaign to enact zoning legislation. Zoning addressed a crucial issue in rapidly growing metropolitan areas: for what purposes real estate would be used and what factors and parties would dominate decisions about those uses. A highly popular early twentieth century municipal reform, zoning fit within an expansion of the power of the municipal government and involved creation of a central board of appeals to help carry out the new land-use controls, thus reflecting the centralizing impulse.

While zoning legislation helped bring order to the city’s patchwork landscape, it also contributed to decentralization, reinforcing the city’s

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1 Samuel P. Hays, “The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America,” *Journal of Urban History* 1 (November 1974), 16.

division into clearly defined residential, commercial and industrial sectors. Zoning laws further promised to protect the integrity of neighborhoods by excluding what residents considered incompatible land uses, thus helping to preserve the residential character of their neighborhoods and to protect property values. Further, in Pittsburgh the story of the passage of zoning legislation also highlighted a strong tradition developed in this century: the willingness of Pittsburgh's elite to organize the private sector to accomplish what they perceived as public goals, from early efforts to gain flood control to the post-World War II Renaissance.

Studies by John Friedman, James Holmberg, Roy Lubove and Samuel Hays proposed that cities, with their economic, social and political-administrative institutions, have acted as agents of transformation and reorganization. The transformations and reorganizations have come both within the central city and its hinterland. In his article, "Cities in Social Transformation," Friedman argued that economic growth spearheads a geographic expansion of the central city's influence. Social and political-administrative institutions follow this process, extending their scope to match the enlarged economic sphere, disrupting traditional relationship patterns.² This phenomenon creates "an awareness of a larger political unity beyond the city's walls which leads to the recognition of that unity as the logical area for public policy and planning."³ Human relationships tend to transcend political boundaries, as well, and match their scope of organization to the wider urban space, encouraging what has been described elsewhere as a "more intense human interaction at a level high on the vertical scale of social organization."⁴

James Holmberg's thesis, "The Industrializing Community: Pittsburgh, 1850-1880," described just such a transformation and reorganization. He argued that those years, which witnessed the creation of firms conducting business in areas that transcended local political boundaries, marked the initial integration of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County as an effective economic unit.⁵ Contemporaneously, due to demands by new industries and residents for services, large-scale urban governments

2 John Friedman, "Cities in Social Transformation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1961), 92.

3 *Ibid.*, 102.

4 Hays, "Political Structure," 17-18.

5 James C. Holmberg, "The Industrial Community: Pittsburgh, 1850-1880," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1981), 118-119.

developed. An expansion of business activity, in addition, fostered both a sense of mutual dependence between the center and the periphery and an understanding of community that encompassed the broader economic space.⁶

In his study of Pittsburgh, Roy Lubove established that the growth and integration described by Holmberg continued into the early twentieth century. Spurred especially by growth in metals production, a definite regional economy emerged between 1880 and 1910. By that year the Pittsburgh "Industrial District" (the city and outlying mill towns) had a population exceeding 1 million and was "roughly coterminous" with Allegheny County. One could also include within the city's economic region the five other surrounding counties (Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Washington and Westmoreland).⁷

Samuel P. Hays further analyzed those forces and the changes they brought.⁸ He argued that the expanded scope of business, social and political activities shaped the programs of the businessmen and professionals in the leadership ranks of the Progressive reform movement. They adopted the model of the business corporation, with its expansive geographic scope and centralized decision-making structure. Accordingly, they rejected any governmental structure that allowed local, small-scale interests to persist.⁹ Lubove studied the nature of urban reform in Pittsburgh and asserted that the businessman-reformer leadership described by Hays directed the reform process in the city in the early decades of the century. Pittsburgh's progressive reformers represented the major business interests, the large firms that had spearheaded the city's economic expansion and rise to regional prominence. While realizing that weak municipal government augmented their power and influence, they also grew increasingly frustrated with the inability of the fragmented local government to deal effectively with certain matters of interest to the business sector: flood control, thoroughfare and bridge construction, and municipal service delivery, among others. They sought strategies — both formal and informal — to make government more rational and modern and to give it authority over a larger geographic area.¹⁰

Yet, as Hays further argued in another article, "[t]he urban upper class

6 *Ibid.*, 136, 140, 404.

7 Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change* (New York: 1969), 3-5.

8 Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55 (October 1964).

9 *Ibid.*, 161.

10 Lubove, 20-22.

faced two ways at once; decentralist in residential insitutions, it was integrative in its economic and occupational life."¹¹ The same elites who argued in favor of centralist proposals also strove to protect their own residential enclaves in the city. They were essentially "separatist," establishing their own neighborhoods, clubs, churches and schools, and fighting to protect them from strangers.¹² Holmberg also emphasized the persistence of local, decentralist elements not tied to the expanded economic space the city's larger firms created. Those forces resisted the reformers, who, with their efforts to build a political environment matching their broader view of the community, represented interests tied more directly to changes wrought during industrialization. Those two elements, for example, opposed each other over the issue of annexation.¹³

The urban leaders' reform strategies, further, reflected both their broader view of the city and their persistent attachment to "private group prerogatives" and separatism. They chose the voluntary association as the instrument to represent and advocate the business position.¹⁴ The groups formed included the Chamber of Commerce, the Civic Club, the Citizen's Committee on City Plan, and the Allegheny County Planning Commission. They drew their membership from the entire Pittsburgh economic community and, thus, transcended narrower political boundaries. These groups directed the reform activity in Pittsburgh.¹⁵

The campaign to create a "Greater Pittsburgh" and the fight to gain adequate flood control demonstrate the efforts by elite voluntary associations to develop effective measures to deal with problems extending beyond local jurisdictions. The former represented a desire to incorporate the city and its suburbs into a single political entity or at least encourage problem-solving premised on the concept of "Greater Pittsburgh."¹⁶ Further, through the auspices of both the Flood Commission of Pittsburgh and the Citizens Committee on Flood Control, from 1908 to 1936 the reformers "drafted legislation and coordinated a range of activities cutting across local, state, and national jurisdictions." A fragmented local government that stymied efforts at effective, coordinated activity frustrated reformers, and they realized flood control was not strictly a local problem. It demanded action beyond the authority of

¹¹ Hays, "Political Structure," 21.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Holmberg, 119, 147.

¹⁴ Lubove, 22-23, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Pittsburgh's municipal government. Therefore, reformers moved their focus from the local to the state and finally to the national level to prompt action broad enough to solve a clearly multi-state, regional problem.¹⁷ The businessmen's and professionals' broader vision of the community gave them a perspective on issues that drew them into larger and more complex levels of activity.

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In addition, members of many groups — ethnic, religious and elite — chose to seek residence in a relatively small, homogeneous area within the increasingly heterogeneous city. Only through separation could they hope to preserve their heritage, values and life-styles. That form of collective behavior proved as important to upper-class elite groups as it was to the more widely studied working class ethnic groups.¹⁸ As E. Digby Baltzell wrote, "the exclusive neighborhood, then, with its distinctive architecture, fashionable churches, private schools and sentimental traditions, is an indispensable factor in the development of an upper class style of life, system of personal values, and a distinct character structure."¹⁹ Given the important role elite neighborhoods played in maintaining values and culture among elites, protecting the integrity of those small, local areas of residence naturally also concerned businessmen and professionals.

The vulnerability of elite neighborhoods to deterioration in the rapidly changing urban environment fed the concern for their preservation. Fashionable areas had decidedly short life-spans. Baltzell asserted that "in large cities such as New York or Philadelphia, the fashionable blocks rarely last more than two or three generations."²⁰ Renee Reitman identi-

17 Roland M. Smith, "The Politics of Flood Control on the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers at Pittsburgh, 1908-1936," (Seminar Paper, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1971: Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh Libraries), 35-36.

18 E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Illinois: 1958), 173-174.

19 *Ibid.*, 174.

20 *Ibid.*, 178.

fied a similar rate of mortality for at least one elite community in Pittsburgh. She studied the Shadyside neighborhood and found that its life as an elite area lasted only from its initial development in 1880 until 1920, when the forces of deterioration set in.²¹ Zoning promised to halt the deterioration of such areas and to preserve their elite character by preventing undesirable and destabilizing incursions, such as apartment houses and public garages.

A Chronological Overview: Proposals, Agencies and the Metropolitan Ideal

Between 1900 and 1923, when zoning was adopted, reform elements in the city pushed for a number of changes to achieve their goals. Their success was varied, yet a general tendency proved clear. Twice during this period, in 1901 and 1911, they successfully orchestrated revision of the city's charter. They won a clear victory in their fight for a city-wide school system. Their agenda also included efforts to create both a uniform tax and a building code. A number of new city departments were established to rationalize and modernize municipal administration. A controversial and yet tenaciously sought program involved the annexation of outlying areas to the city. That, perhaps, represented most clearly the influence of the new, broader vision of Pittsburgh. Along with the drive for physical and political integration of the region came an effort to establish a mechanism to effect centralized direction over the region's future development. One program carried out under this impulse was city planning. Another, perhaps more significant effort, involved the long "Greater Pittsburgh" campaign to devise some method for metropolitan government.

In 1901 the state legislature granted a new charter to the city of Pittsburgh replacing the charter granted in 1887. The major change in city government established by this act was a transformation of the office of the mayor (or "city recorder" as the office was briefly named). Under previous charters the mayor proved very weak, having few administrative or executive powers. Reformers complained that the authority and power of the office must expand to match the needs of the "modern city" with its new activities and responsibilities. They argued that the mayor must be a "real executive" and possess sufficient administrative powers

21 Renee Reitman, "The Elite Community of Shadyside, 1880-1920," (Seminar Paper, University of Pittsburgh, 1964: Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh Libraries), 34.

to coordinate city government.²² Clearly the business corporation proved the model. The mayor functioned similarly to the chief executive officer of a corporation as he gave annual reports on city finances and the "general condition of the affairs of the city," and was "responsible for the good order and efficient government of the city."²³ In addition, the act created 10 executive departments under the administrative authority of the mayor. Each department functioned relatively independently; however, the mayor was required to meet with the heads of these departments at least once a month and the department heads were required to submit annual reports and information to the mayor and council on demand.²⁴ Through the office of the mayor, reformers hoped to achieve coordination of city government.

The new charter of 1901, however, retained the two councils and the ward system of election. Both the two-house legislative councils and the ward system were based upon, and hence allowed to persist, localism and a decentralization of the political system. Each councilman represented his home ward and, thus, focused on a limited constituency. He had a very narrow vision of the city and that vision shaped his politics. The businessmen-reformers, with their wider view of the city, rejected any form of government that allowed localism to hold sway. After reorganizing the executive, the next step was to reorganize the legislative branch of municipal government.

That step came with the charter revisions of 1911. In terms of the structure of government, the most significant revision proved to be the abolishment of the two-house, ward-elected council in favor of a single, nine-member council elected at-large.²⁵ That represented an important victory for the forces of centralization: the number of legislators was reduced from hundreds to nine and, in theory, each represented the entire city. The act took effect immediately. One indicator of the reformers' determination was that in the period between the passage of the act and the election of the new council, the governor appointed a temporary council rather than permitting the old one to continue serving.²⁶

Also in 1911, proponents of centralization won another significant

22 Voters' League, Executive Committee, *Report of the Voters' League to the Hon. E.V. Babcock, Mayor-Elect of the City of Pittsburgh, December 13, 1917* (Pittsburgh: 1917), 13-14; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1901* (Harrisburg: 1901), 20-48.

23 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws, 1901*, 21.

24 *Ibid.*, 21-23.

25 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1911*, (Harrisburg:1911), 461-467.

26 *Ibid.*, 463.

victory with the creation of a central school board. Progressive reformers commonly held a desire to wrest control of the schools from the wards and vest it in a central authority.²⁷ Contemporaneous with a state-level effort to create a uniform public school system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.²⁸ The school districts of Pittsburgh and Allegheny City (annexed in 1906) were consolidated and placed under the authority of a 15-member board of public education appointed by the county courts. The measure eliminated the 67 sub-districts that comprised the old system, which was perceived as more fragmented.²⁹

The charter revisions of 1911 also included the requirement that all cities of the second class (Pittsburgh and Scranton) adopt a "uniform rate of assessment and taxation for all real estate."³⁰ Pressure from a voluntary association known as the Taxation League brought modification in 1913. The League, concerned as much with land speculation as with taxation, desired a system that would tax unused land at a higher rate than used land. That would encourage constructive development and discourage the speculative holding of large tracts of vacant land upon the promise of increased valuation.³¹ While the exact basis for assessment differed between the 1911 and the 1913 measures, common to both was a desire for a standardized, city-wide system of taxation, with or without a differential rate. The goal was predictability. Under a single, set system of taxation businessmen could better predict their tax bills and, thus, plan for tax expenditures.

Predictability also proved a key goal behind the drive for a uniform building code. Before the passage of the uniform code, builders had to refer to a number of different ordinances, passed over a long period of time (since, at least, the passage of the first limited building code in 1887); this situation was considered cumbersome and inefficient. As early as 1913 the Civic Club, one of the more influential voluntary reform associations, approached the state legislature and requested it grant the city power to enact a uniform building code. The governor subsequently vetoed the act passed in that year. Two years later, however, reformers reintroduced the bill. It passed and the governor signed it. With the enabling legislation, the city council appointed a building code commission to draft a comprehensive ordinance. After long debate, a final

27 Hays, "Political Structure," 23.

28 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws, 1911*, 309-461.

29 J. D. Crawford, ed., *Municipal Year Book, 1913* (Pittsburgh: 1913), 46.

30 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws, 1911*, 273.

31 Anne Lloyd, "Pittsburgh's 1923 Zoning Ordinance," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 292-293.

version of the ordinance passed in 1918, establishing a comprehensive set of specifications to which every building erected or altered in the city had to conform.³² It, thus, consolidated under one ordinance all the specifications to be followed by a building contractor.

Consolidating functions and responsibilities and restructuring municipal government along hierarchical lines of organization was clearly characteristic of this period. Even before 1900 — perhaps indicative of future trends — the mayor and council in 1874 created a Bureau of Parks to administer the city's growing holdings in park lands, and in 1896, a Bureau of Bridges.³³ The charter of 1901 created 10 executive departments including Public Safety, Public Works, Collector of Delinquent Taxes, Assessor, City Treasurer, City Controller, Law, Charities and Corrections, and the Sinking Fund Commission.³⁴ With the charter revisions of 1911 the list expanded to include a Department of Supplies. The city also created a City Planning Department and an Art Commission in 1911.³⁵ Later came the Bureau of Engineering and Construction (1899), an office of Tenement House Inspectors (1903), a Survey Bureau (1905), a Building Inspection Bureau (1907), a Bureau of Light (1913 — responsible for the city's system of street lighting), an Office of City Architect (1914), and a Bureau of City Housing (1918). (This is only a partial list.)

In 1912 Mayor William F. Magee tried unsuccessfully to create both a public utilities bureau and an office of efficiency engineer to provide a "watchdog" over expenditures in various city departments, offices and bureaus. The proposed utilities bureau would supervise street railways, gas (artificial and natural), private water companies, electric light, heat and power, and telephone and telegraph companies. For example, no less than "one hundred and fifty corporate grants and innumerable ordinances of council" governed just the street railway system in Pittsburgh, indicating clearly the need for some coordination.³⁶ Magee faced opposition to that effort both at the city and state levels. He also failed to gain passage of the necessary legislation creating the position of efficiency engineer. The city council called the position a "good idea" but said the mayor was "using it for a blind to his political administration," a way to avoid his responsibilities in fiscal management.³⁷

32 City of Pittsburgh, *Municipal Record*, 1918 (City of Pittsburgh, 1918), 163.

33 City of Pittsburgh, *Municipal Record*, 1893-1894 (City of Pittsburgh: 1893-94), 82; City of Pittsburgh, *Municipal Record*, 1896-1897 (City of Pittsburgh: 1896-97), 6, 34.

34 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws*, 1901, 22.

35 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws*, 1911, 239, 872, 291.

36 Editors, *National Municipal Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April 1912), 293.

37 *Ibid.*, 294.

The record of that effort to restructure municipal government indicated clear trends. As government assumed more responsibilities and began to perform more functions, the structure had to change to accommodate the enlarged scope of activity. Borrowing the corporation's bureaucratic, hierarchical model, municipal government attacked the problems of coordination by expanding its bureaucracy with each new responsibility and function it assumed. A more bureaucratic government expanded its scope of authority and a more "rationalized" structure increased its control. Decision-making became more centralized, vesting immediate authority in various section heads and ultimately with the mayor and council.

Local government's governing capacity thus increased during this period. Accompanying it was a desire to expand government's geographic scope through annexation. Businessmen-reformers in Pittsburgh who wished to expand the geographic scope of their influence favored annexation or consolidation. Consolidation efforts dated from at least 1850. In that year an editorial in the *Pittsburgh Post* supported consolidation of Pittsburgh and a number of outlying cities, towns and boroughs on the basis that "for all business purposes [they] are as much of the city as the city proper."³⁸ The Board of Trade, a forerunner to the Chamber of Commerce, called for a convention on consolidation in 1865. In 1868 and again in 1872 the city carried out vigorous annexation campaigns.³⁹ This brought out strong opposition from locally oriented forces. After the initial successes the annexation drive went into a long period of quietude only to be reawakened after 1900.

Concurrent with the struggle for a new city charter, a number of reform-minded groups within the city — including the Chamber of Commerce and the Civic Club — fought to gain passage of legislation to allow the city to annex outlying suburbs. Neighboring Allegheny City was the key focus of their desire. The Chamber sponsored bills in the state legislature in 1903, 1905, and in the special session of 1906, before they achieved some success. For annexation to work, reformers needed a provision stating that in the special election calling for an annexation, approval required only a simple majority of the combined votes in the municipalities involved. The less populous Allegheny City protested vehemently, but ultimately to no avail. After passage of the enabling legislation in April 1906, the election was held in June and the measure narrowly approved. The city of Pittsburgh formally incorporated Al-

³⁸ Quoted in Holmberg, 236.

³⁹ Holmberg, 236; Crawford, 62.

leggheny City by an act of council December 9, 1907.⁴⁰

Pittsburgh's largest neighbor proved not the only outlying area to lose its independence to the expansionist impulse. Between 1905 and 1911 the city added all or parts of 10 boroughs or townships.⁴¹ That "land-grabbing" through forced annexation aroused strong resentment among the survivors. In 1910 representatives from a reported 122 separate political units joined together to form the League of Townships and Boroughs of Allegheny County, expressly to oppose further forcible annexation moves by their giant neighbor.⁴² Their first major battle came the very next year.

In 1911 Mayor Magee introduced a consolidation bill to the state legislature. Magee clearly lined up with those whose vision of the "city proper" extended beyond its circumscribed political boundaries. In an address to the city planning commission in December 1911, he made his definition of the city apparent when he declared that the "real Pittsburgh consists of sixty-five square miles of territory with a population of 761,000."⁴³ Both politically and administratively, in Magee's eyes, the problem was that of those 65 miles of territory containing 761,000 people only 41 square miles and 533,905 people were actually within the corporate limits of Pittsburgh. Twenty-four square miles of territory and 227,000 people remained outside and divided among 37 separate governing units.⁴⁴ Recognizing that many of the problems facing the city in areas of education, transportation, communication and health, among others, were metropolitan in nature, the mayor declared, "Efficiency and economy in the operation of government as well as the public health and safety and public education should dictate amalgamation."⁴⁵ Arguing before the Chamber of Commerce for the efficiency to be gained by organization of a larger unit, Magee called for the consolidation of the surrounding territory "that will probably be closely inhabited within a period of the next 20 or 30 years" under "one governmental jurisdiction."⁴⁶

Leading city officials across the nation during this period shared the metropolitan perspective and keen desire for growth through annexa-

40 Lubove, 27-28; H. Marie Dermett, Comp., *Civic Club of Allegheny County: Fifty Years of Civic History, 1895-1945* (Civic Club of Allegheny County, 1945), 20; Crawford, 62.

41 Crawford, 62.

42 Dermett, 20.

43 City of Pittsburgh, *Annual Reports of Departments and Offices of the City of Pittsburgh, 1913* (Pittsburgh: 1913), 59-60.

44 *Ibid.*, 60.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*, 47.

tion or consolidation. Acting even before the turn of the century, New York proved one early leader in, and model for, consolidation efforts. A well-publicized example for possible action in the Progressive Era was San Francisco. After the devastating earthquake and fire in 1906 civic leaders founded a Greater San Francisco Movement with the goal of consolidating the city and neighboring Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda in a metropolitan borough system modeled on New York's. The effort was defeated, but the goal was not soon forgotten.⁴⁷ Pennsylvania history also provided an example for such a drastic consolidation move. The state merged the governments of the city of Philadelphia and Philadelphia County in 1854. The extensive political and territorial consolidation envisioned by Mayor Magee in 1911, however, went down to a sound defeat. The League of Boroughs and Townships subjected the bill to strong opposition. In addition, the Civic Club, appalled by the divisiveness created by the measure, threw its support behind those opposing forcible annexation.

The defeat of the 1911 measure did not spell the end of a concerted effort to expand the authority and jurisdiction of the city. What ended was the exclusive use of forcible annexation to realize that goal. Annexation remained a useful tool, but local opposition clearly made it a difficult tool to wield effectively and efficiently. Reformers needed to develop other strategies. Accordingly, they introduced two techniques to give the city a measure of centralized decision-making authority over future development. First they supported creation of a city planning department. Concurrently, they groped toward some means of effecting metropolitan government while avoiding the use of forcible annexation.

Almost from the beginning it became difficult to separate city planning from schemes to form some sort of metropolitan government. Reformers sought metropolitan government in order to create a mechanism by which future development of a city and its hinterlands might be centrally directed. City planning embodied the ideal of a central body charged with directing growth and development. Thus, both planning and metropolitan government schemes were products of the same drive. However, reformers never viewed a city planning department as a metropolitan government in and of itself; rather they saw it as only a part, albeit a very important one, of such a unit. Therefore, although the two programs shared a common view of the city and each was considered indispensable to the other, each developed within its own separate sphere.

47 Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890* (Berkeley:1969), 175.

After lobbying efforts by a number of the progressive voluntary associations in the city, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed enabling legislation in June 1911, establishing a city planning department under the direction of a city planning commission "consisting of nine persons to be appointed by the mayor, to serve during his term of office and until their successors are duly appointed and qualified, and who may or may not be residents of the city."⁴⁸ Although a significant step in the direction of centralization, the powers granted proved very weak and largely recommendatory in nature. The legislation's "real power" lay in its control over final approval of "all plans, plots, or re-plots of lands laid out in building lots, and the streets, alleys or other portions of the same intended to be dedicated to public use, or for the use of purchasers or owners of lots fronting thereon or adjacent thereto, and located within the city limits."⁴⁹ That power was important, as it assured that plot and street lines in newly developed areas within the city were coordinated with and dovetailed existing city lines. In at least this area, hence, reformers attained centralized control. Otherwise, the powers were strictly recommendatory, although they had a feature that proved increasingly important. While the commission could not mandate that its plans be followed, nonetheless the plans it generated dealt not only with the city itself but also with "territory extending three miles beyond the city limits."⁵⁰ With the three-mile territorial extension, the commission's authority perhaps fell more precisely into the area of metropolitan or even regional planning.

The act of 1911 illuminated the two basic themes underlying the drive toward city planning: centralization of control and authority, and planning for the city and its hinterlands. A 1916 publication by a leader in the planning movement, Charles Mulford Robinson, elaborated upon those themes and their basic elements. Robinson's book dealt primarily with street and lot planning. However, in attempting to assign to those tasks what he felt was their proper importance, he also developed a theory supporting planning in general.

Robinson first asserted that any effort at city planning presupposed the creation of some method of central control over the planning process. Planning done without clear central control would be fragmented, concerned with locality and neighborhood, rather than the community

48 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws, 1911*, 872; James C. Clark, "The Pittsburgh Zoning Ordinance," *Proceedings of the Thirteenth National Conference on City Planning, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 9-11, 1921* (Boston: 1921), 155.

49 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws, 1911*, 873.

50 *Ibid.*

as a whole. Central control over planning was necessary for truly comprehensive planning.⁵¹ The exact nature of that centralized control had two basic elements: standardization and authority. One method to exert central control would be to standardize certain actions, such as plotting streets and building lines. Standardization of rules and procedures would guarantee coordinated development. Robinson admitted, however, that standardization represented a very rigid form of control. It might be abandoned, but only in favor of strict central control over any latitude allowed, lest liberty "degenerate into license."⁵²

The other important element was authority. Planning commissions had to be granted the authority to carry out their proposals and require adherence to their plans.⁵³ As shown in the Pennsylvania enabling act, success in that area was mixed. The commission had no authority to mandate action. Only in the area of street and property plans and plots could it enforce adherence to its standards. Robinson emphasized the mixed results and offered a clear and largely accurate reading of the contemporary situation when he stated that the efforts to gain central control and authority in planning were "still at the experimental stage."⁵⁴

In addition to the idea of central control, Robinson also elaborated on the subject of regional planning. He voiced what was becoming an increasingly common position among both planning enthusiasts and others who had a broader view of the city when he described a city's political boundaries as both "arbitrary" and "invisible." He argued that in reality a city was "built not only up to, but beyond that shifting line which is here today and perhaps a mile further out tomorrow." The rapidly growing city demanded that planning schemes not confine themselves to narrow and meaningless political boundaries. He pointed to several enabling acts, including Pennsylvania's, which tacitly recognized that fact and extended the jurisdiction of the planning commission beyond the city limits. However, Robinson argued that in some ways any rigid three- or five-mile extension only drew another arbitrary line. He called, rather, for an enlargement of the jurisdiction to cover all outlying areas recognized to be closely tied — economically, geographically — to the central city.⁵⁵ City planning, therefore, meant planning not for the

51 Charles Mulford Robinson, *With Special Reference to the Planning of Streets and Lots* (New York: 1916), 230.

52 *Ibid.*, 230-31.

53 *Ibid.*, 247.

54 *Ibid.*, 232.

55 *Ibid.*, 248-49, 253.

"political city" but for the larger metropolitan community created by the economic expansion of the city into its hinterlands.

At the local level, Mayor William Magee, in public addresses in 1911 and 1913, spoke of city planning in terms very similar to those Robinson would use in 1916. Magee spoke of the need for central authority, of the problems caused by territorial limitations on action, and of the necessity of a metropolitan vision of Pittsburgh. On December 1, 1911, Magee sent a message to the newly created city planning commission. In that address and its supplementary communication he outlined his thoughts about city planning in general, and specific programs and proposals he felt the commission should concentrate on at once. First, after elaborating on all the problems caused by political fragmentation, he generally concluded that Pittsburgh needed centralized authority to meet the many challenges facing both the city and its suburbs that were "better treated on the basis of territorial area than on strict municipal lines."⁵⁶ His ultimate solution called for the creation, either by annexation or some other less coercive device, of a metropolitan Pittsburgh.⁵⁷ The planning commission, however, also had a role in solving the problems of political fragmentation. Most importantly, the commission should act as a "clearing house" through which all the various proposals for improvement and development could be evaluated and, hopefully, molded into a coherent program for the benefit of the entire community.⁵⁸ In relation to that central clearing house role Magee realized that there must be a broadening of the powers both of the city and of the commission.⁵⁹ Planning was all but worthless without the power to implement and to administer the plans.

Two years later, in a speech before the Fifth National Conference on City Planning in Chicago, Illinois, Magee elaborated more directly on the themes suggested in his 1911 message. His speech dealt directly with "The Organization and Function of a City Planning Commission." He asserted that planning was hurt by two forms of "territorial" limitations. First, jurisdiction over many aspects of planning — streets, public works, parks — was divided among several departments, bureaus and offices within city government. Again, he emphasized the important clearing house role. The planning commission must be granted the central authority to evaluate and coordinate among those various sections provid-

⁵⁶ City of Pittsburgh, *Annual Reports*, 1913, 58-62.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 79-81.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

ing a metropolitan vision.⁶⁰

The many geopolitical divisions caused the second "territorial" limitation that stymied coordinated action. The divisions not only included those between city and suburb, but also between city and state, and state and nation. While the aid of all those units was necessary, Magee asserted that "[t]he entire area both within and without the corporate limits [of the city] must be planned as a whole regardless of the number of governmental units now contained within it."⁶¹ Magee argued that the failures of city planning up to that time could be attributed to the lack of any centralized administrative authority within the planning commission and to the fragmentation caused by the political division of the city and its suburbs. "The poverty of city planning in its present stage of development is nowhere so well exemplified as by the absence of laws providing for the administration of purely community questions upon the basis of the metropolitan district."⁶² Again, he found the ultimate solution in the creation of a metropolitan government. Calling for planning based on the metropolitan unit further suggested an equating of city planning with regional planning.

Magee also outlined a second important role for the planning commission beyond that of clearinghouse. He envisioned the commission as an agency that would not only coordinate programs but also act as a bridge between often competing segments of the city, both in the public and private sectors. It would function as a "centripetal element" drawing together all the energies of the community and directing them toward a central goal.⁶³

Magee's was not the only voice in the community speaking of city planning in such expansive terms. In 1917 the executive committee of the Voters' League sent a report to then mayor-elect E. V. Babcock in which they outlined their views of city planning. First they offered their definition of a city. "The modern city is a big public service corporation," in the words of the Voters' League, carrying out at least 50 functions, serving in excess of 700,000 customers and employing nearly 5,000. They equated the city with a big business and as such called for the new mayor to reorganize the city along business principles so as to manage it more efficiently.⁶⁴

60 William F. Magee, "The Organization and Functions of a City Planning Commission," *Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on City Planning, Chicago, Illinois, May 5-7, 1913* (Boston: 1913), 73-75.

61 *Ibid.*, 77.

62 *Ibid.*, 78.

63 *Ibid.*, 82-84.

64 Voters' League, 13.

The League carried its analogy even further when it took up the subject of planning. To them city planning meant "merely a longer look into the future; taking your mind for a moment off the business of today and by using the experience of the past to plan for the business of tomorrow."⁶⁵ They pointed to the city's large corporations, specifically Bell Telephone and the Pennsylvania Railroad, as examples of the necessity and practicality of such actions. "How long would any big business or industrial enterprise last that failed to look into the future?" Accordingly, after the proper preliminary investigation, the League wished the city to follow the corporate example and develop and implement a plan to guide the city's growth for "a period of at least ten years."⁶⁶

There was, however, another shade to the League's argument. Its rhetoric betrayed a more parochial attitude as well. The lack of planned action in Pittsburgh, the League lamented, had dulled the city's competitive edge in the inter-city battles for economic growth and population. Detroit and Cleveland had adopted intelligent planning and, hence, had made their communities "pleasanter (sic), cheaper and more desirable" — and more competitive.⁶⁷

In addition to political pressure in the form of reports, such as that of the Voters' League aiming at furthering the planning activity of the municipal government, the private sector also provided a model in the Citizen's Committee on City Plan (CCCP). Spearheaded by private action, city planning activity in Pittsburgh pre-dated the establishment of the city's planning commission. In 1909 a group of private citizens hired Frederick Law Olmstead, a nationally renowned planner, to prepare a comprehensive plan. They brought Bion J. Arnold to the city to prepare a study on "the traction problem of the metropolitan district of Pittsburgh."⁶⁸ Such voluntary private sector initiatives were formalized in 1918 with the creation of the CCCP. Frustrated by the continued inability of the official planning commission to act, the CCCP spent \$250,000 to conduct "a comprehensive survey and study of the metropolitan district of Pittsburgh."⁶⁹ The CCCP had at least one very tangible link to the city planning commission. It hired Harland Bartholomew as consultant. At the same time, Bartholomew also served as consultant to

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-29.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁸ U. N. Arthur, "Review of City Planning in Pittsburgh," *Proceedings of the Twelfth National Conference on City Planning, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 19-22, 1920* (Boston: 1920), 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

the city's planning department.⁷⁰

The CCCP shared the expanded view of planning held by Magee and the Voters' League. Following the survey it conducted, it published a number of plans, including one dealing with parks and recreation that clearly reflected a planning perspective regional in character. Most obviously it defined the park and recreation issue as essentially metropolitan in nature. Any plans made should deal with the "very large metropolitan district" of which the city of Pittsburgh was the center.⁷¹

In its park plan the CCCP also attacked the division of the city into wards as the product of "superstition." Even though councilmen were elected at-large, politics were still largely organized at the ward level and, hence, localistic concerns still governed city hall. Efficient planning could not take place in such an atmosphere. Rather, the CCCP argued that any division of the metropolitan area must be based on technical, engineering, physical and /or geographic features that would divide the metropolis into "physically homogeneous service areas."⁷²

The CCCP went even further in its private planning activity. It also spawned two new agencies aimed at coordinating planning on a larger scale. First, the CCCP encouraged the concurrent establishment of a voluntary County Planning Commission in 1918. Then, it worked to formalize that agency and in 1923 successfully pushed for enabling legislation creating an official county planning commission. In addition, it sponsored a Joint County Planning Conference in 1922 that brought together Pittsburgh's city planning commission, the County Planning Commission (still voluntary at that date), and the CCCP. The conference provided a forum in which the common planning concerns of the city and county could be discussed and, perhaps, some course of action decided upon.⁷³

The drives within both the public and the private sectors to implement metropolitan or regional planning succeeded primarily in producing largely powerless agencies and plans that never came to fruition. Planning was a function of government and unless the government had central power and authority over the wider area, no planning done by that government — or brought before the public through private activity — could succeed. Hence, concurrent with the expansion of the field of planning, efforts were made to create a metropolitan or city-county

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Citizens' Committee on City Plan, *Parks — A Part of the Pittsburgh Plan*, Report No. 4, September 1923 (Municipal Planning Association, 1923), 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 6.

government.

After the defeat of the annexation bill in 1911, and in the face of continued suburban hostility, those wishing to realize the "Greater Pittsburgh" had to devise a new method. Mayor Magee strongly supported the idea of a metropolitan district as a way of governing both Pittsburgh and its suburbs. The Civic Club also came out in favor of a metropolitan district government in 1911.⁷⁴ Working models were available in both London, England, and Boston, Massachusetts, upon which to pattern action. The metropolitan district allowed the suburbs to retain their individual identity while vesting within the governing unit the authority to deal with those matters that were clearly metropolitan in nature, such as a transportation system, water supply and public utility service. The Civic Club reaffirmed their support of such a scheme in 1916.⁷⁵

Morris K. Knowles, the city's consulting engineer, directly addressed the close connection between the drives for effective planning and metropolitan government in Pittsburgh in a paper presented at the Eleventh National Conference on City Planning in Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York, in 1919. Engineer Knowles addressed the conference on the "Engineering Problems of Regional Planning." In the first half of the paper he dealt with that issue exclusively. In the second half, however, he asserted the "carrying out the works of a regional plan is not solely an engineering problem. Existing political organizations must, of course, be the basis of it, and intricate legal and organizational problems must be solved to build up a group of related organizations . . . required to secure the results desired."⁷⁶ Knowles then went through a number of possible organizational strategies — municipal limits and consolidation or annexation, extension of municipal jurisdiction, contracts between municipalities, county administration, private enterprise — to conclude that district organization was the best.⁷⁷

Knowles' support of the metropolitan district proved significant, for he not only acted as the city's consulting engineer but also chaired the Civic Club's Municipal Planning Committee and was an instrumental figure behind the program launched by the club in 1920 to realize the goal

⁷⁴ Dermett, 20.

⁷⁵ *Annals of the Civic Club of Allegheny County*, November 1916 (Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

⁷⁶ Morris K. Knowles, "Engineering Problems of Regional Planning" *Proceedings of the Eleventh National Conference on City Planning, Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York, May 26-28, 1919* (Boston: 1919), 127.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 127-132.

of a "Greater Pittsburgh."⁷⁸ In September 1920, the Civic Club formed a "Greater Pittsburgh" Committee "consisting of representatives of outlying boroughs—merely a gathering together of three members from each borough or township for the purpose of investigating the situation very quietly and coolly with a view to finding a sane and common ground upon which to venture in an effort to make a bigger and better Pittsburgh." Knowles was closely involved and even suggested that the name of the Municipal Planning Committee be changed to the Community Planning Committee and that it concentrate its efforts on pushing for the metropolitan district plan.⁷⁹

In 1923 the Civic Club, supported by Mayor Magee (then serving a second term), sponsored a legislative bill to create a metropolitan district centered in Pittsburgh. The bill met heavy opposition, however, and supporters substituted a second bill, which passed, calling merely for the creation of a commission to study the matter.⁸⁰ Supporters successfully introduced a second metropolitan district bill in 1926. Subsequently, a special election was called in which voters soundly defeated the metropolitan district idea.

The reform package outlined above aimed at creating a political Pittsburgh that matched the community created through the economic expansion of the city into its hinterlands. The spearhead, economic expansion, did not automatically create the larger political or social entity. The three forces—economic, political-administrative, and social—did not move in tandem. Rather, they interacted with each other in a process that had both leading and lagging elements. In the Pittsburgh example the political-administrative element lagged. That did not preclude some victories, such as at-large elections and the creation of a city-wide school district, for the side promoting centralization. On the other hand, decentralization and concern with locality and the smaller scale remained strong. Into that contest was thrust the issue of zoning. The effort to create a zoning system succeeded. Its success must be analyzed in relation to its position in the struggle between centralization and decentralization.

Zoning: A Program for Everyone

The standard interpretations of zoning's appeal and rapid adoption in cities across the nation usually emphasize civic boosterism, a copy-cat

⁷⁸ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Civic Club Board of Directors*, December 1918 to December 1921 (Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh Libraries), 133.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Dermott, 20; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1923* (Harrisburg: 1923), 688.

behavior among urban elites, or, as planning historian Mel Scott saw it, a desire to quickly take the best and newest remedy for all that ailed the modern city.⁸¹ That interpretive framework is inadequate because it fails to tie zoning clearly into the larger forces shaping the industrial city of the twentieth century. Zoning needed to be more than new and flashy to demand the attention of civic leaders. It had to fit their vision of the city and complement their attempts to realize that vision. Zoning went even further, however, appealing to members of the elite on two different levels: it touched their centralizing impulses while also touching their equally important neighborhood-based decentralizing impulses. Perhaps zoning's incredible appeal during the 1920s can be better explained by that, rather than the more limited, traditional interpretation.

Zoning first came to the attention of city officials at least as early as 1913. In that year's annual report Mayor Joseph G. Armstrong asserted that one of the priorities for the planning commission should be an investigation into the possible "restriction of the heights and character of buildings with, of course, the districting of the city where such restrictions shall apply."⁸² Before any such action could be taken, however, the state legislature had to pass enabling legislation. In 1915 the Civic Club approached the city with the idea that perhaps the newly passed building code legislation might also provide for the districting of the city. However, after consultation with a lawyer it became clear that the city needed a more specific grant of power.⁸³ The Civic Club, with the support of other groups in the city, including the Real Estate Board, began the push to gain the necessary legislation in 1918. To create a favorable atmosphere the club published a special bulletin, "Districting and Zoning; What It Is; Why Pittsburgh Should Do It."⁸⁴ A bill was introduced in 1919 without success. A second bill introduced in 1921 passed. The bill was amended in 1923 to provide for the establishment of a Board of Appeals to administer the zoning ordinance.⁸⁵ The long-awaited zoning measure passed quietly into law on June 30, 1923.

An examination of the ordinance, its base of support, and its relation to other issues facing the city reveal the two-leveled appeal of the

⁸¹ Scott, 192.

⁸² City of Pittsburgh, *Annual Reports*, 1913, 107.

⁸³ *Annals of the Civic Club*, February 1916 and May 1917 (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

⁸⁴ Civic Club Records, Box 15, File 270 (Archives of an Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh Libraries); Dermett, 37.

⁸⁵ Dermett, 37-38; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1919* (Harrisburg: 1919), 50-51; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Laws*, 1923, 590-591.⁸⁷ Robinson, 287.

measure. In a very real sense, zoning offered, or seemed to offer, something for everyone. To those who thought of the city in centralizing terms it offered at least a city-wide uniformity of regulation, a central control over land use, and it also dovetailed with efforts to establish regional planning. To those who thought of the city in neighborhood-based

'Zoning, regional planning and metropolitan government drives shared common supporters.'

decentralizing terms it offered protection to both property values and neighborhood integrity. And it created a system of regulation that promised to decentralize the city, pushing residential, commercial and industrial uses ever outward and ever farther apart. In reality, this appeal at two different levels often was difficult to separate, as they often were at work in the same individual.

Zoning offered a streamlining and centralization of control over decisions concerning land use. As Constance Perin argued, "Zoning is no less a product of the industrialization of its time, a streamlining of the ever-present process of trading in land and property, mass-producing parcels for ready appraisal, pricing, and exchange."⁸⁶ Zoning eliminated one of the persistent and nagging questions in the city's real estate market: how any parcel of land might be used in the future. Zoning's use regulations decided the answer to the question for every parcel of land in the city. That simplified matters not only for private traders in land, but it also helped the city tax assessors as land values were often determined by potential use.

Zoning's regulations and the board of appeals that administered them replaced, at least in part, largely unsuccessful private sector attempts to control land use. The device used was the restrictive covenant. It restricted, usually for a period of 20 to 25 years, the use to which a parcel of land might be put. It was a favorite device, especially in fashionable neighborhoods that used it to try to retain a degree of uniformity. However, the effectiveness of the restrictive covenant was limited and based mostly on cooperation between neighbors that could, and did, break down.⁸⁷ As Sam Warner demonstrated in his study of suburbanization in Boston, decisions over building and land use were made by

⁸⁶ Constance Perin, *Everything in its Place: Social Order and Land Use in America* (Princeton, N. J.: 1977), 148.

⁸⁷ Robinson, 287.

"9,000 individual builders" and "[n]o legislation save the law of nuisance and a few primitive safety codes prevented these 9,000 landowners from doing anything they wanted with the property."⁸⁸ Zoning offered enforceable, centralized control over those decisions and promised to prevent the perceived chaos caused by individuals acting alone without any vision of the larger community.

Zoning offered planning enthusiasts the important element of coercion that previous planning provisions and private action lacked. Unlike other maps and plans drawn up for improving the city, the zoning map was enforceable. The regulations on the height and bulk of buildings and use of land had to be followed.⁸⁹ Before the passage of the ordinance, for example, only moral persuasion could be used to try to convince owners to use their land and buildings in "appropriate" ways.⁹⁰ Zoning finally gave some teeth to planning decisions. And zoning provisions were city-wide, creating one set of rules for the entire municipality.

Further, the board of appeals created by the ordinance represented yet another expansion of the city's municipal bureaucracy as well as a central decision-making unit. As at other times when the city took on an additional function, when the city acquired the zoning power it created another board to administer the provisions of the ordinance.⁹¹ In addition, the board had the sole authority to administer the existing regulations and to initiate changes when circumstances warranted.⁹²

Zoning also complemented the regional planning and metropolitan government campaigns waged during the waning years of the Progressive Era. Zoning, regional planning and metropolitan government drives shared common supporters. Zoning and regional planning became particularly intertwined. Once city planning broadened its vision to become more regional in character, zoning also expanded from a city-based program to a regional issue. In the year that Pittsburgh adopted its zoning ordinance, planners meeting at the Fifteenth National Conference on City Planning spoke of zoning as a regional concern. The problem was that not only were center cities passing zoning ordinances, but so were outlying independent suburbs. Pointing to Cleveland as an example, the planners argued that suburban communities there, by excluding industries and restricting commercial areas, were zoning

88 Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (New York: 1971), 37.

89 City of Pittsburgh, *Municipal Record*, 1923, 252-53.

90 Clark, 156.

91 City of Pittsburgh, *Municipal Record*, 1923, 266.

92 *Ibid.*, 266-68.

"against the city of Cleveland which will thus be obligated to provide common, economic facilities for the surrounding communities."⁹³ In the same year, Theodora Kimball published a handbook on zoning that began with a definition of a city that described it as "a vital part of the region in which it was situated" and further argued that any planning activity, including zoning, had to be regional in scope.⁹⁴ The 1926 metropolitan district bill submitted to the state legislature by the Civic Club suggested a connection between regional planning, municipal government, and zoning. The bill contained a provision for a district board to regulate "the location height area bulk and use (sic) of buildings and premises."⁹⁵

The arguments put forth on zoning's behalf also evidenced another level of appeal. The sources of these arguments suggested the dual nature of zoning's appeal. As a strong proponent of centralization, the Civic Club, put forth the more parochial arguments. In 1916, when the zoning campaign was still in its early stages, the Civic Club requested that its membership submit "brief written reports of any depreciations in property values experienced by them as the result of the encroachment into their residence districts of structures of objectionable type or which in that district are undesirable." Among the objectionable and undesirable structures listed were "garages, manufacturing plants, shops, flat and apartment buildings."⁹⁶ The next year the Club promoted zoning as a method to protect property values, arguing further that it was time for the city to take action. The property protected by zoning included both residential and commercial (business districts), both of which were threatened by "encroachments detrimental to their character and stability."⁹⁷ In a special bulletin published in 1919, the Club again forwarded the idea that zoning would protect neighborhoods from out-of-place incursions.⁹⁸ The Club ran ads in the local newspapers that

93 George B. Ford, "Regional and Metropolitan Planning: Principles, Methods, Cooperation," *Proceedings of the Fifteenth National Conference on City Planning*, Baltimore, Maryland, April 30, May 1-2, 1923 (Boston: 1923), 4-5.

94 Theodora Kimball, *Manual of Information on City Planning and Zoning* (Cambridge: 1923), 3-4.

95 Civic Club Records, Box 9, File 136 (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

96 *Annals of the Civic Club*, June 1916, (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

97 *Ibid.*, January 1917 (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

98 Civic Club Records, Box 15, File 230 (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

featured a picture of a charming cottage with a picket fence in the ominous shadow of a monstrous factory to emphasize zoning's promise to protect the sanctity of the family home.⁹⁹

In those various campaign appeals the Civic Club demonstrated its concern for neighborhoods, though considering the nature of its membership, the club probably was most concerned with elite neighborhoods. Nonetheless, protection of neighborhood integrity and the maintenance of high property values underscored a concern for the small scale. Of special concern was the exclusion of undesirable elements that destroyed homogeneity. Public garages were unwanted, as evidently the closest any of the elites desired to get to "Gasoline Alley" was the Sunday newspaper. The elite viewed apartment houses, with their transient populations, as potentially destabilizing elements in a community. And it was very clear that they wished industrial Pittsburgh to stay as far away as possible from residential and even commercial Pittsburgh (for example, Downtown).

For many of the same reasons, zoning appealed to real estate interests. By stabilizing property values and by setting into law current and future land use, zoning took many of the risks out of the real estate industry. A contemporary observer and strong proponent of zoning, Charles Cheney, wrote of the many benefits zoning offered real estate men. Primarily, by stabilizing values and removing uncertainty over future use, zoning removed the "suspicion of real estate as an investment" and made "[i]nvestors, banks, and mortgage loan companies, as well as the small home owner, [and] the renter" more desirous of real estate as an income-bearing investment.¹⁰⁰ Speculators in real estate resented the restrictions,¹⁰¹ but the larger, more established firms welcomed the stabilizing element. Evidence is scarce, but in 1918 the Pittsburgh Real Estate Board twice came out in favor of zoning, and sponsored, along with the Civic Club, the enabling act.¹⁰²

Finally, zoning aimed to decentralize the city. Through its separation of residential, commercial and industrial elements, and the regulation of the height and bulk of buildings within those use districts, it promised to aid the effort to reduce congestion and over-crowding. It promised to replace the jumbled and chaotic conditions with a rational pattern that

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Charles Cheney, "Zoning in Practice," *National Municipal Review*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (January 1920), 33-34.

¹⁰¹ Lloyd, 289.

¹⁰² Civic Club Records, Box 15, File 230 (Archives of an Industrial Society: University of Pittsburgh Libraries).

foresaw a city spread rationally across the landscape.

The economic, political and social forces that influenced the reformers and their reform packages, including zoning, were not invisible hands shaping a social transformation. The businessmen-reformers recognized, if they did not fully understand, the forces transforming the industrial city and their role in the process. Two studies that appeared as part of the Pittsburgh Survey suggested such cognizance. Robert A. Woods, in a study of Pittsburgh's growth patterns, tied together the forces of economic and political-administrative growth. The turn of the century, Woods argued, marked the emergence of the city

... into the day of large things, — into the greater concentration of capital, and the incidental liquidation which gave many families overpowering fortunes of cash in hand; the assembling of vast heterogeneous multitudes of laborers to keep up with the demands of a period of unparallel prosperity; the ampler civic sense signalized by the Carnegie institutions with their unusual cultural opportunities, and embodied after a time in municipal reform and progress, and in excellent forms of social services.¹⁰³

Woods went on to argue that the Greater Pittsburgh movement and the annexation of Allegheny City symbolized Pittsburgh's emergence as a "modern city" and "gathered into a current aggressive impulses which had never before run in public channels."¹⁰⁴ Woods further envisioned a day "when all the large industries will be eliminated from the city, and Pittsburgh proper will become simply the commercial and cultural headquarters of its district."¹⁰⁵ And after justifying political expansion by discussing the economic dependence of the area upon Pittsburgh, he concluded that "[t]he sheer forces of physical setting and commercial need have thus tended to give self-consciousness and force to the movements for urban coherence."¹⁰⁶

In addition to recognizing the convergence of economic and political forces, Woods also saw the important role played by the new technically minded men in the community.¹⁰⁷ Allen T. Burns further elaborated in his

103 Robert A. Woods, "Pittsburgh: An Interpretation of Its Growth" in Paul Underwood Kellogg, ed., *The Pittsburgh District Civic Frontage* (New York: 1974), 19.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*, 16.

106 *Ibid.*, 20-21.

107 *Ibid.*, 27.

study of civic forces in the city. After emphasizing the very real physical obstacles to unified action — rivers, hills, gorges, cliffs — Burns demonstrated that civic leaders in the community recognized the need to deal with problems on a “natural” territorial basis and purposefully had organized to bring about “one community, one government,” as Mayor Magee described the campaign in 1909.¹⁰⁸ Thus, that suggested that the efforts to bring about a political-administrative system matching in scope the economic expansion of the city was a conscious and deliberate effort in which the reformers recognized both the forces at work transforming their community and the role they played. They strove to shape Pittsburgh to fit their vision of an ideal city.

That vision left an important legacy for the Pittsburgh of the 1980s. The municipal reforms of the early twentieth century represented significant advances toward the expansive and bureaucratized city government known today. Zoning not only fit within the expansion of city government but also reinforced the separation of the city into distinct areas of land use. In addition, it helped maintain the integrity of the many different neighborhoods that grew out of a number of people’s searches for enclaves in which they could preserve their values and lifestyles. And the reform process demonstrated the willingness and ability of the private sector to organize in order to bring about public action. ■

108 Allen T. Burns, “Coalition of Pittsburgh’s Civic Forces,” in Kellogg, 49.

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"It appears, then, based on the surname analysis, (of Irish-Catholic immigrants' county of origin, 1850) that the great majority of the Irish immigrants to mid-nineteenth-century Pittsburgh had come from the more modern areas of eastern and central Ireland. Only a minority of these immigrants had emigrated from the more congested and impoverished areas of western Ireland where the Great Famine had raged most fiercely. Unlike major American ports of entry, particularly New York and Boston, Pittsburgh's inland location had evidently shielded it from the immediate reverberations of that tragic event."

— Victor A. Walsh, "Across the 'Big Wather': The Irish-Catholic Community of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Pittsburgh," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 66 (January 1983), 8.