THE ORIGINS OF URBAN LAND USE PLANNING
IN ALBERTA, 1900-1945

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PREFACE

PAPERS ON LAND POLICIES

This is intended as the first of a series of research papers concerned with land policies. The papers will initially relate to work currently being undertaken as part of, or in conjunction with, the Centre's study of land policies in Canada. This is a long-term comparative study of the approaches made by the Provinces to a range of land issues such as restriction of property rights, compensation and betterment, zoning, development control etc.

Future papers will cover such subjects as the evolution of urban planning in Alberta since 1945 (a continuation of this paper), land use policies in British Columbia and Ontario, British land policies in the 'seventies, land banking and the transfer of property rights.

J. Barry Cullingworth

January 1981
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Introduction

Land use planning emerged as a function of government in Canada during the early decades of this century. The public sector had always played some role in assisting and regulating aspects of urban development through the provision of public services and through various forms of building regulations, such as fire, health and building codes. But it was only after the turn of the century that provincial governments began adopting legislation which enabled municipalities to more directly regulate the location and character of development. With the adoption of these early planning acts (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1912, Alberta in 1913, Manitoba in 1916 and Ontario and Saskatchewan in 1917), municipalities in these provinces were permitted to regulate the subdivision of land, prepare master plans and establish town planning commissions. In addition, the larger municipalities were granted authority to restrict non-conforming uses from residential districts, an early form of zoning.

Though these planning measures were largely ineffective they did provide a basis upon which future land use controls developed. And they did establish the precedent that land use planning regulations were indeed a proper and desirable function of government. The major policy question was, as it still is, how much and what type of planning regulations were necessary and desirable.

The answer to this question, of course, depends upon the specific set of circumstances prevailing at any given time. In addition, what might appear to be necessary and desirable to certain groups might be equally unnecessary and undesirable to other groups. From time to time, therefore, planning becomes an important issue to different groups and for different reasons. This means that there will be periods in which there is a great deal of debate over the question of public land use regulations, and other periods during which planning is not a major issue at all. Moreover, as in almost any area of concern involving public policy decisions, it is quite natural to find that there are often huge gaps between the land use regulations planners and advocates of planning recommend, the regulations which government enacts into legislation, and those aspects of enacted legislation which are actually implemented.
What are the societal dynamics which account for both the timing of government planning initiatives and for the size of the gap between what is recommended, enacted and implemented? Why do certain groups either promote or resist various forms of public land use regulations? In short, what are the factors which affect the nature and timing of public policy initiatives relating to the use of land? Questions such as these can only begin to be answered by looking at the evolution of government planning policy in the context of the more general social, political and economic conditions of the times — in short, by analysing planning policy in an historical context.

The objective of this research monograph is to examine, in some detail, the specific origins and evolution of land use regulations in one province, Alberta, and to draw some partial and tentative conclusions about the societal dynamics which provided opportunities for and constraints on the nature and timing of public land use planning initiatives. Chapter 1 analyses the initial reaction of businessmen, reformers and government to the first major real estate and urban development boom, which took place from the turn of the century to 1913. During this period a town planning movement developed and Alberta's first planning act was adopted. Chapter 2 looks at planning activity during a period of recession and slow urban growth, which lasted from 1913 until the mid-1920's, during which time professional planners continued unsuccessfully to promote the adoption of more comprehensive planning measures. Chapter 3 examines the prosperous late 1920's in which the planning movement in Alberta experienced a great deal of popular and governmental support, and in which the very comprehensive and progressive 1929 planning act was adopted. Finally, chapter 4 draws some general conclusions about the major factors influencing the progress of planning in Alberta during the whole period from 1900 to 1945.
1. Pragmatic Reaction to Rapid Urban Growth, 1900-1913

1.1 Early Land Use Restrictions

Regulation of land use in Alberta did not begin with the adoption of the Town Planning Act in 1913. In fact, the 1913 Act was never really implemented. A variety of other less comprehensive forms of land use restrictions had already been adopted by both the province and the larger cities prior to 1913, and these were gradually expanded through the years. Direct public regulation of the private land development process began shortly after Alberta became a province in 1905. Although the population of the province was only 185,200 in 1905 (and almost 70 percent lived in rural areas) the cities and towns began to grow very rapidly during the economic and real estate boom that lasted from the early 1900's to 1913.

In 1901, for example, Calgary and Edmonton could barely be considered cities, with populations of 4,000 and 3,000 respectively. By the 1911 census, they had grown to 44,000 and 25,000 (close to a 1,000 percent increase) and they continued to grow even after the collapse of the real estate boom in 1913. By 1921, Calgary had become the eighth largest and Edmonton the tenth largest city in Canada. Under these conditions of rapid urban growth, even a largely rural province such as Alberta was forced to become concerned with the social, physical and economic problems associated with rapid urban growth and to take some action.

Among the earliest regulations were those affecting the subdivision of land. The 1906 Land Titles Act stipulated that streets had to be at least 60 feet wide, lanes a minimum of 20 feet wide, and provision had to be made for access to the rear of every lot. A few years later the Act was amended making it a statutory offence to sell unregistered subdivision lots — an amendment made necessary because speculators were not registering their land sales in order to avoid even this minimum attempt to rationalise the subdivision of land. Since cities were growing so quickly, a Department of Municipal Affairs was established in 1912 'to promote municipal organization and superintend municipal administration'.

2 Statutes of Alberta, 1906, Chapter 24.
3 Statutes of Alberta, 1912.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Edmonton</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
<th>Lethbridge</th>
<th>Medicine Hat</th>
<th>Red Deer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>4,091</td>
<td>2,072</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>323</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24,900*</td>
<td>43,704**</td>
<td>8,050</td>
<td>5,608</td>
<td>2,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>58,821</td>
<td>63,305</td>
<td>11,097</td>
<td>9,634</td>
<td>2,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>83,761</td>
<td>13,489</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>2,344</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>93,817</td>
<td>88,904</td>
<td>14,612</td>
<td>10,571</td>
<td>2,924</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>159,631</td>
<td>129,060</td>
<td>22,947</td>
<td>16,364</td>
<td>7,575</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Annexation to Calgary: Riverside and Rouleauville (Villages), 1907

** Annexation to Edmonton: Strathcona (City), 1911; North Edmonton (Village), 1912; West Edmonton (Village), 1917; part of Strathcona, 1947

In addition to provincial legislation of this type, Calgary and Edmonton began adopting their own land use regulations. In 1904 Calgary's city council adopted a building bylaw requiring that better quality and fire proof construction materials be used in the central area and also required that special permission be obtained from the city before certain specified noxious uses could be built. Through early fire and building codes such as this one, municipalities in Canada were adopting measures which began to have the effect of regulating the location of different uses, by excluding uses which were potential threats to public health and safety. Calgary further amended its building bylaw in 1912, dividing the city into a residential and a commercial district, regulating signs and billboards, the height of buildings, the size of front yards and the location of apartment buildings. (1) This does not mean that such extensive controls were being applied throughout the entire city. Rather, the authority existed for such controls to be used when the city or property owners thought them necessary to obtain some public goal or to protect property values as specific problems arose.

The City of Edmonton adopted similar measures. In 1906 a bylaw (2) was passed relating to the provision of water mains, sewers, fire access and the erection of telephone poles. It also required each new subdivision to be approved by the City Engineer. In 1912 Edmonton adopted its first comprehensive set of building code regulations (3) for houses and apartment buildings, which, among other things, set limitations on site coverage, required side and rear yards and required a minimum spacing between buildings. Such a bylaw was simply a direct reaction to the unprecedented rate of population growth and physical development taking place in the city. The year 1912 was Edmonton's greatest 'boom' year — the population jumped by 63 percent, from 31,000 to 50,000, in that one year. (4)

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3 Bylaw No. 417, Ibid.

4 For further details, see: J.G.MacGregor, Edmonton: A History, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1975, Chapter 14, 'Boom Years, 1912-1914'. The mayor of Edmonton fully supported increased municipal regulation of development. See: W.Short, 'Constructive Town Building vs. the Reckless Townsite Game in Western Canada', The Dominion, August 1913.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percent of Canada</th>
<th>Numerical Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>Percent Urban Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>73,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>374,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>301,000</td>
<td>412.6</td>
<td>137,700</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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<td>1921</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
<td>214,500</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>222,900</td>
<td>37.9</td>
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<td>143,100</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>278,500</td>
<td>38.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>796,200</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>64,600</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>306,600</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>939,500</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>143,300</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>488,200</td>
<td>52.0</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
<td>392,400</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>927,000</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,627,900</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>295,900</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>1,196,255</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, as Table 3 indicates, the rate of development in both Calgary and Edmonton in 1912 was not only greater than in any previous year but was not surpassed until the late 1940's. A total of 7,507 building permits worth $34.8 million were issued in 1912. After the boom collapsed in 1913, neither city's total number of building permits ever surpassed 1,000 in a single year until the prosperous late 1920's. And even then, during the peak of that boom in 1929, the total number of building permits amounted only to 3,222, with a total dollar value of $17.1 million.

Table 3: Building Permits, Calgary and Edmonton, 1904-1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Calgary Number</th>
<th>Calgary Value</th>
<th>Edmonton Number</th>
<th>Edmonton Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>689</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>880</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3,843</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
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<td>3,216</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1,883</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1,166</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3,361</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>4,136</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>5,785</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures not available for some of the earlier years.

In light of the very rapid development taking place up to 1913 it is easy to understand why a variety of building bylaws were adopted by the municipalities and why the province continually strengthened its subdivision regulations. These regulations were aimed at the two most immediate problem areas: the quality of building construction and the quality of the design of street layout. Since these early land use regulations followed development, rather than preceded it, they were mainly too little and too late. The form urban development took was almost completely the result of market dynamics, individual decisions of the numerous different actors rather than the result of any collective decision making process. In his study of land development patterns in Calgary, Foran noted that, in spite of the lack of formal planning, market dynamics led to a separation of different uses and the establishment of differentiated residential areas. By 1912 a land use pattern had been established which has shaped development ever since. Foran points out that during the boom years:

'The business district was extended to accommodate the intensified demand for retail and wholesale facilities. Factory areas blossomed into manufacturing districts. Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of gross expansion lay in the degree of residential development. New districts emerged north and south of the business centre to give Calgary a true suburban appearance by 1912. These years were of profound importance in determining Calgary's land use patterns, for the extent of physical growth delineated by 1912 was to remain virtually unchanged until the 1950's.' (1)

However, the pattern and type of development which emerged from this fairly autonomous market process was not very satisfactory. Street patterns were haphazard, making transport of people and goods difficult; residential development was spread out in all directions creating servicing problems for the city; the poor were forced to live in overly congested sections due to the high land prices; and

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municipal finances were being stretched to their limits in the attempt to keep up with the type and amount of municipal services required. Few, if anyone, opposed growth. The problem was that there was simply too much of a good thing taking place at one time and in one place.

It should be stressed that these early interventions in the land market took place despite the conservative nature of government and the dominant political philosophies of individualism and laissez faire. What is most interesting is that the provincial and municipal governments not only intervened in the land market as specific problems arose, something which is fairly easy to understand, but, in addition, around 1910, a fairly extensive movement developed in Alberta advocating more comprehensive forms of land use planning, leading to the adoption in 1913 of the first planning act.

1.2 Birth of an Alberta Town Planning Movement

As the real estate boom was approaching its peak, proposals for more comprehensive coordination of urban growth forced the issue of planning on to the public agenda, giving rise to a movement promoting planning in Alberta. An Alberta Housing and Town Planning Association was established and from 1911 to about 1914 a great deal of planning activity took place — that is activity promoting the implementation of planning; little actual planning was ever carried out.

The issue of planning presented itself in a number of forms, all of which led to the realisation that a comprehensive town planning act was required. The subdivision of land was one of the biggest problems. Too much land was being subdivided, the subdivision plans were often of very poor quality, and few of the subdivided lots were actually being built upon. In 1912 a private bill was introduced into the legislature to prescribe minimum standards of subdivision design. The bill was withdrawn when the government indicated that they were preparing their own more comprehensive subdivision regulations. In 1913 the government did prepare two sets of official regulations relating to the subdivision of land. One required that any subdivision containing more than 25 lots had to be justified to the provincial Public Utilities Commission by proving that there was
a need for the lots. The other laid out minimum standards for subdivision design, matters such as lot size, street width, dedication of land for public purposes, block size and so on. (1)

The issue of planning also arose in relation to the location of new public buildings in both Edmonton and Calgary. In Edmonton, a Minneapolis firm of landscape architects, Morell and Nichols, prepared plans for the development of a civic centre. The City, in 1912, designated the area between the old post office and the C.N.R. Station, lying between 99th and 100th Streets, as the area for the civic centre. However, in March 1913, a referendum was held seeking public support for the proposal and the bylaw was turned down by the voters and the plan shelved. (2)

Also in 1912 the City of Calgary was preparing plans for a proposed grouping of new federal, provincial and municipal buildings in the downtown area. (3) One of the candidates being considered for site planner of the project was the prominent American planning advocate Charles Mulford Robinson. (4) Robinson was a prolific writer, with no specific professional education, who began promoting 'civic improvement' in the 1890's and wrote a number of best selling books on municipal improvement and city planning. He stressed the practical basis of civic aesthetics and was one of the earlier promoters of the 'city beautiful', which emphasised the importance of fine architecture, trees, parks, gardens, sculpture and the control of signs and utility poles. His writings stimulated the formation of numerous municipal improvement and civic art societies, a few of which engaged him to prepare city plans for them. (5) The Calgary Herald, while supporting the hiring of an expert to lay-out the site

3 For a history of all the attempts to create a civic centre for Calgary, see: V.McKellar, 'The Calgary Civic Centre - An Art of Illusion', Plan Canada, 20(2), June 1980, pp. 73-80.
4 Calgary Telegram, July 26, 1912.
for the civic centre, urged that a Canadian be hired: 'There is at least one eminent Canadian engineer whose services might be secured in this connection, and it would be advisable ... to get in touch with him.' (1) The Herald was most likely referring to Noulan Cauchon, a professional engineer involved in promoting planning throughout Canada. (2)

Although Calgary's proposed civic centre never materialised, it did help provide a platform for the consideration of a wide variety of plans then being carried out in other parts of North America and Europe. An exhibit of various plans from other cities was held in Calgary during the summer of 1912. The following description of the exhibit from a local newspaper indicates the type of planning material gathered for the exhibit. Some six months later Calgary would retain one of the architects whose work was included, Thomas H. Mawson, to prepare a preliminary general plan for the city.

Seattle spent $60,000 in having a set of plans prepared by the eminent civil engineer, V.G. Bogue, and with the possible exception of Chicago and Brooklyn, these are regarded as the most elaborate in contemplation in the United States....

Of the somewhat smaller American cities, Dallas, Texas, is admittedly in the front rank as far as future improvements go. The plans of architect George E. Kessler, including a most complete boulevard system for the city, are also on view.

Reading, Penna., has engaged John Nolan to provide likewise for that municipality, and his ideas are shown in detail adjoining those of the Dallas man.

Making a rather wide jump in the matter of distance, Bolton, England, has employed Thomas H. Mawson, who lectured in Calgary last spring, and that gentleman has gotten up an elaborate set of photogravures, some in color, showing the ambitious scheme for the betterment of the beauty of the borough mentioned.

1 Calgary Herald, June 26, 1912.
Mr. Mawson's former partner, Mr. Dunington-Grubb, who was in the city last week with plans for the Calgary University, has recently sent ... a handsomely illustrated pamphlet of "Cedarvale", in the township of York, just outside the limits of Toronto, in which he has designed the "restricted model subdivision", and critics of such work pronounce the effort one of the finest seen by them.

Ottawa's ambitious desires, which are being worked out in conjunction with the Dominion government, have been placed in the exhibition by Noulan Cauchon, C.E., who formally lived in Calgary as a young man, and is well known here. Mr. Cauchon has been commissioned to lay the federal district of the Dominion capital, and will proceed with the work at once. (1)

This interest in subdivision controls and the improvement of central business districts by building a civic centre grew out of a concern that local business elites in Calgary and Edmonton had for improving their cities as places in which to do business and to live. Though the planning movement was composed of a wide variety of people it was the more pragmatic concerns of the business elite that provided the movement with its greatest strength. This is interesting because, at first glance, one might assume the contrary. Why should there be demands for a greater public role in regulating urban development, not from the political left, but from the business establishment itself? The business elite wanted to see master plans, planning commissions with authority to enforce plans, more effective subdivision controls and more detailed land use restrictions, along the lines of modern zoning. In fact, when we look more closely, we find that these concerns for planning were focused on two key elements: the provision of inexpensive and healthy working class housing, and the use of planning as a means of advertising the progressive and efficient qualities of their city in order to attract further development. Cheaper working class housing would be achieved by eliminating the more ruthless aspects of the speculative subdivision of suburban land. If the land prices were not artificially inflated and if the street and lot design were efficient, good quality working class housing could be provided at a reasonable cost. And a better planned central business district and more efficient use of tax funds on important public services would improve the ability of a city, such as Calgary or Edmonton, to attract new investment.

1 Calgary Telegram, July 26, 1912.
further, by advocating a direct municipal role in the provision of low-cost housing, in addition to subdivision controls and related planning regulations.

Manufacturers were interested in working class housing, not so much out of general humanitarian concerns, but due to the assumption arising out of the common belief in environmental determinism — that an improved housing environment would help bring about a more stable and contented work force. (1) In addition, the local business elite generally supported such measures because good working class housing was yet another municipal asset. It made the city more attractive for potential new investment in manufacturing. This interest in housing, therefore, arose out of very pragmatic concerns. The real estate boom and the speculation in suburban land made good housing almost impossible for low wage earners to obtain: something had to be done.

If affordable housing of good quality was to ever be provided in the suburbs steps had to be taken to counteract the more ruthless subdivision and development methods being used at the time. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association had a clear position in favour of regulating development in order to obtain better and cheaper housing for the unskilled labour their factories required. They even advocated municipal housing projects just after the turn of the century. For example, during the major wave of strikes which occurred in 1906 and 1907 the C.M.A.'s periodical, Industrial Canada, pointed out that Canadian manufacturers 'have become quite exercised of late over the manner in which rents have been soaring skyward' leading to 'the shortage of moderate priced houses for working men ... Such conditions are not conducive to contentment among factory employees, and the situation is deserving of serious consideration'. (2) In 1907 the Toronto Branch of the C.M.A. proposed the establishment of a limited dividend company sponsored by manufacturers to build 'workingmen's homes on simple but sanitary lines' in scattered suburban districts of the city where cheap land could be found. (3) It is over the cost of residential land and

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1 As an example, see: S.Spragge, 'A Confluence of Interests: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920' in The Usable Urban Past, loc. cit., pp. 247-267.

2 Industrial Canada, July 1906, p. 794.

3 Ibid., March 1907, p. 654.
1.3 A Focus on Housing: The Suburban Solution

The continual emphasis on subdivision controls within the planning movement grew out of the recognition that the solution to the serious urban housing problem could be found in the suburbs — if suburban development was not allowed to occur in the same haphazard and unsanitary way the city itself had developed. The Alberta Town Planning Convention, held in November 1912 in Edmonton, focused on planning as a solution to the housing problem. All three resolutions adopted by the Convention supported measures aimed at the suburban solution of the housing problem. The three resolutions:

1. endorsed the principles of a proposed Alberta Townsite and Subdivision Act which was in the Alberta Legislature at the time;
2. asked the provincial government to pass an act respecting town planning modelled on the British Act of 1909; and
3. approved the building of low cost working class housing as a municipal venture and experiment. (1)

The British planning act mentioned in the second resolution was an act which focused solely on regulating the development of land adjacent to existing urban areas. It did not regulate the development or redevelopment of existing urban areas. (2)

The reference to low cost housing for the working class was part of a more general housing concern widely shared among manufacturers throughout Canada during the first two decades of this century. Such proposals took the suburban solutions one step

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housing rents that manufacturers within a city were at odds with the
more speculative real estate businesses, making manufacturing
interests potential supporters of planning, at least to the extent
that it led to better housing. The manufacturers quite naturally
saw cheaper housing, not higher wages, as the solution to the high
cost of housing, and they hoped that better planning would help to
bring this about by minimising land speculation. 'The remedy lies
not in a general increase in wages, for many industries are already
paying as much as they can afford ...' argued the C.M.A.

'Complaints arise about the "cost of living".
Insistent demands are made for a "living wage",
which must include the profits of the land
speculator and the landlord. Strikes follow. The
men may lose, but the manufacturer always loses ...
High rent means high wages.' (1)

And even if high wages were to be paid, they argued, there is no
guarantee that better housing would result, since speculators and
landlords could simply extract higher rents.

This connection between land speculation and the high cost of
housing is one practicing planners of the day were also continually
making. The planners were not opposed to individualism or the land
market as such, but they did constantly warn against the types of
individual actions which harmed the general public good — such as
excessive speculation in suburban land. Thomas Adams, for example,
in his book on Rural Planning and Development in Canada, urged
public intervention when necessary to curb speculation:

'In a country like Canada the cost of bare land
ought not to be a serious matter, and, where it is
forced up in value by speculation, as it now is, it
ought to be controlled by legislation.' (2)

He made it clear that he was not opposed to land speculation in
genral. He noted that 'Canada has been largely developed by
speculators of the right type' who left the comforts of developed
regions of the world to open up the prairies 'in the hope of earning

1 Ibid., May 1912, p. 1049.
2 T. Adams, Rural Planning and Development, Ottawa: Commission of
   Conservation, 1917, p. 94.
big rewards in return for their sacrifices'. 'But', he continued:

'when the pioneer stage is over and the building up of the social life of a new community begins, speculation takes on a new and injurious form. Socially created values are inflated and monopolies in natural resources are established. It is in this latter form that speculation in Canada in recent years has produced deplorable moral and financial results, in rural as well as in urban areas.' (1)

Thus, the conditions of the times led to a confluence of interests on the issue of finding a more efficient and socially beneficial method of subdividing and developing suburban land. A rising group of middle class professionals, usually architects, engineers, surveyors and landscape architects, who became 'town planners' held a notion of what was in the 'public interest' which was compatible with much of the more powerful established interests of capital of the day. The promise offered by town planning and the early town planners was that urban problems could be solved through limited forms of state intervention based on a 'scientific' approach to the problems, with the aim being social and economic efficiency in the general 'public interest'. In one of the first North American books to be written on city planning, Charles Robinson in 1903 noted that:

'the science of modern city-making is being formally laid down as its principles are discovered and its rules enunciated. For the true idea that spurs to useful endeavour must be that which is based on study and facts.' (2)

And in a speech to the Calgary City Planning Commission, Henry Vivian made a similar justification for planning regulations:

'town planning, in its widest sense, is nothing more or less than the science of city development. We see no reason why cities should be left to grow practically without order, and without some scientific attempt being made to adapt the growth of the city to the real needs of the people.' (3)

1 Ibid., pp. 102-103.
2 C.M. Robinson, Modern Civic Art, 1909 edition, p. 4.
3 H. Vivian, 'How to Apply Town Planning to Calgary', September 17, 1912, in Two Notable Addresses on Town Planning and Housing, Calgary City Planning Commission, 1912, p. 13.
1.4 Planning as Boosterism

Not all the advocates of planning in Alberta had such a sophisticated approach. For many members of the local business elite, planning was simply another aspect of the package of things one did to boost the local community. With the entire region of western Canada developing for the first time competition between cities was fierce. The more population and industry and commerce a city could attract to itself the more wealth there would be within the community. So every town and city which had any dreams of greatness adopted a growth strategy, combining bonuses for new industries, major public works programs, deficit municipal financing, massive land annexations, municipal ownership of key utilities if they were not being provided efficiently and cheaply by private interests, special tax policies — in Alberta, a variation of Henry George's single tax — and fierce struggles to have the provincial capital, or university or other major public facilities or a major railroad junction located in your own community. (1)

Cities such as Calgary and Edmonton, for a variety of reasons, were much more successful than other cities in the region, and they became the major metropolitan centres of Alberta, while other centres, such as Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer lost out. As planning became more of an important issue and concern throughout North America, planning became one of those important features that any 'progressive' and growing city just had to have. This theme was continually used by the advocates of planning. Henry Vivian, for example, in his Calgary speech, argued the following:

'The value of Calgary as an industrial centre, as a training centre, will be affected immensely by the question as to whether your streets are so laid out as to secure that both population and material should move from point to point in the quickest possible way, with the least expenditure of energy, and the least cost; and surely that is one of the functions that the city should take upon itself. That is a function that cannot be taken on by an individual; it must be taken charge of by an authority responsible for the whole of the city, also an authority that has a continuous life.' (1)

Since planning would help to make a city a much more efficient place in which to do business, the establishment of a planning commission and the preparation of a master plan were necessary first steps. The business establishment in Calgary, but not Edmonton, was able to convince City Council to establish a City Planning Commission and to allocate the fairly large sum (for those days) of $10,000 to finance the preparation of a general plan for the future development of the city.

The resolution establishing the Calgary City Planning Commission carried City Council unanimously, and the Commission met for the first time in December 1911. G.W. Lemon, an active promoter of planning, was hired as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Commission, and eight committees were appointed. The nature of these committees is a good indication of the types of concerns members of the Planning Commission had. In a letter to the mayor proposing the establishment of the committees the following description of each was provided:

Housing and Sanitation Committee to consider among other questions ventilation, housing, sewers, yards, public comfort stations, etc.

Arts and Building Committee to consider among other questions a civic survey, concentration of public buildings, general scheme of Town Planning, etc.

Traffic and Transportation Committee to consider among other questions street railway routes, automobile roads, driveways, subways, etc.

Parks and Boulevard Committee to consider among other questions boulevards, trees, fountains, beautification of the City, etc.

Draughting Committee to consider among other questions maps and plans of works as recommended by committees to be submitted for approval of Town Planning Commission.

Legislative Committee to consider among other questions legal aspects and questions in connection with the work of the Town Planning Commission.

Streets Improvement Committee to consider among other questions expropriations and street widening, electric lighting, methods of street cleaning, etc.

Educational and Statistical Committee to consider among other questions the gathering of data in connection with Town Planning and giving publicity for the information of the public. (1)

All these concerns of the committees relate to physical development and to the coordination of municipal services capable of supporting further growth and development. The object was to become more efficient and effective at providing these services to help to make Calgary a better place in which to do business.

One of the first major actions of the Planning Commission was to recommend that a prominent planner be retained to prepare a general plan for the city. The Planning Commission favoured Thomas Mawson because of his international reputation. Hiring someone like him, they argued in their appeal for funding from City Council, would be good publicity for the city. 'We also believe', they wrote, 'that ... the announcement that we were employing an expert of world-wide repute, would rebound to our credit and that this, in itself [sic], would be of great value to us from a publicity standpoint.' (2) Not only would it be good publicity but such a prestigious planner would help Calgary to keep up with and perhaps even outpace other Western Canadian cities, many of which were also getting into the planning game. They closed their request for funds

1 Report to the Mayor, December 13, 1911. In Glenbow Archives, BE 33, C151P, File 473.

by reminding council that they

are undoubtedly aware that Vancouver, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Lethbridge have moved in this matter of town planning. All will readily concede that Calgary can ill afford to lag behind in a matter of such supreme importance to the present and future welfare of this city. (1)

On January 29, 1913, Mawson was retained by the city to prepare a preliminary general plan and in April 1914 the plan, Calgary, A Preliminary Scheme for Controlling the Economic Growth of the City, was presented to the city. (2)

1.5 Adoption of the 1913 Town Planning Act

One of the key reasons the 1913 Town Planning Act was adopted was because of the amount of planning activity Calgary, and to a lesser extent Edmonton, were able to generate. Once Calgary decided to have an elaborate general plan prepared, its backers were faced with the problem that there was simply no statutory authority for the city to implement it. The City Planning Commission, therefore, had one of its members draw up a draft planning act and it was this act that the Alberta government adopted in 1913. (3) In fact the drafters of the Alberta Planning Act did not actually go to much trouble preparing the legislation. They simply made a direct copy of the New Brunswick Town Planning Act of 1912, which in turn, was simply a slightly modified version of the planning provisions of the British Housing, Town Planning Etc Act of 1909. (4)

1 Ibid.


4 In fact, in October 1912, G.W. Lemon, the Secretary of the Calgary City Planning Commission, requested that the Calgary City Clerk obtain for him six copies of the New Brunswick Act. Lemon explained that he wanted the copies so that they could 'be used in preparation for the Provincial Convention at Edmonton called by Mayor Armstrong, and at which the City of Calgary is to be represented'. Letter to City Clerk, Glenbow, October 12, 1912. In Glenbow Archives, BE 33, C151P, File 459.
It thus appears that the key factor was to simply have some enabling legislation and to have it quickly. The British Act had received a lot of publicity within planning circles of the day and to some extent so had the New Brunswick Act, which was the first Canadian comprehensive planning act. The British model was used rather than an American model simply because there was no American act relevant to the Canadian governmental and constitutional structure. Many American cities had 'homerule', whereby they could freely undertake planning if they desired without enabling legislation from the state level of government. In Canada, however, as in Britain, the localities were dependent upon a senior level of government to pass enabling legislation.

The fact that Alberta, a largely rural province with its two largest cities still relatively small compared to other parts of the country, even adopted a planning act seems to have come about because no one really cared otherwise. The local elites of the two largest cities were lobbying for it so the government adopted it. (1)

All that was changed in the Alberta Planning Act compared with the British Act was such things as the names of the authorities responsible for administering the act (i.e. the Alberta Department of Municipal Affairs in place of the British Local Government Board). Both Acts permitted local authorities to prepare a 'town planning scheme' for any land which is in the course of development or appears likely to be used for building purposes,

1 Peter Smith notes in his study of the 1913 Act that it was adopted on the very last day of the legislative session. In 1913 Premier Sifton was about to face his first election campaign as leader of the ruling Liberal Party and he had a great deal of legislation he wanted to have enacted in that session. Planning, however, was not on his agenda. The proposed planning act was not supposed to reach the floor of the legislature at all until some last minute lobbying by an Edmonton alderman resulted in the planning bill being introduced on the last day of the session. It was rushed through all three readings in a matter of minutes and became law without any serious discussion. It received little attention in the press, and as Smith points out, the circumstances under which the act was adopted 'suggest a low level of commitment to the planning act, an impression which is supported by its lack of originality'. P.V. Smith, 'The Principle of Utility and the Origins of Planning Legislation in Alberta, 1912-1975', in The Usable Urban Past, loc. cit., p. 206.
with the general object of securing suitable provision for traffic, proper sanitary conditions, amenity and convenience in connection with the laying out of streets and use of the land and of any neighbouring lands for building or other purposes. (1)

The Alberta Act also allowed local authorities to appoint a town planning commission with statutory authority to prepare and carry out plans, and both the British and Alberta Acts allowed for compensation to be paid to those whose property might be 'injuriously affected by the making of a town planning scheme'. (2) Both Acts allowed a local authority, if it so wished, to 'recover from any person whose property is so increased in value as a result of planning, one-half of the amount of that increase'. (3)

1.6 Decline of the Alberta Town Planning Movement

During 1913, with the planning act it wanted, with a general plan about to be completed and with the City Planning Commission in existence, one would think that, in Calgary at least, if not in other parts of the province, a great deal of progress in future oriented planning of physical development could be carried out to complement the established municipal building codes and the provincial subdivision controls. However, this was not to be the case. The planning movement in Alberta died as quickly as it arose. During 1914, the Calgary City Planning Commission faded away, the Mawson plan was being ignored and there was no longer any clamoring from the local business elites of the larger cities for planning. What had happened was that the real estate boom had quite literally collapsed during 1913, a recession had begun throughout the country, and World War 1 was getting under way. All of this meant that there was little urban development taking place anywhere and there was no need to engage in what would be simply fruitless attempts at boosterism under such conditions.

Additionally, many municipalities went bankrupt or nearly so. Owners of all the 'paper subdivisions' could no longer afford to pay their taxes and the municipalities had a hard time in turn paying

1 Statutes of Alberta, 1913, Chapter 18, Section 1.
2 Ibid., Section 5.
3 Ibid., Section 5(3) and Great Britain, Statutes, 1909, Chapter 44, Section 58(3). For a further discussion of the 1913 Alberta Planning Act, see: D.G. Bettison, et al, Urban Affairs in Alberta, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1975, pp. 18-25.
their debts. To make matters worse, until 1916, Alberta had a Henry George type of single tax for property taxation. This was instituted during the boom years to encourage development of land (only the land was taxed, not the improvements). When the real estate boom collapsed, there was no one willing to buy land or develop land to any great extent and thus land owners were unable to pay the steep property taxes on their undeveloped land which produced no revenues.

As a result of these conditions, all cities became owners of vast tracts of land due to tax arrears forfeitures. Between 1918 and 1920 Edmonton took possession of some 70,000 lots and by 1919 Calgary owned two-thirds of the land within its boundaries. (1)

Although the planning movement in Alberta, as with the rest of the country, enjoyed fairly extensive support during the boom years, this support, even at its peak, was very shallow. As long as conditions were such that greater coordination of development was seen to be absolutely necessary for the sake of the efficient functioning of the city as a place to do business, there was support for the concept of planning. Once growth and development faded away, however, so did the planning movement. But the planning movement did not disappear. There were still professionals and dedicated advocates of planning who continued a strong lobbying effort. But planning became simply a 'gospel', to be preached and advocated. It no longer had the active support of influential citizens and civic leaders.

No sooner had the Alberta Planning Act been adopted, than the change in economic conditions led to it being ignored and eventually forgotten. At a meeting of the Town Planning Institute of Canada in 1924, for example, the report on planning activity in the province of Alberta was very brief: there was nothing to report.

'So far as town planning in Alberta is concerned there is at the present time nothing doing. You are aware of course that in 1913 the Town Planning Act was passed. Prior to that time there had been a great deal of land subdivision and when the boom flattened out and the natural reaction followed and the war came on there was a great deal more subdivision than was required for

1 Ibid., p. 22 and The Historical Development of the Downtown and the Inner City, City of Calgary Planning Department, February 1978, p. 45.
proper development for many years to come. In consequence action has been chiefly confined to cancellation of subdivision plans with a view towards putting the affected lands back on a farming basis where they should be. There has I understand not been a single application made under the Town Planning Act.' (1)

And in 1928 Noulan Cauchon pointed out that it was not only Alberta's planning act which had become 'practically useless' due to provincial inaction.

'In Canada the first province to pass a Town Planning Act was New Brunswick, in 1912. Nova Scotia followed, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, but in these provinces no staffs were appointed to make the acts intelligible and workable and they have been practically useless.' (2)

The first planning acts in all the provinces proved to be equally as 'useless' as Alberta's.

1 Journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, June 1924, p. 19.
2 Ibid., February 1928, p. 7.
2. Lost Initiatives, 1914 to the mid-1920’s

A new stage in the development of planning in Alberta began after the end of the real estate boom in 1913. Though planning no longer had the active support it enjoyed during the boom years, it still had a handful of prominent advocates. Planning passed into a stage in which no one really opposed the 'science' of town planning but neither could its advocates get any governmental authority to seriously attempt to carry out land use planning activities. It seems fairly safe to predict that if it had not been for the influence of one person during the 1914 to mid-1920's period, even this promotional effort on behalf of planning might not have survived. When land development began to pick up again during the prosperity of the mid and late 1920's more widespread interest in planning began to develop and new planning legislation was adopted. But it was the tireless efforts of Thomas Adams which helped maintain the existence of a town planning movement in Canada and in Alberta.

2.1 Thomas Adams and the Commission of Conservation in Alberta

In October 1914, Adams came to Canada from Britain to become the Town Planning Advisor to the Public Health Committee of the Commission of Conservation. The Commission of Conservation had been established in 1909 to help better conserve and rationally develop Canada's natural resources. From the beginning, the Commission interpreted its mandate to include the conservation of Canada's human resources — its population. Thus, bad living conditions, especially in cities, became a focus of the Commission's public health reformers. These public health concerns led to concerns over housing conditions which in turn led to town planning as a solution for urban problems.

After some consideration, members of the Commission decided that Thomas Adams, who was the chief administrator of Britain's 1909 Planning Act at the time, would be the best possible advisor on the subject of town planning. The problem the Commission had in promoting planning was that it was a federal advisory body, with no legislative authority. In fact, planning and public health were responsibilities of the provincial level of government. Thus, all the Commission could do was promote the adoption of planning enabling acts in the various provinces. With his experience with the 1909 British planning act Thomas Adams naturally made a good candidate for the position. Adams lent a great deal of credibility to the planning movement because of his international reputation and because, as Town Planning Advisor to the Commission, he had the
prestige and authority of a high ranking federal official. He was, therefore, not just another enthusiastic citizen in favour of town planning. (1)

During his tenure with the Commission, from 1914 until its dissolution in 1921, Adams frequently visited provincial and municipal officials throughout the country. He also played a fairly active role in Alberta. In 1915 he was an advisor to the Dominion Parks Branch on methods of implementing plans for Banff, plans that Thomas Mawson had been involved in developing a few years earlier. It seems that Adams was responsible for convincing the provincial government to issue procedural regulations for implementing the 1913 Town Planning Act. This was an attempt to help make the legislation more operational in the hope that municipalities would actually use it. In his annual report on town planning to the Commission in 1916, Adams noted that:

'The Alberta Act has been in force since 1912 [sic] but no procedure regulations were issued until this year. We made some suggestions for simplifying these regulations, and they have recently been printed and distributed.' (2)

In the summer of 1916 Adams visited both Calgary and Edmonton, meeting with local officials and civic groups, and promoting the preparation and implementation of plans under the 1913 Act. (3) In Calgary he attended a joint meeting of the City Council and the Board of Trade called to discuss the desirability of taking some action on implementing Mawson's 1914 plan — though nothing ever came of this attempt. (4) Two weeks later Adams was in Edmonton at a public meeting called to discuss the desirability of forming a local branch of the Civic Improvement League of Canada and to consider the local application of the Planning Act. The meeting in Edmonton was chaired by Mayor Henry, and Adams delivered an address on planning and civic improvement. A resolution in favour of planning was adopted by the meeting, though there is no record of any action ever being taken:


3 Ibid., 1917, p. 98.

4 Conservation of Life, July-September 1916, p. 87.
Whereas, it appears desirable that the city of Edmonton should forthwith take steps to prepare a town planning scheme, under the Alberta Act relating to Town Planning, for the purpose of regulating the use and development of the land comprised in the city area, with proper regard to economy, convenience, good sanitary conditions, and amenity in connection with such development;

Be it resolved, That the City Council be memorialized to the effect that a Commission of Inquiry be appointed by the council to take the necessary preliminary steps with regard to the preparation of such a scheme and other matters incidental thereto. (1)

The meeting was simply another example of how no one really opposed planning though its active promoters were few. Since urban development was not taking place at the time, planning was simply a very low priority item. Of the meeting, for example, the Edmonton Journal optimistically reported that:

We have had the question of town planning discussed in Edmonton before, but Mr. Adams' visit should have the effect of giving greater definitiveness to our ideas and, what is still more important, should lead to the translating of those ideas into action. (2)

At least some Edmontonians were hoping to be better prepared for the next period of growth, by which time, the Journal concluded, 'the evils that have hitherto attended expansion may be avoided'. However, because of the nature of the times, Adams was able to accomplish little more than the generation of some publicity and enthusiasm for the planning movement.

2.2 Suburban Land: Residential vs. Agricultural

Aside from advocating improved planning legislation, Adams was also called upon for advice on the problem of the taxation of agricultural land which had been subdivided during the boom years but never built upon. Because of the depressed real estate market during the war all of the paper subdivisions around the larger cities were causing administrative and financial problems.

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 88.
A great deal of farm land has been annexed to the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat during the peak of the real estate boom. Speculators had hoped to turn the annexed land into building lots, and the vacant land was being taxed as residential land, not agricultural, because subdivisions had been laid out on paper. Owners of the land wanted to take it out of the city limits in order to avoid municipal taxation, while municipal officials wanted to keep the land within the city's boundaries for tax purposes — though both parties agreed that the land would not likely be developed in the foreseeable future. The four cities involved in the problem called on Adams to recommend a solution. Adams himself was to recognise that this was a most unusual situation:

At the request of these cities, I attended conferences and had consultations with the proper officials as to how they could get out of their financial difficulties. It was rather unusual for a city to call in town planning advisors, with a view to decreasing rather than increasing their financial difficulties — the ordinary conception of town planning is that it means further expenditure of money rather than the saving of money. (1)

Adams was continually trying to counteract the argument that town planning was expensive. The type of planning he was promoting related to public regulation of land development, not grandiose building projects. In this case he tried to resolve the problem by recommending that a land use plan be prepared dividing the city into business, residential and agricultural districts and that only those areas likely to be developed be serviced, while the rest of the land be treated as agricultural and taxed at a lower rate. Money would be saved on the provision of municipal services and landowners in the outlying areas would be taxed less. As Adams put it:

The idea is that the land will be planned in such a way that the money being wasted on local improvements will be saved in the future by carrying out such improvements as will be required to deal with the growth of the population and not with the extraordinary pictures conceived by real estate owners with vivid imaginations. (2)

1 Commission of Construction, Annual Report, 1919, p. 101

2 Ibid.
Adams proposed that all subdivisions in the outlying areas be cancelled and that no new subdivisions be allowed unless they were in accordance with the overall plan. Under Adams' proposal, land designated as agricultural could be converted to another use only with approval from the City Council and only then would municipal services, such as water, sewers, pavement and so on, be provided. In addition, the converted land would be subject to an unearned increment tax at a rate of 50 percent of the difference between the assessed agricultural value and the assessed value of the new use. The owners would also have to pay the cost of servicing the land.

The major innovations Adams was proposing, therefore, were the ideas of having agricultural districts designated within city boundaries and the establishment of a system for developing and taxing this agricultural land when it was converted to another use. All this was necessitated by the subdivision and annexation of too much land during the boom years, though it was certainly a good proposal for a general policy relating to the development of agricultural land.

In the case of Calgary in 1919, Adams proposed that a full one half of the city be designated as agricultural. He pointed out that, even though Calgary only had a population of about 60,000 in 1919, it had enough land area to accommodate a population of 770,000. Adams reported that:

> Having arrived at the decision that one-half of the area of a city is enough to provide for reasonable growth for many years, the remainder of the land should be treated as agricultural land for the time being, or taken out of the city. Otherwise it will be taxed at a rate which the average owner cannot pay, and the city will get no benefit from this taxation, because it is responsible for extending local improvements which cost more than the taxes are worth, even when the latter can be collected. Growing arrears of taxes and continued improvement extensions beyond needs have bad effects on the finances of any city. (1)

But such a comprehensive solution was never carried out. Rather, institutional inertia and muddling through prevailed. Again, Adams' attempt to use land use planning as a means of coping with the combined financial, housing and land development problems of

1 Ibid., p. 114.
municipalities created some degree of interest but little action. To Adams, all these problems were clearly interrelated and required coordinated public action:

The whole problem of housing is mixed up with this question of land, and the development of land is so dependent upon town planning of the right kind that housing and town planning schemes must proceed side by side. (1)

This, however, was not to begin to occur until after the second world war. In the late 1920's and early 1930's zoning began to be adopted by municipalities throughout the province and new planning legislation was adopted, but even then, it was zoning without planning — the adoption of zoning bylaws without preparation of any general land use plan.

From the time Alberta became a province in 1905 to the early 1920's, therefore, the development of land use planning went through two general phases. The first resulted in the very pragmatic and piecemeal imposition of provincial subdivision regulations and municipal building bylaws, including the adoption of a provincial Town Planning Act which was never implemented. The second featured rather fruitless attempts to encourage provincial and local government to implement land use planning for the sake of more rational and efficient management of municipalities and for the sake of being better prepared for the next real estate boom. In the end, it was only the piecemeal bits of legislation adopted as a result of the first phase that actually had any impact on land development.

1 Ibid., p. 115.
3. Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Legislation

During the prosperous late 1920's, planning once again became a major public issue in Alberta, as it did throughout the rest of the country. Like the pre-world war I period, a great deal of urban development was taking place, new subdivisions were being built and the urban real estate market was booming. Only with this general improvement in economic conditions did the half forgotten and certainly demoralised town planning movement begin to once again receive some attention from government officials and local business elites. The province hired a professional planner, Horace L. Seymour, appointed a provincial Town and Rural Planning Advisory Board, and adopted planning acts in 1928 and 1929. The 1929 legislation was one of the most comprehensive planning acts adopted anywhere in Canada up to this time.

But like previous booms, this one did not last very long, and the depression which followed in the 1930's was lengthy and severe enough to nearly wipe out any planning gains which were made. When prosperity returned in the early 1940's it was a wartime prosperity, the emphasis was on wartime production. As a result, there was little new urban development taking place and little need for government, or anyone else, to worry about regulating and controlling urban growth.

A major difference between the late 1920's and the earlier real estate boom was that, in addition to the problems of the subdivision of suburban land, zoning — and the separation of different land uses from one another — became a major issue. The land market by itself could not protect better residential areas from encroachment by other uses which could harm local amenities and decrease property values. Thus, in the same way that state intervention in the land market was necessary in the case of the subdivision of land, so was the action of the state required and welcomed in the case of protecting property values of already established areas of the city.

3.1 Adoption of New Planning Legislation

During the short lived period of prosperity in the 1920's, the Alberta Legislature adopted two new planning acts. The need for a revised planning act was due to the amount of development taking place in Alberta's municipalities. The first of the two planning acts resulted largely from the peculiar circumstances having to do
with the provincial Premier of the day, John E. Brownlee, who saw planning as a means of preserving the province's natural beauty. (1)

In 1928, an act titled 'The Town Planning and Preservation of Natural Beauty Act' was adopted by the Provincial Legislature. (2) It did not repeal the 1913 Town Planning Act. Rather, it added some regulations aimed at problems created by the rapid growth in the use of the automobile. One of its chief aims was to help rural localities preserve the natural beauty of their areas by regulating buildings and signs along roads outside of cities, towns and villages. It also provided for the acquisition of land 'for provincial park purposes and for the purpose of preserving places of natural beauty or historic interest'. (3)

Of much greater importance, however, was the provision for the appointment in 1928 of a provincial Town and Rural Planning Advisory Board, to help local authorities develop and implement town planning proposals, to advise them on subdivision regulations, and to advise them on preserving local amenities. The Board's prominent members included: a member of the Provincial Legislature (an architect who was appointed its chairman), the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs represented the government on the Board, and a civil engineer, a farmer, a businessman and two representatives of the United Farm Women of Alberta and the Women's Institute. The United Farm Women of Alberta, an auxiliary organisation of the governing United Farmers party, seems to have provided the major stimulus for the adoption of the act through their lobbying on behalf of protecting the rural countryside from cheap commercialisation. The Premier himself seems to have played a major role after he was inspired into taking action upon return from a visit to Europe. As was reported afterwards:

The Premier returned from a trip to the old country in 1927 impressed with what he had seen there in the way of convenient and beautiful development and keenly desirous

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2 Statutes of Alberta, 1928, Chapter 48.

3 Ibid., Section 15.
that the future development of his own Province should be guarded along lines which would make urban centres pleasing places, and would tend to improve instead of marring the natural beauties and amenities of the Province.... Within a year he has enlisted not only members of his Cabinet and the agricultural group which elected him to office, but also the public at large in the cause of the rational development of the Province with due regard to aesthetic values, both in town and country. (1)

Although the 1928 act had an emphasis on preservation of the countryside from unsightly development, it was the establishment of a provincial planning board that eventually had a much greater and longer term effect than the regulation of billboards and gas stations in rural areas.

The act both pleased and puzzled planners around the country. It contained provisions they had been advocating for a generation but it was obviously drawn up by someone who did not know much about planning. Because it did not repeal the 1913 Town Planning Act, there was confusion between what was and was not legal, and the 1928 act, for all its good intentions, was not very thorough. The editors of the Journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada noted that 'For a time it puzzled us .... The Bill embodies some features that we have strenuously argued for in these columns over and over again.... But our rejoicing ... was tempered by the manifest inadequacy of the Bill as a comprehensive Town Planning Bill.... One of our confreres remarked: "The Bill is a tragedy!"' (2) But still the planners liked the act in principle, it was far better than nothing at all: 'A technically imperfect Act with little natural passion behind it may be much more potent than an "icily regular" Act which chills the blood and confounds the intellect.' (3) To a certain extent they proved to be right. The imperfect 1928 act did lead to the adoption of a much more satisfactory one the following year.

The 1928 act called for the appointment of a provincial Director of Town Planning who would be a member of the Planning


2 Journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, April 1928, p. 41.

3 Ibid.
Advisory Board as well as a professional advisor to local jurisdictions. By the late 1920's there were a number of experienced planners available for the position. The Premier wrote to Alfred Buckley, the editor of the Journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, asking him for advice on who to appoint. Buckley recommended that the person should be qualified as both a planning technician and as a sociologist — someone with social concerns. 'If you can get a man with a sound technical training, and experience', he wrote to the Premier, 'who is at the same time a sociologist and honestly does care, without outward stimulus, for the betterment of social life for ordinary people, and can communicate his concern by speech and written work, you get the man you want and need'. (1) Buckley recommended A.E.Dalzell, an engineer by training who took a serious interest in social problems, especially housing. Dalzell was once one of Thomas Adams' assistants. Buckley added that:

Dalzell sees, as few men do, the relation of the land — the use of land in Canada — to the whole problem of town, rural and regional planning. Other men are inclined to scamp this vital question because they are afraid of the real estate interests, by whom we are always surrounded. Dalzell is risking his livelihood by getting at the root of the problem telling what he knows. (2)

However, rather than Dalzell, Brownlee selected Horace L.Seymour, who had had similar experience and concerns as Dalzell. Seymour was a professional engineer and land surveyor and had been Thomas Adams' assistant from 1914 to 1921. He also assisted Adams on replanning Halifax after the harbour explosion in 1917 (3) and was involved in the administration of Canada's first federal housing program, the 1919 Housing Loan Program. In the 1920's he was a consultant to the City of Kitchener and helped prepare planning proposals for that city. For three years after that he was the Resident Engineer for the Vancouver Town Planning Commission in the preparation of their general plan. (For a resume of Seymour's professional career, see Appendix B.)

1 Letter from A.Buckley to J.E.Brownlee, May 1928, Alberta Archives, 69. 289, File 245.
2 Ibid.
The selection of the Director of Town Planning was a very important decision given that the planning legislation needed to be rewritten if it was to be of any real significance. And because of Seymour's qualifications and experience he was the right person in the right place at the right time. Instead of remaining an historical oddity in terms of Canadian planning legislation, the 1928 Alberta Planning Act led to the 1929 act because of the decision to hire a qualified planning advisor.

The first thing Seymour did was obtain permission from the government to consolidate the 1913 and the 1928 acts incorporating the concerns of the Premier about preservation of natural beauty and the concerns of planning advocates for effective planning and zoning enabling legislation for municipalities. This he did and his 'Act to consolidate and amend the Statutes relating to Town Planning and the Preservation of Natural Beauty' was adopted in 1929, repealing the two previous acts. (1) Part I of the new act related to the preservation of natural beauty while the rest of the act dealt with land use planning matters.

Almost by accident, therefore, Alberta ended up with a fairly comprehensive and modern planning act. A basically rural province with a United Farmers party in power since 1921, adopted one of the most thorough planning acts in the country: the result, in part, of an initial concern over the spread of roadside billboards and cheaply built gas stations, restaurants and motels.

The 1929 act was a substantial piece of legislation. It was 22 pages long and had 68 sections. To administer planning in the province, the act authorised the appointment of a Town and Rural Planning Advisory Board, a Director of Town Planning and any other staff required. The Board was given a long list of responsibilities relating to the preservation of natural beauty in rural areas. In urban areas, local authorities were permitted to adopt official town plans and zoning bylaws; establish local town planning commissions, and in the case of two or more municipalities, regional planning commissions; and acquire any land required by a proposed plan. All of this required the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The legislation was very broad, providing the widest authority and definition for each category of planning activity. It contained 'the state of the art' as far as the professional planners of the day understood planning. One part of the act laid out in detail

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compensation for damages caused by planning activity, excluding zoning bylaws. Property could not be considered injuriously affected by adoption of a municipal zoning bylaw. In addition, provisions for the strict enforcement of the act were included. Not only property owners but also municipalities had to comply. The Minister of Municipal Affairs could intervene at any time if it appeared that an adopted plan was not being implemented properly by a municipality or if planning was not initiated where the Minister thought it ought to be.

Subdivision controls were authorised as well as 'replotting schemes', whereby an inefficiently laid out subdivision could be replanned. By a two thirds vote a local council could authorise the preparation of a 'replotting scheme for the cancellation of any existing subdivision or part thereof and making a new subdivision thereof and the redistribution of the newly subdivided land amongst the owners of the cancelled subdivision ...' (1) Most of the existing subdivision plans were prepared during the pre-1914 boom period, and this provision for reploting allowed them to be replanned along more efficient lines. The subdivision planning problem of the 1920's related much more to the problem of dealing with existing inefficiently planned subdivisions than the subdivision of new land. So much land had been subdivided during the first boom period that much of it was still undeveloped well into the 1950's.

However, the impact of the act was limited. It was adopted by the Legislature in March and the stock market crashed in October. The depression brought to a halt, by about 1933, the burst of planning activity which began in the late 1920's. But, while the prosperity lasted, there was a great deal of planning activity throughout the province as a result of the Premier's interest in planning and the efforts of Horace Seymour to promote the adoption of planning among municipalities of all sizes. In his third annual report, in 1932, on town planning progress in the province he reported that a total of 52 municipalities are 'definitely interested' in planning and that a total of 20 planning commissions had been established under provisions of the 1929 act. These included the provincial Planning Advisory Board, planning commissions in the cities of Calgary, Drumheller, Edmonton, Red Deer and Wetaskiwin, and planning commissions in 13 towns and two villages. (2) But this did not mean that any great amount of land use planning was actually taking place.

1 Statutes of Alberta, 1929, Chapter 49, Section 45.
2 Canadian Engineer, September 6, 1932, p. 11.
The establishment of a planning commission meant different things in different municipalities. Some were started at the urging of planning enthusiasts with very little commitment from municipal officials and others were started with the aim of pushing for a civic centre or some other such 'booster' type activity. In the small municipality of Peace River, for example, the entire planning commission resigned in 1930 as a protest against the City Council's refusal to take planning seriously. In dissolving itself, the Commission passed the following blunt resolution:

Whereas the local Town Planning Commission has experienced a total lack of co-operation from the Town Council, amounting almost to direct antagonism to the purpose of the Alberta Town Planning Act, as evidenced in the inactivity of Council effecting such improvements as have been recommended with a view to enhancing the appearance of the town's streets, river frontage and other public places;

And whereas the expenditure of public monies on the purposes of Town Planning is not in the public interest until such time as the town council is willing and ready to lend an intelligent interest to the work;

Therefore the members of the local Town Planning Commission feel that the services of this Commission cannot be continued to any good purpose, and we herewith tender our resignation as members of the said Commission. (1)

In the case of the City of Edmonton, a Town Planning Commission was created in August 1929, but instead of funding the preparation of a comprehensive plan it was decided to deal more pragmatically with the immediate problems of the city. Edmonton City Council authorised the Planning Commission to prepare a major street plan and a zoning bylaw and not a master plan. In addition, Council decided to hire only a draughtsman who had worked with the Vancouver Town Planning Commission rather than a more experienced and qualified planner. (2) This gap between what professional planners sought to have implemented and what municipal officials called 'planning' existed throughout the province, as indeed it existed elsewhere and continues to do so today.

1 J.T.P.I.C., December 1930, p. 129.

3.2 The Spread of Zoning

Although no municipality prepared a comprehensive master plan as authorised by the 1929 Planning Act, most municipalities did take advantage of the zoning authority provided by the act. As Table 4 indicates, 15 municipalities adopted zoning bylaws within three years of the passage of the Planning Act and throughout the 1930's and 1940's municipalities of all sizes continued adopting zoning bylaws. Since the zoning bylaws were all adopted without being based on any longer range planning, they were simply pragmatic documents aimed at protecting land values by separating land uses from one another. Individual political dynamics in each locality governed the nature and content of the zoning bylaws, and few if any would have met modern standards in terms of rational and efficient land use patterns.

Local real estate interests were usually behind the zoning bylaws and few were adopted until all real estate interests were satisfied. In Calgary, for example, a zoning bylaw prepared in 1931 was opposed by the Board of Trade and was not adopted. After some revisions Calgary finally did adopt a zoning bylaw which had characteristics clearly reflecting the interests behind it: Residential uses were prohibited in the central business district and yet were allowed in industrial areas; and expansion of industry was permitted on predominantly residential lands adjacent to the river, even though Mawson's 1914 plan recommended preservation of these river front 'beauty spots'. (1)

Adoption of these early zoning bylaws throughout Alberta generally occurred during periods when real estate activity was beginning to pick up. After the depression curtailed planning activity in the early 1930's, seven additional municipalities adopted zoning bylaws between 1937 and 1939, a period when the economy was beginning to recover. World war II once again curtailed domestic development activity and the next boom in zoning bylaw adoptions occurred after the war, when another 21 were adopted between 1947 and 1950.

It seems that the zoning provisions of the 1929 Planning Act were the most widely implemented sections of the act, indicating that the problem of protecting different land use categories from one another was the major problem within the land development process. Because cities had matured somewhat by the late 1920's, zoning

1 Calgary City Planning Department, The Future of Downtown Calgary, 1966, p. 76.
Table 4: Adoption of Zoning Bylaws in Alberta, 1930-1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Towns Adopting Bylaws</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Carbon (V) Olds (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Bowden (V) Edmonton (C) Edmonton Beach (R) Edson (T) Fairview (V) High River (T) Springbank (M.D.) Sylvan Lake (V) Wetaskiwin (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Camrose (T) Coronation (T) Gleichen (T) Ponoka (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Clyde (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Calgary (C) Strathmore (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Rimbey (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Holden (V) Leduc (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Hythe (V) Shepard (M.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Barrhead (T) Kaspaswin (R) Red Deer (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Lacombe (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Hanna (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Lloydminster (T) Mayerthorpe (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Sturgeon (M.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Beaverlodge (V) Bentley (V) Grande Prairie (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Lethbridge (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Brooks (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Jasper Place (Suburb) McLennan (T) Raymond (T) Viking (V) Vilna (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Leduc (M.D.) Picture Butte (V) Ponoka (M.D.) Strathcona (M.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Bashaw (V) Beverly (T) Bonnyville (T) Bowness (V) Calmar (V) Cochrane (V) Forest Lawn (V) Innisfail (T) Medicine Hat (C) Pembina (M.D.) Stony Plain (M.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Cardston (T)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(C) City; (T) Town; (V) Village; (M.D.) Municipal District; (R) Resort.

Source: Alberta Provincial Archives, 'Zoning By-laws', 71.80/2074.
joined subdivision regulations as forms of state intervention considered to be 'legitimate' not only by planners but, more importantly, by real estate interests and municipal officials. The land market by itself could not protect better residential areas from encroachment by noxious uses, uses which could decrease property values. As the President of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, Noulan Cauchon, noted in 1925:

Zoning is the application of common sense and fairness to the public regulations governing the use of private real estate. It is a painstaking, honest effort to provide each district or neighbourhood within a city, as nearly as practicable, with just such protection and just such liberty as are sensible in that particular district. (1)

When Alberta's cities first developed after the turn of the century, market forces by themselves began to lead to a separation of uses and a differentiation of different classes of residential areas. By the 1920's there was a need to call upon the use of government authority to protect certain districts. This meant that in certain cases the land market had to be protected from itself. Even though zoning is an encroachment on the rights of private property, it was enthusiastically supported by most real estate interests soon after the first zoning ordinance was adopted by New York City in 1916. For example, a speaker at a Board of Trade meeting in Ontario pointed out that:

More values are destroyed through lack of zoning than by fire. The house owner can protect himself against loss by fire by means of fire apparatus and insurance. There is no insurance against loss due to misplaced buildings except a zoning insurance.... No city can afford to be without a zoning ordinance. (2)

As with planning in general, there was a gap between what planners saw as the objectives of zoning and the way zoning was viewed by real estate interests. To real estate interests, zoning was a business proposition, stabilising property values by preventing the intrusion of business in residential areas and conversely by consolidating commercial and industrial areas. Planners tended to emphasise the fact

1 Canadian Engineer, 50(14), 1925, p. 464.
that zoning bylaws were the means by which comprehensive planning efforts, especially master plans, could be implemented and enforced. For planners, zoning, like planning, was a 'science'. The Town Planning Institute of Canada published a booklet titled What it Means to Zone (1) in which the broader, more ideal basis of zoning was laid out. Zoning was defined as a:

function of town planning which determines the relative disposition of structure to site, detailing uses, areas, heights, intervals and the occupancy of structure with a view to assuring adequate access of air and the rays of the sun to buildings to the measure of their occupational requirements, and ensuring health, efficiency and amenity to human beings. (2)

To planners zoning was a 'scientific and sociological' aspect of planning which was indispensable in providing for the 'health and efficiency' and 'the common welfare of the race'. (3) In practice, however, things did not quite work out this way.

In his study of Edmonton planning, Dale argues that the zoning bylaw adopted in 1933 'was to inflict on the city and its administration a planning malaise for nearly two decades... It was one of the gross errors in Edmonton's seventy-five years of urban life ...'. (4) The bylaw replaced zoning type restrictions which had been introduced in 1923 and 1925. Bylaw No. 35 in 1923 prescribed the space to be left vacant around buildings, in order 'to provide light and ventilation directly from the outside'. It limited the number and nature of buildings to be erected on a lot within certain parts of the city and declared certain streets or portions of streets to be purely residential. One of its primary aims was to protect residential areas from other uses. Clause 8 states:

No building shall be located, erected or used for a shop, store, laundry, public stable, public cow shed or for any business, trade or industrial purpose, upon any lot or parcel of land abutting upon any residential street. (5)

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1 By J.M.Kitchen, T.P.I.C., Publication No 2, Ottawa, 1926.
2 Ibid., p. 3.
3 Ibid., p. 4.
4 Dale, loc. cit., p. 219.
5 Quoted in Dale, ibid., pp. 210-211.
In 1925 Bylaw No. 30 added to these restrictions by confining certain noxious uses to specific areas of the city. These bylaws were in effect zoning bylaws, but not until the 1929 Planning Act did municipalities have authority to formally adopt comprehensive zoning bylaws. The Edmonton Zoning Bylaw of 1933 (no. 26) was similar to the others adopted throughout the province. As Dale notes:

What the City Council had obviously failed to understand was the difference between "city planning" and "zoning"... the latter merely one of the many legal and administrative devices by which City plans may be carried out.... The official use of the zoning by-law as the main instrument to control development of the city completely failed to achieve or promote rational land use. It merely attempted to separate particular use-districts and as such was rather more regulative and negative than either constructive or positive. (1)

Since there was no master plan or any broader planning policies, the zoning bylaw could be amended from time to time on most any grounds. There was no set of criteria for judging amendments. Either they were approved or they were not. And most applications for amendment were approved. The city did not want to do anything that would discourage development, especially during the depression. Between 1933 and 1945 the zoning bylaw was amended 27 times.

In spite of this critical view of the zoning bylaw, which is a 'planners view', that is, an assessment based on what ought to have been done, the Edmonton bylaw (and probably most of the other zoning bylaws) achieved what they were actually intended to achieve — protection of certain districts, mainly better quality residential areas, from undesirable uses. This of course is not 'planning', nor is it in any way a means of rationally coordinating land uses in the city for the over all public good. Viewing zoning from this perspective, that of real estate dealers and land developers, we can understand why these business interests would accept the type of interference in the land market this type of zoning requires, whereas they would not see the need for, or else resisted, the broader form of zoning the planners were hoping to see adopted.

Until the end of world war II there was little in the way of land use planning taking place in Alberta once the brief period of prosperity ended in late 1929. Other than zoning, the 1929 act had relatively little significance in terms of actually affecting development in

1 Ibid., pp. 219-220.
Alberta. The 'preservation of natural beauty' section of the act simply regulated billboards and gas stations along rural highways. For example, Seymour's third annual report stated that:

On main highways or highways under direct provincial control all gasoline filling stations must be licensed. Seventy-five licenses have been issued this year (1932), the consideration being always for the safety and attractiveness of the highways of the province. A building line for all private structures is established at 60 ft. back from the centre line of the highway, and the location, design and construction of refreshment booths, garages and tourist camps as well as of filling stations serving the public must be approved. (1)

Such mundane regulations were far from the more comprehensive land use planning Seymour and the other advocates of planning had hoped to see implemented, especially from legislation as thorough as the 1929 Town Planning Act. However, because of the depression, even the Town Planning Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs, which was established in 1928, was abolished by 1934 and the administration of the Planning Act was transferred to the Minister of Public Works. Seymour was Director of Town Planning from 1929 to 1932, when the position was temporarily abolished. As Table 5 indicates, the 1929 Planning Act was amended several times through the 1930's and 1940's. All these amendments, however, were mainly of a minor administrative character.

The provincial Town and Rural Planning Advisory Planning Board did continue to exist through the depression, though it became relatively inactive. The Board handled any planning matters arising in areas where no local planning authority existed and it administered the regulations governing the erection of billboards.

A.P.C. Belyea, who was Director of Town Planning for the province during the 1940's, summarised the impact of the depression on planning in Alberta in the following way:

For about two years after the passing of this (1929) Act there was a great deal of active interest taken in town planning in Alberta but with the onset of the depression in 1931, town planning activity came to

1 Canadian Engineer, September 6, 1932, p. 34.
be looked upon as a luxury and both the Provincial Government and the municipalities cut this work down to a minimum and for the next few years town planning work consisted mainly of maintaining what had already been accomplished. (1)

Only in 1937 and 1938 did some interest in planning revive. But it was not until after world war II that both urban and rural conditions once again forced the issue of applying at least some degree of public regulation and coordination to the land development process.

1 Letter from A.P.C.Belyea to C.C.Milne, March 12, 1945, Alberta Archives, 70.413/18, File T.P.100, Section II.
Table 5: Alberta Planning Legislation, 1913-1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act (An Act relating to Town Planning); Chapter 18, adopted March 25, 1913.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act (An Act relating to Town Planning); a rewriting of the 1913 Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>The Town Planning and Preservation of Natural Beauty Act (An Act to facilitate Town Planning and the Preservation of the Natural Beauties of the Province); Chapter 48, adopted March 31, 1928; did not replace the 1922 Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929 (An Act to consolidate and amend the Statutes relating to Town Planning and the Preservation of Natural Beauty); Chapter 49, adopted March 20, 1929; repealed the 1922 and 1928 Acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929, Amendment Act, 1929; Chapter 50, adopted March 21, 1930.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929, Amendment Act, 1931; Chapter 59, adopted March 28, 1931.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929, Amendment Act, 1934; Chapter 66, adopted March 21, 1934.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929, Amendment Act, 1937; Chapter 61, adopted April 14, 1937.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>The Town Planning Act, 1929, Amendment Act, 1938; Chapter 68, adopted March 31, 1938.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Revised Statutes of Alberta, 1942, The Town Planning Act; 1929 Act reenacted incorporating the various amendments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>An Act to amend The Town Planning Act; Chapter 46, adopted March 28, 1945.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Planning Theory and Planning Practice: Some Conclusions

As this study of the origins of land use planning activity in Alberta indicates, there is a large gap between what planners and advocates of planning recommend and what is actually implemented. This gap continues to exist today. The underlying source of the problem is the attempt to maintain as much of the urban development process within the private sector. This resistance to a greater public role in regulating urban development is the greatest constraint on any attempt to rationalize and coordinate urban growth, whether the attempt is initiated by reformers from among the business community itself, from among planning professionals, or from among the political left.

In spite of this enormous constraint on government planning activity, the public role in regulating urban development continues to expand. This expansion of urban planning in Alberta could, in one view, be seen as simply a number of random events with no broader logic behind it. The history of planning in Alberta, or anywhere else, would, in this view, simply be an interesting story about the past, with no relevance to the present.

This, however, is not the case. The roots of current planning practice go back to this period from 1900 to 1945 when state intervention in urban development in the form of land use planning was first seriously considered and partially implemented. It was during this period that a 'profession' of urban planners developed. There were reasons why the profession developed and why professionals promoted the approach to planning that they did. There are also identifiable trends relating to the timing of the implementation or lack of implementation of planning. The history of planning in Alberta, therefore, provides us with some insights on the problem of the continual gap between planning theory and planning practice.

4.1 Planners and Planning Theory

Although the business interests which promoted planning had much more limited objectives than the professional planners (limited generally to boosterism and protecting property values), the professional planners of the day, such as Mawson, Adams and Seymour, fully believed in the potential which planning offered as a solution to many societal problems. At the root of their beliefs was a strong element of environmental determinism. They believed that by simply applying some forethought to the development of cities, many problems could be avoided. This required the use of state authority to limit, not the free functioning of the land market (for few if any of the early planners could be considered radicals or socialists) but only
the excesses of those who would take advantage of a situation to the
detriment of the general public interest, such as land speculators
and builders of cheap and unsanitary housing. As Thomas Adams noted
in his book, Rural Planning in Canada, a little bit of planning
could forestall more foolish socialistic proposals: 'If we would
only apply sound social principles to the early stages of our
individualistic system of developing land, we would be less in need
of applying socialistic remedies of doubtful value in the latter
stages.' (1)

This form of cooperative individualism provided the
justification for promoting state intervention in the land development
process. Improvement in urban conditions would come about through
the application of scientific rationality imposed upon society through
modest forms of state regulation, thus obviating the need both for
any more radical remedies and also for grass roots political
participation, since only experts could approach problems
scientifically. It is for these reasons that we see the beginnings of
state intervention in urban development coming about shortly after the
turn of the century, not as a result of demands from some socialist
or leftist movement or party, but simply from the everyday dynamics
of a society in which people tried to cope with the irrationalities and
inefficiencies which were the 'natural' outcomes of its own
functioning. And it is for these reasons that we do not find any
organised resistance to planning. What we find in Alberta, rather than
resistance, was simply a total lack of interest except at the peaks of
real estate booms when the manifestations of the irrationalities and
inefficiencies of the laissez-faire system of land development were
also at their peak. A further reason why there was no organised
resistance to the state intervention in urban development which did
take place, unlike today, was that municipal councils and municipal
planning commissions were almost always composed of pro-growth
elements either directly from or representing the local business elite
of the community. (2) It was they who would decide the timing and
content of any land use planning activity.

1 T.Adams, Rural Planning in Canada, Ottawa: Commission of
Conservation, 1917, p. 178.

2 For an interesting study of the role of the local business
elite in the origins of planning in Vancouver, see: J.Bottomley,
Ideology, Planning and the Landscape: The Business Community,
Urban Reform and the Establishment of Town Planning in
Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1940, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis,
Department of Geography, University of British Columbia,
September, 1977.
But who were these people who were recommending land use planning and why were they so dedicated and earnest in promoting their views? Here we must look at the development of planning as a profession to find an answer. At the start of the town planning movement there were no professional planners. Interested citizens and professionals from land development related professions, such as architecture, land surveying, landscape architecture and municipal engineering, formed the active core of people promoting planning. But fairly quickly a distinct body of professional town planners developed, to such an extent that, by 1919, the Town Planning Institute of Canada was established. Thus, during the 1910's, in Alberta (as in other parts of the industrialised world), a new profession, town planning, was developing in response to new societal problems, problems having to do with land development.

This new professional body sought to gain its legitimacy and sought to justify its reason for existence on the basis that it was a body of 'value-neutral' and 'objective' technical experts who could recommend scientifically based solutions to urban problems. Planning succeeded in becoming established as a recognised profession because, like growing social orientated professions, planners offered the potential of taking the diverse issues and problems of urban areas out of the general public domain of democratic politics and to isolate them within the domain of professional experts. During the 1920's the Town Planning Institute of Canada defined planning as 'the scientific and orderly disposition of land and buildings ... with a view to obviating congestion and securing economic and social efficiency, health and well-being'. Society did not have social or political problems, according to this view, but simply technical ones which the 'science' of town planning could rectify if given a chance, i.e., the proper enabling legislation and sufficient political support from provincial legislatures and municipal councils.

It is as a result of this firm belief in the potential of scientific rationality to solve urban problems efficiently and effectively and with little social conflict, that planners were advocating what they were, and why they were so deeply committed to the cause of planning. As we have seen in the case of Alberta, they continued to promote planning even when there was no support from other sectors of society. Thomas Adams' efforts between 1914 and 1921 are a good example of this.

Central to the ideology of these planners was a utilitarian view of society. As Peter J. Smith points out, utilitarianism formed the core of the professional ideology of the early planners, a core that included 'the notion of the public good, the assumption of rationality (and the faith in science and the positivist viewpoint which that gave rise to), a preoccupation with material progress, and the
doctrinal acknowledgement of economy, efficiency, and order as the criteria of utility'. (1)

The persistence and dedication of the early planners can also be understood in light of the sociology of professionalism. Planners came from a rising class of socially-active individuals, who were neither part of the working class nor part of the owning class, but comprised elements of the emerging 'middle' class. They were ambitious middle-class individuals who were instrumental in structuring society according to a distinct vision — the vertical one of career. As Bledstein points out in his study of the rise of professionalism:

The most emphatically middle-class man was the professional, improving his worldly lot as he offered his services to society, expressing his expanding expectations at ascending stages of an occupation. Professionalism emerged as more than an institutional event .... It was a culture — a set of learned values and habitual responses — by which middle class individuals shaped their emotional needs and measured their powers of intelligence. (2)

Planners hoped to not only find for themselves a rewarding career with some status but, in addition, to find for themselves a certain social usefulness by practicing in an area of expertise that provided benefits for the good of society in general. They thus saw themselves as better than the working class whose work lacked the social status of a profession and better than the business class whose work lacked direct societal usefulness. Planners, like other professionals, gained their legitimacy, and thus their social status, because, in seeking reforms, they did not question or reject capitalism but only one aspect of it. They rejected the selfishness which was necessary to the most exploitive forms of early capitalism. It was thus more appropriate to call for state intervention in the case of such things as rampant land speculation and irrational and inefficient patterns of development which only benefited the individual developer. Unrestrained competition, exploitation and a strictly economic view of work and


society was seen by this middle class as a social vice that destroyed both public prosperity and public tranquility. Only the selfish person indulged his appetites at the expense of his neighbours. Middle-class professionals recognised self-interest as a powerful human motive, but a motive which did not have to produce selfish outcomes. Self-interest could also be an enlightened source of benevolent action for every productive person who identified his particular interest with the general public interest. (1)

4.2 Planners and Planning Practice

While putting the evolution of the profession of planning into this sort of perspective may help us understand why planners were advocating what they were after the turn of the century, the problem of the timing of planning measures remains. As Alberta's planning history indicates, there was no even growth in the development of land use regulations. Government action came sporadically, in spite of the attempts of planners to have a more comprehensive planning policy institutionalised. And as Alberta's planning history shows, the periods of greatest government action in terms of adopting planning legislation, preparing plans and zoning bylaws, and imposition of new subdivision regulations, came during periods of prosperity when there was a great deal of urban development and real estate activity taking place. As the Figure on the following page indicates, Alberta's planning legislation was adopted at the peaks of each real estate boom, and this pattern has continued well after world war II. Even though different governments were in power at each of these peaks and even though a fairly lively planning movement existed in between the peaks fruitlessly promoting more planning, only the serious problems caused by too much development ever forced the provincial governments to seriously consider or reconsider their land use planning policies. This pattern largely holds true for municipalities also.

The province of Alberta was not alone in this reactive approach to land use planning policy. During and shortly after the first great real estate boom which ended in 1913, six provinces adopted land use planning legislation for the first time. In 1912 New Brunswick and Nova Scotia adopted town planning acts and Ontario adopted a subdivision control act (the City and Suburbs Plans Act). In 1916 Manitoba adopted a planning act and in 1917 both Ontario and Saskatchewan adopted planning acts. These 1916 and 1917 acts were adopted after the collapse of the real estate boom, and they reflect the success of the town planning movements in these provinces. During the next peak in real estate activity, the mid and late 1920's,

1 Ibid., see p.10.
TOTAL EDMONTON AND CALGARY BUILDING PERMIT VALUES AND SIGNIFICANT PLANNING ACTS: 1905-1955

British Columbia adopted a planning act for the first time (in 1925) and in 1928 Saskatchewan replaced its previous act with a new one. Resistance to state intervention in urban development was thus strong and only weakened when urban problems were severe enough to warrant such action.

In addition to this, however, these planning acts were only adopted at the time that a real estate boom was reaching its peak or, were adopted shortly after it peaked, in reaction to the problems caused by the boom (as in the case of the 1916 and 1917 acts mentioned above). Since the conditions which finally moved the provincial governments into adopting the legislation largely disappeared, so did governmental interest in enforcing the acts. None of the provinces ever established adequate machinery to implement the acts or to assist municipalities in implementing them. Thus, from 1900 to the end of World War II there is little continuity in terms of the institutionalisation of provincial land use planning programs and policies. As we have seen in the case of Alberta, provincial planning activity took place only in reaction to immediate problems and then the activity faded away.

What is unique about Alberta's early planning legislation in comparison with the other provinces, is that Alberta has managed to introduce its new planning acts almost precisely at the peak of real estate booms. This historical coincidence has occurred simply because of the degree to which strong support from influential quarters coalesced to develop during each peak. For example, in 1912 a particularly active and strong Calgary Town Planning Commission existed and happened to push, together with influential Edmonton politicians, for adoption of the 1913 Planning Act. In the case of the late 1920's it was Premier Brownlee's and the United Farm Women of Alberta's interest in preserving the natural beauty of rural roads that led to the 1928 Planning Act which in turn led to the much more comprehensive 1929 Planning Act. If the 1928 act had not been adopted it is very likely there would not have been the appointment of the provincial planning board, no appointment of a provincial town planning director, and without Horace Seymour or someone like him, there was little chance of having the 1929 Planning Act drafted. Unlike the first real estate boom earlier in the century, the late 1920's boom was very brief and the conditions leading to public debate over planning just barely got off the ground before the crash of 1929. Few provinces, therefore, ended up adopting new legislation unless there were some special circumstances, as there was in Alberta. The boom period was simply not long enough to stimulate a sufficiently strong municipal reaction.
By world war II both the principle and some of the basic mechanisms for land use planning had been established in Alberta. However, planning was never quite institutionalised. Its adoption and implementation was dependent upon the condition of the economy and the rate of urban development. When urban growth was proceeding very rapidly, as during the 1910 to 1913 period and during the late 1920's, new planning initiatives were made. During the periods of slow growth, such as during world war I and the early 1920's, not even the more active promoters of planning such as Thomas Adams could convince the provincial and municipal governments to undertake future orientated planning action. During the depression planning commissions and concern over planning in its broader sense faded away as urban development faded away. However, zoning remained. Even in periods of slow growth, zoning helped rationalise the urban land market. But because there was so little growth these early zoning bylaws in Alberta were very simple and quite inadequate by today's standards. As development accelerated after world war II a host of new land use restrictions, revisions in the planning act, replacement of zoning bylaws, and preparation of municipal master plans all began taking place rather quickly and only then was land use planning fully institutionalised as an operational function of government.
Appendix A

Outline History of Provincial Land Use Planning Activity in Alberta, 1900-1945

1883 Municipal Ordinance of 1883 provides regulations for the establishment and government of rural municipalities, towns and cities.

1884 Calgary is incorporated as a town.

1892 Edmonton is incorporated as a town.

1894 Calgary is incorporated as a city.

1904 Edmonton is incorporated as a city.

1905 Alberta becomes a province; population of 185,195; 68% rural; two cities; 15 towns and 30 villages.

1906 Land Titles Act regulates certain aspects of land subdivision, requiring minimum street widths of 60 feet, lanes of 20 feet, and requiring access to the rear of every lot.

1911 Department of Municipal Affairs established; previously Department of Public Works handled municipal affairs.

1912 Private bill introduced in the provincial legislature setting minimum design standards for subdivisions; bill withdrawn when government indicated it was preparing more comprehensive planning legislation of its own.

Prior to adoption of planning legislation, the government developed two sets of official regulations: (1) required all subdivisions over 25 lots to be approved by the Public Utilities Commission; (2) prescribed minimum standards of subdivision design — lot size, street width, dedication of land for public purposes, block size, etc.

Town Planning Conference of Alberta held at Edmonton, passed resolutions: endorsing a proposed Alberta Townsite and Subdivision act; seeking passage of a planning act similar to the British 1909 planning act; and approving the construction of working class housing as a municipal venture and experiment.

1913 The first Town Planning Act for the province is adopted; it is similar to the 1912 New Brunswick Act, which is very similar to the 1909 British planning act.
1913 Thomas Mawson hired by the federal government to prepare townsite plans for Banff.

1914 Alberta Town Planning and Housing Association holds a convention in Calgary, discusses transportation, population, water, sewers, fire protection, parks, housing and subdivisions.

1915 Alberta issues its first procedural regulations for municipal implementation of the 1913 Town Planning Act; Thomas Adams plays a role in promoting the implementation of planning in the province.

Board of Public Utility Commissioners established, to supervise the issue and repayment of municipal debt and to regulate prices charged by public utilities.

Thomas Adams visits Calgary, Edmonton and Banff, conferring with local municipal officials and Boards of Trade, and advocating adoption of improved planning legislation by the province.

1916 Thomas Adams again visits Calgary and Edmonton, promoting the establishment of local branches of the Civic Improvement League, and advocating the preparation of municipal general plans and adoption of improved planning legislation.

An unsuccessful attempt is made to establish an Alberta Housing and Town Planning Association.

1918 Alberta Good Roads Board established.

1919 Alberta is one of two provinces which do not adopt housing legislation enabling municipalities to participate in the federal housing loan program.

1922 Town Planning Act re-enacted in a revised form with no substantive alteration to its provisions.

1928 An Act to Facilitate Town Planning and the Preservation of the Natural Beauties of the Province adopted by the legislature as a result of promotional activities by the United Farm Women of Alberta, who sought to protect the countryside from commercialization (billboards, gas stations, etc.). Short title of the Act: 'The Town Planning and Preservation of Natural Beauties Act'.

Town Planning Branch and position of provincial Director of Town Planning created within Department of Municipal Affairs; Horace L. Seymour hired as town planning director of the province.

1930 Alberta Provincial Parks and Protected Areas Act adopted.
As a result of the 1929 planning act, 14 Town Planning Commissions established and 13 zoning bylaws adopted by Alberta municipalities; no general plans were adopted.

1931 Amendment to the Town Planning Act establishes a Zoning Board of Appeal, but where a municipality does not establish such a Board appeals can be made to the Town and Rural Planning Advisory Board of the province.

1934 Department of Trade and Industry established, to promote industrial development and to formulate plans for the useful, economical and orderly development of the province’s natural resources.

1937 Amendment to Town Planning Act increases subdivision control regulations to help curb speculation.

1938 Special Areas Act authorises Special Area land use surveys, land classification and grants to farmers moving to better soil and climate zones after disastrous periods of drought.

1939 Commercial advertising along highways outside cities and towns completely eliminated; the earlier licensing system begun in 1928 never really worked and was too costly to administer.

1940 Alberta Building Association Act adopted, to help finance construction of low-cost housing by private associations of three or more people; Building Association Advisory Board established within Department of Trade and Industry; very few houses were ever built under the act.

1942 A new Town Planning Act adopted, replacing the 1929 Act; amended in 1945, 1946, 1948, 1949, and again in 1950 when the title of the act was changed to the Town and Rural Planning Act.

1945 Alberta Housing Association Act adopted; never implemented.

Alberta National Housing Loans Act adopted, enabling municipalities to participate in the 1944 federal National Housing Act programs.

Department of Economic Affairs established, to promote the orderly economic development of the province.
Appendix B

Horace L. Seymour — Biographical Information

Horace L. Seymour was Alberta's first provincial Town Planning Director. He held this position from 1929 to 1932 and was the author of the 1929 Alberta Town Planning Act.

There has been little biographical information about Seymour published. The following resume was prepared by Seymour himself shortly before his death in April 1940. (Source: Seymour Papers, Public Archives of Canada, M.G. 30, B.93.)

Horace L. Seymour

Housing and Town Planning Consultant, Ottawa, Canada

Horace L. Seymour is a graduate of Toronto University with degrees of B.A.Sc. and C.E. He is commissioned to practice as a Dominion Land Surveyor and an Ontario Land Surveyor. He is also a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada and of the American Institute of Planners. He has practiced as engineer, surveyor or town planner in all provinces of Canada except Prince Edward Island.

During the last war, he was assistant to the Federal Town Planning Advisor and was engaged under his direction in the re-planning of the devastated area in Halifax. Since then he was Associate Consultant in the preparation of a comprehensive Plan and Zoning By-law for the City of Kitchener which was the first city in Canada to take such action. The plan there prepared has been consistently followed since the early twenties. He was three years in Vancouver as Resident Engineer for the Town Planning Commission, report published 1929-30.

For four years he acted as Town Planning Director for the Province of Alberta where his work included rural planning as well. He was engaged in drafting the Alberta Town Planning Act which provided regulations controlling all development along the highways as to location and design of filling stations, refreshment booths, tourist camps, advertising signs, etc.

As a result of his work and reading, he is convinced that planning is an economic need in every municipality. Mr. Seymour claims there should be a program of development which can be followed by successive councils and this program should include policies in regard to the treatment of vacant city-owned property, as to major streets, recreational facilities, transportation
facilities, as to housing development, as to the control of new building, not only as structural requirements, but also as to the use to which such new buildings are to be put. By the passing of a comprehensive Zoning By-law, the area of the city may be divided into appropriate districts or zones for different types of industry, business and residence. The passage of such Zoning By-laws, Mr. Seymour points out, gives meaning and the assurance of continuance to a Town Planning program.

In the past few years Mr. Seymour has been engaged in a general consulting practice. He drafted the New Brunswick Town Planning Act in 1936 and the Nova Scotia Town Planning Act in 1939. He is retained by the Saint John Town Planning Commission and by the Council of the Town of Sackville, N.B. He is working at the present time for the Town Planning Commission at Cornwall and has recently been retained by the Councils of Fort Arthur and Fort William to make Town Planning surveys as a basis for Town Plans and Zoning By-laws.

Mr. Horace L. Seymour is a graduate in engineering of the University of Toronto with degrees of B.A.Sc. and C.E. He has lectured for several years in Town Planning at both the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta. He has been Supervisor for the Ottawa Centre during the past two years, of the University of Toronto Extension Courses and has been the principal lecturer in the Housing and Town Planning classes.

Mr. Seymour is a Member of the Engineering Institute of Canada, a member of the Ontario and New Brunswick Association of Professional Engineers, a Dominion Land Surveyor and Ontario Land Surveyor and one of the two Canadian members of the American Institute of Planners. He is also a member of the executives of the National Housing and Planning Association and the Ottawa Housing and Planning Association.

In surveying, engineering, in housing or town planning, Mr. Seymour has been employed in every province in Canada except Prince Edward Island. He drafted the following Town Planning Acts: Alberta, 1929; New Brunswick, 1936; and the Nova Scotia Act just passed in April 1939.

Mr. Seymour's first important work in town planning was when, loaned by the Federal Commission of Conservation, he assisted in the replanning of the devastated area in Halifax following the explosion in the harbour in 1917. He was associate consultant for the Plan for the City of Kitchener, first city in Canada to have a comprehensive plan prepared. For three years he was Resident Engineer for the Vancouver Town Planning Commission, for five years Director of Town Planning for the Province of Alberta. He is now Consultant to this province, and to the Saint John Town Planning
Commission. He has just made a preliminary survey and report to the Fort William Town Planning Commission after a short stay in that city.

Mr. Seymour has written a number of technical articles on engineering, housing and town planning subjects. He has recently contributed articles to the Engineering Journal, the American City magazine, the Canadian Engineer, and is a regular contributor to the Canadian Unionist on housing.
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