

## What is your own big plan?

Common Core Anchor Reading Standard 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

## Living inside the Burnham Plan

The Plan of Chicago --- known as the Burnham Plan for its main author Daniel Burnham --- was published a century ago. So what? Why should anyone care? Here's why:

Whether you realize it or not, you live inside the Burnham Plan. All of us do --- Chicagoans, suburbanites, even those on the farthest edges of development.

This region of ours where we work, play, shop, drive and make our home is, in many ways, the result of the Plan's ideas. It was formed by that 1909 document.

When you listen to music at a Grant Park festival, you're in the Plan. When you walk down Michigan Avenue, you're in the Plan.

Have you ever taken out-of-town visitors for fun and fresh air at Navy Pier? Each time you do, you're taking them into one of the Plan's many recommendations.

Ever drive down Roosevelt Road? Or Western Avenue? Or Ashland Avenue? Those streets and many others in the city are able to handle so much traffic each day because, in the 1920s and 1930s, they were widened --- as the Plan had recommended.

The Plan's impact, however, hasn't been limited to Chicago.

If you've ever had a picnic or gone for a nature walk or played softball or golf in a Cook County Forest Preserve, you can thank the Plan.

The idea of a Forest Preserve District had been kicking around for years, but the Plan gave them focus and impetus. And, in 1914, Cook County residents voted to establish the district. Two years later, the first land was purchased. Today, the district has 68,000 acres, nearly all of it in the suburbs.

And consider the map facing page 40 in the Plan, shown to the right. It's titled "General Diagram of Exterior Highways Encircling and Radiating from the City." This map looks a lot like the present-day highway-expressway-tollway system that we drive today. It's almost as if Burnham and his colleagues were looking at today's highway map when drawing up their own.



Make no mistake. The Plan wasn't a hard-and-fast schematic that civic leaders and voters slavishly followed. It was a vision that took into account many, many factors --- from lakefront parks to the meandering Chicago River, from a double-decker Wacker Drive to a new island off the shoreline at Twelfth Street. That island was the site of the 1933 World's Fair, then became Meigs Field Airport for many years, and is now Northerly Island Park.

Some of its ideas never saw the light of day. Most of those that became reality weren't exactly as they were pictured in the Plan.

The key thing was that --- because of the Plan and because of the commitment of citizens and leaders to its vision --- change didn't just happen. Decisions weren't made on the fly or in reaction to some sudden event. They were thought about. They were given reasoned consideration. They were discussed and weighed and analyzed.

And not just by officialdom.

Citizens like you thought about the Plan's ideas --- and acted on them. Historian Carl Smith reports that, between 1912 and 1931, Chicagoans approved 86 Plan-related bond issues, costing a total of \$234 million. That's the equivalent of about \$3 billion today.

So that's important to recognize as well. It's not just Burnham's Plan that we're living in today. It's the Plan of hundreds of thousands of average citizens as well.

### **Extended Response**

Visionaries are big thinkers. They have a vision of what is and what should be. In what way was Daniel Burnham a visionary? In what way will you make your mark on Chicago?

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