

Local Politics and Local Planning: A Case Study of Hamilton, Ontario, 1915-1930

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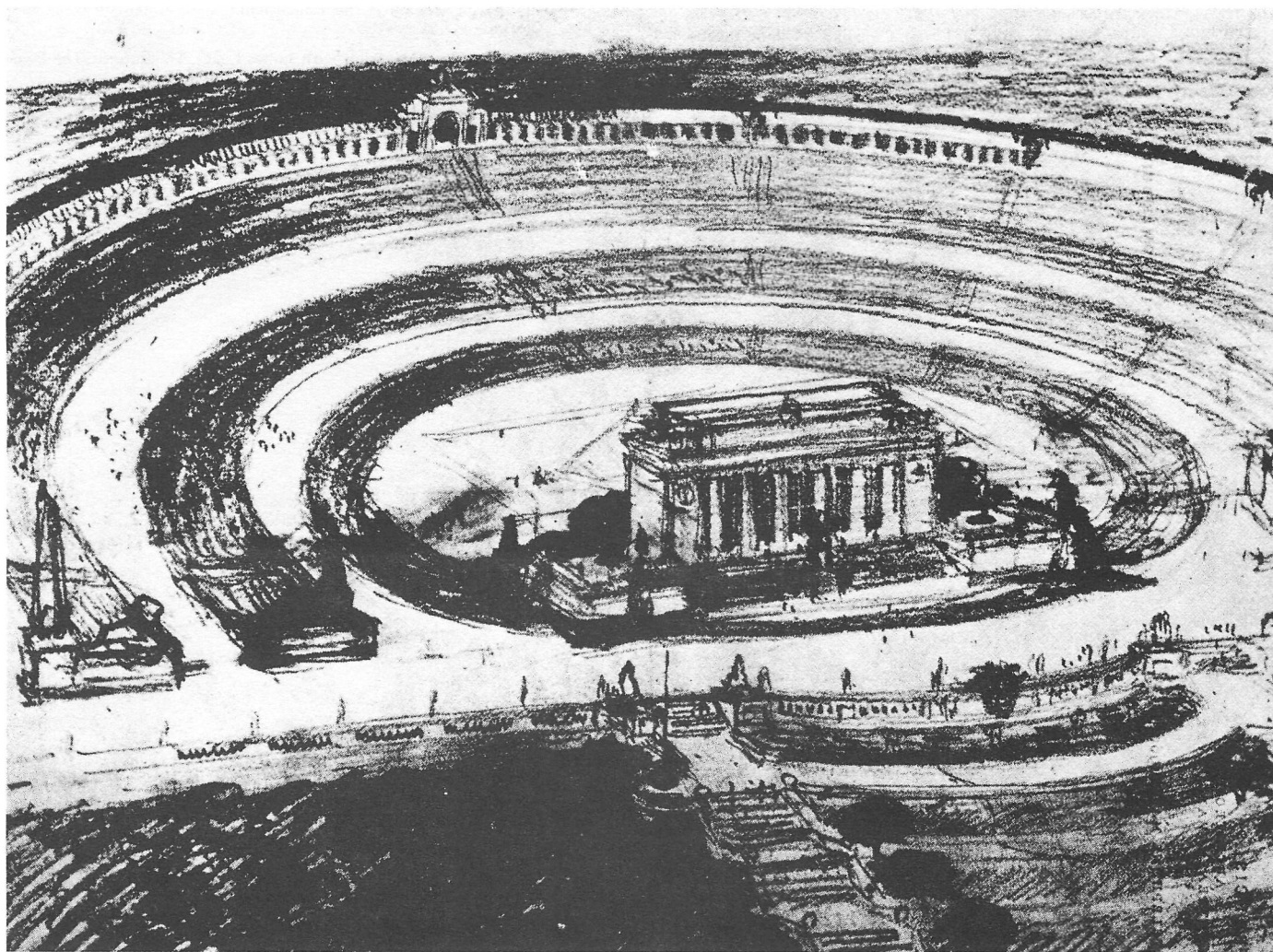
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Résumé de l'article

Une étude des buts et des stratégies de développement à Hamilton montre la convergence des rapports professionnels et des comités civiques de développement reste trop limitée pour estimer l'ampleur du mouvement local de développement urbain et ses éléments essentiels d'embellissement et d'efficacité. Le Town Planning Board (TPB) consultant municipal engagé en 1915 et le rapport de l'ingénieur-urbaniste Noulon Cauchon de 1917 reflètent la coexistence de deux forces chez les partisans du développement de Hamilton. La période de l'après-guerre entraîne des changements dans la composition du TPB et le développement de politiques adéquates de zonage diminue l'influence politique du TPB et conduit à son abandon par les embellisseurs influents vers 1923. Tandis que l'inefficace TPB poursuit l'achèvement de son plan de zonage en 1928, les embellisseurs se sont dirigés vers les parcs administratifs et les comités routiers lesquels, dotés de pouvoirs et de budgets par la législation provinciale, constituent de bien meilleurs instruments de réalisation des plans à long terme réclamés dans le rapport Cauchon et poursuivit sans succès à travers le TPB. Vers 1930, l'efficacité des urbanistes est disparue tandis que les embellisseurs ont surmonté les défis politiques de leurs plans au profit de boulevards paysagers et d'une expansion majeure du système de parcs.



HAMILTON STADIUM

Proposed by N. Cauchon.

FIGURE 1. Mountain Stadium proposed by Noulan Cauchon in 1917 "Reconnaissance Report" and 1919 "Report on Mountain Highways."

SOURCE: *The Journal Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, July-August 1926.

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Résumé/Abstract

Une étude des buts et des stratégies de développement à Hamilton montre la convergence des rapports professionnels et des comités civiques de développement reste trop limitée pour estimer l'ampleur du mouvement local de développement urbain et ses éléments essentiels d'embellissement et d'efficacité. Le Town Planning Board (TPB) consultant municipal engagé en 1915 et le rapport de l'ingénieur-urbaniste Noulan Cauchon de 1917 reflètent la coexistence de deux forces chez les partisans du développement de Hamilton. La période de l'après-guerre entraîne des changements dans la composition du TPB et le développement de politiques adéquates de zonage diminue l'influence politique du TPB et conduit à son abandon par les embellisseurs influents vers 1923. Tandis que l'inefficace TPB poursuit l'achèvement de son plan de zonage en 1928, les embellisseurs se sont dirigés vers les parcs administratifs et les comités routiers lesquels, dotés de pouvoirs et de budgets par la législation provinciale, constituent de bien meilleurs instruments de réalisation des plans à long terme réclamés dans le rapport Cauchon et poursuivis sans succès à travers le TPB. Vers 1930, l'efficacité des urbanistes est disparue tandis que les embellisseurs ont surmonté les défis politiques de leurs plans au profit de boulevards paysagers et d'une expansion majeure du système de parcs.

A study of the goals and strategies of planning in Hamilton shows that concentration of professional reports and civic planning boards alone is too limited to assess the local fate of the city planning movement and its constituent emphases of beautification and efficiency. The municipal advisory Town Planning Board (TPB) appointed in 1915 and the report commissioned from engineer-planner Noulan Cauchon in 1917 reflected the co-existence of the two emphases among Hamilton planning advocates. Post-war changes in the composition of the TPB and the development of ad hoc political alternatives to zoning reduced the TPB's political influence and led by 1923 to its abandonment by prominent beautifiers. While the ineffectual advisory TPB continued until completion of its zoning plan in 1928, the beautifiers moved to administrative parks and roads boards whose provincially legislated powers and budgets made them more effective vehicles for the realization of long-standing plans which had been re-iterated in Cauchon's report and pursued unsuccessfully through the TPB. By 1930, the efficiency planners had disappeared while the beautifiers had overcome political challenges to their plans for scenic boulevards and a major expansion of the park system.

In tracing the rise and decline of the city planning movement in early twentieth century Canada, it soon becomes apparent that there is no easy relation between the development of the ideas of the planning profession and the experience of local planning advocates. At the professional level, as studies by W. Van Nus and T.I. Gunton demonstrate, a definite cycle from the 1890s to the 1930s with stages in which ideals of beautification or efficiency dominate lends coherence to the concept of a national planning

movement; this coherence can then be traced as E. Bloomfield does for Kitchener-Waterloo in the rise and fall of planning groups in individual communities.¹ Starting from the local level, the view may be different; "movement" becomes "vehicle" in a political process in which local and individual agendas dominate over planners' priorities. As can be seen in the case of Hamilton, Ontario, any interpretation of the early twentieth century civic improvement and planning movement, or assessment of its success, must not look to the ideas of commissioned professional planners in isolation, but as elements of a political process underway in the local community. In the context of that process, a planner's

report may be less an application of current theories than a vehicle to promote the projects of certain local boosters. Similarly, a planning board's demise may be simply a mutation as these individuals abandon a powerless agency in favour of more effective avenues through which to pursue the particular goals which had earlier led them to boost the planning movement. As a result, developments in the national movement such as the pre-war shift from beautification to efficiency may find only ambiguous reflection at the local level. In short, the success or failure of the local movement should not be judged deductively by the standards of the national movement, but inductively by reference to the goals of those boosters who define and animate the local movement, who are less concerned with the supposed opposition of beautification and efficiency and who may abandon ineffective town planning boards and commissions in favour of other political bodies.

In Hamilton, the planning movement developed initially through the municipal Town Planning Board (TPB) appointed in 1915, and in the direction of reports by Ottawa engineer-planner Noulan Cauchon in 1917 and 1919. The development of *ad hoc* alternatives to zoning, changes in TPB membership, and post-war economic restraint had, by 1923, rendered the Board politically ineffectual. It was abandoned by some of its major boosters in preference for other municipal commissions operating with narrower mandates, well-defined powers under provincial legislation, and adequate budgets. Good Roads advocate James J. Mackay went to the Suburban Area Commission, while parks and beautification proponent Thomas B. McQuesten helped turn the Board of Park Management into one of the most aggressive commissions in the city. These two commissions frequently cooperated to achieve goals which had proved elusive through the TPB. While the latter lasted until 1928, after 1923 it was no longer an adequate gauge of the success of the Hamilton planning movement.

The professed concern of the Hamilton City Council in commissioning the Town Planning Board, and of the TPB in commissioning a report from Noulan Cauchon, was planning land use in an expanding city. Both of the commissioning parties sought advice on a number of issues, including the proper role of zoning to redirect land use in the existing city, the role of planning to control suburban expansion, and the role of a TPB in municipal politics.

Noulan Cauchon was no stranger to Hamilton. He had come to the attention of the TPB as an assistant to engineer W.F. Tye, who had been commissioned in 1917 to prepare a report on "The Railway Situation in Hamilton, Ontario" as part of a bid by the city to force the Toronto, Hamilton, and Buffalo Railway Company to abandon its southerly right of way and join a planned common north end rail corridor. Unsuccessful in challenges before the Board of Railway Commissioners and the Supreme Court of Canada, the Hamilton Council hoped a professional engineer's report

would lend the weight of science to a weak case. The move proved unsuccessful, but the tactics obviously impressed the TPB, for its members immediately commissioned Cauchon to prepare a report on planning priorities in Hamilton.²

In his "Reconnaissance Report on the Development of Hamilton, Ontario," Cauchon offered "scientific town planning" as an "economic gospel of regeneration."³ Throughout the report, however, regeneration played a smaller role than the simple elimination of waste through foresight and planning. The principle in determining zoning within the existing city was avoiding congestion by adopting height and volume standards for building lots and varying street widths according to municipal services and traffic volume. Congestion in the city, as in any organism, was the cause of decay, reduced vitality, and poor health. Zoning, therefore, was not to be adopted according to fixed and abstract standards, but according to the need to ensure that the development of economic life and provision of services in the city did not violate the need of the citizens for sunlight and fresh air. It was, in short, to move from a fixed design to an administrative process.⁴ This general principle relieved Cauchon of the responsibility to offer specific suggestions in zoning beyond the accepted conventions of limiting building height according to street width, and removing chemical and smoke-emitting industries from the western side of the city because of the prevailing winds.

He was more specific in his suggestions for the planned expansion of the city. Like all who looked on the suburb as the panacea for social ills, Cauchon believed that suburban surveys could relieve congestion and increase prosperity, but only with proper planning. The obvious area for expansion was the land above the escarpment and outside city limits, the "mountain tableland" which could accommodate "eyrie residences . . . far from heat and dust of the day" and "high above the noise and turmoil of the throbbing city by the shores below."⁵ Cauchon recommended bringing the area under city control to prevent unhealthy development, and using the prospect of servicing to lead existing subdivision owners to abandon the conventional grid plan and submit to large-scale planning which would create a cohesive economic and artistic residential suburb. The replacement of haphazard servicing by demand with scientific planning would reduce the cost of these capital works while increasing amenities.

As a first step toward the fulfillment of these plans, Cauchon advocated adopting a comprehensive city plan which would establish zoning for undeveloped lands in order to control the rate and cost of servicing. Once zoning had been established, the city could apply to the provincial legislature for a special act giving Hamilton effective control over engineering standards and public services in the five mile "Urban Zone" beyond city limits defined by the 1917 Ontario Planning and Development Act. Such control would avoid costly

duplication of services and ensure standardization of materials and parts in the larger city of the future.⁶

Cauchon was least helpful when dealing with the issue on which the Hamilton TPB was most in need of clear advice: the composition and function of a town planning board. On composition, the Ottawa planner could only offer that the effective board should include "able and influential honorary members from citizens in all walks of life," skirting the question of the proportion of politicians to citizens which often divided the planning movement. On function, he suggested the Board was to give knowledge, stability, and continuity to the planning process, and to "infuse into the movement that indispensable element of Personality, which [would] enthuse the public and secure results through an enlightened popular demand." Popular interest had to be stirred before popular demand could be heeded, and Cauchon advocated the process which had proven successful in winning wide acceptance in Chicago for Daniel H. Burnham's 1901 plan. Visual modes, frequent illustrated lectures, press reports, and school classrooms were to be used in the plan's dissemination, "as it is the rising generation in whom we much trust to 'carry on' our ideals and our civilization."⁷

In the years following the "Reconnaissance Report," the Hamilton TPB made a number of efforts to carry out Cauchon's recommendations, almost entirely without success. The reasons for failure vary with individual recommendations, but can in general be reduced to three: the ambiguous status of the TPB in municipal government; the solution by other means of problems it was meant to solve; and the changing priorities of government and business in the post-war period.

The ambiguous status of the TPB was a consequence of the circumstances of its birth. Its establishment to plan the physical environment and future growth of Hamilton owed less to any widely and deeply felt conviction of its necessity and more to the actions of a small group of people in the local promotion of an idea which had general currency in municipal reform circles. There was little consensus as to the nature of such a board even among the supporters of the idea. When the municipal Council did finally establish a TPB, it acted as much to contain as to advance the idea, limiting the powers of the body without specifying functions. Although some councillors supported the "planning idea," subsequent events showed that the Council as a whole, and particularly the executive Board of Control, sought advice without interference.

The move towards the creation of the TPB began in 1913 when Board of Control member T.S. Morris gave notice in Council of a motion for the creation of a "Commission on City Planning and Better Housing" which would be charged with devising a comprehensive plan for the natural features, streets, parks, housing, and general development of the city.⁸ Morris, a Methodist bookseller who in a provincial "Who's

Who" counted "social and moral reform" among his interests, was a frequent city delegate to the annual meetings of the National Conference on City Planning. He accepted the referring of the proposal to the Board of Control where, in the opposition of other members, it died a quick death. Similar motions in 1914 and 1915 received similar treatment. Each year the proposed commission gained new responsibilities corresponding to new problems in the city, and each year it failed to gain support. Finally, in August 1915, a planning board was appointed and charged with three tasks: the preparation of a planning map, the recommendation of a form of town planning legislation, and the consideration of any questions relating to the planning and improvement of Hamilton. The compromise advisory board lacked responsibility for housing, park development, or transportation, but Morris seized the half loaf and became a member.⁹

In creating a TPB when it did, the Council may have been responding to pressure from local business groups which had been stirred up by the frustrated Morris himself. Chief among these was the Board of Trade, which had earlier in the year invited Thomas Adams, newly-appointed Advisor on Town Planning to the federal Commission on Conservation to address one of its meetings. The Board had advocated the appointment of the prominent British planner to the Commission in 1913, and was pleased two years later to hear Adams affirm that "town planning is a business matter and that it why it appeals to Boards of Trade."¹⁰ Adams' speech emphasized town planning as an investment which must consider the roots of a city's existence in industry and manufacturing and preserve property rights and values. The Board responded with the unanimous adoption of a resolution establishing a permanent planning association. Some weeks later James White, Assistant Chairman of the Commission on Conservation, was invited to address the organizational meeting of the South Ontario Planning Association in the Board of Trade's meeting rooms. Finally, three weeks before the creation of the TPB, representatives of the beautifying Civic Improvement Committee met at City Hall to form a city planning commission; the speaker on this occasion was again the willing evangelical of the cause, Thomas Adams. After debating a number of different approaches to the composition of a planning commission, the Committee agreed on the form subsequently adopted by the municipal Council.¹¹

The flowering of interest among different local groups may have been coincidental or the delayed arrival in Hamilton of an idea whose time had already come in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Halifax, Calgary and a number of other Canadian cities. Certainly town planning was under discussion at all levels of government across the country. Planning commissions of various sorts already existed in many of the larger Canadian cities, town planning legislation had been passed in three provinces and was under consideration in others, and a model provincial Act had been prepared by the Commission on Conservation. A year earlier, the National

Conference on City Planning had held its first — and last — meeting outside the United States, in Toronto. The Hamilton City Council had been sufficiently interested in the publicity value of the conference to mount an exhibit. Perhaps most significantly, Town Planning was still viewed as a central progressive element in the general planning for post-war reconstruction. It had not yet entered into the decline which Adams himself sensed by 1919.

While spontaneous generation in a conducive climate may account for the sudden cessation in 1915 of the Hamilton City Council's opposition to a TPB, the change of heart was probably due to a broader lobbying effort engineered by T.S. Morris and other planning boosters. In a public discussion at the 1916 National Conference on City Planning in Cleveland, Morris asked Thomas Adams about the best course to follow in appointing a planning commission. Without waiting for an answer, he suggested that pressure be brought to bear on the local Council by service clubs and the Board of Trade. He suggested further that the composition of the commission be weighted to give elected politicians a majority, and thereby ensure a larger budget.¹² The 'question' encapsulated events in Hamilton in 1915. Even the suggested composition of four politicians and three citizens corresponded in Hamilton TPB. Morris himself was a member of the Board of Trade and the three citizen members of the TPB were men who had been prominent in the planning commission of the Board and the Civic Improvement Committee. G.E. Main, manager of a local factory, was President of the Board's own TPB and of the Southern Ontario Planning Association. J.J. Mackay, a surveyor, was a member of the Civic Improvement Committee's TPB, as was manufacturer G.C. Coppley. Together with Morris, J.W. Tyrrell, a surveyor and aldermanic representative, and T.B. McQuesten, who became an aldermanic representative in 1916, these professionals and managers formed the core of a group of planning advocates whose names frequently appeared as members of the municipal and Board of Trade (Chamber of Commerce after 1920) TPBs.¹³

The enthusiasm of its members was not enough to ensure the success of the TPB. Although it attracted those who attempted to expand its range, it was consistently frustrated in its attempts to fill even the limited duties assigned it: the preparation of a planning map and planning legislation, and offering of advice on planning issues.

The authorization to prepare a map of the Greater Hamilton Urban Zone to facilitate supervision of suburban surveys was first requested in 1918 but deferred by the Board of Control until 1919. The unfulfilled request was repeated in 1921 and 1922 before a map was prepared by the City Engineer. The request for authority to proceed to the next step and prepare a detailed zoning map was first raised in 1922 and, although work was commenced, was ignored by the Board until 1927 when funds necessary for its completion were authorized. The nine-zoning planning scheme estab-

lishing separate areas for combinations of residential, retail, wholesale, light and heavy manufacturing, and industrial uses was never formally adopted.¹⁴

Although there is no single reason for this failure to adopt the TPB's zoning plan, the easing of zoning problems by other means was a major factor. The problem of protecting prime residential areas from commercial and industrial encroachment had already largely been solved by a series of municipal bylaws using powers authorized in the Municipal Act. A bylaw was passed in August 1917, before the submission of Noulan Cauchon's report and without participation of the TPB "To Prohibit the Erection and Use of Buildings for Certain Purposes within Defined Areas of the City." The bylaw prohibited a wide range of commercial and service functions in addition to tradesmen's workshops and industrial or manufacturing plants from an established and generally prosperous residential area of the city at the foot of the escarpment. Four months later the area was expanded and, in a series of expansions over the following five years, the Restricted Residential Area grew to cover a large part of the three wards which formed a predominantly middle and upper class district south from King Street to the escarpment. These restrictions were not extended to working class residential areas north from King to Barton Street, even though large sections of the district were solidly residential. Although never termed a zoning measure, the bylaw fell into what Walter Van Nus describes as the contemporary "tendency to use zoning to confirm the status quo" by preserving property values in residential areas where owners outnumbered renters.¹⁵

When, by 1922, pressures began to build for exemptions to the bylaw for particular sites, the Council declined to call on the TPB to submit a comprehensive zoning scheme, but instead established a study committee of controllers, aldermen, and city officials to consider options. Only one member of this committee was also a member of the TPB. In its first report six months later, the committee recommended an exemption to allow the construction of a candy factory in the restricted area; despite neighbourhood opposition, the exemption was granted.¹⁶ The following year a permanent Restricted Residential Areas Committee (RRAC) comprising one controller and one member of each of the city's eight wards was established to oversee additions and exemptions to the restricted areas. The wholly political RRAC functioned in place of — and in isolation from — the TPB; a frequent complaint of those working on the TPB zoning scheme was that the busy schedules of RRAC members made joint meetings impossible. Busy schedules may not have been the only reason for RRAC reluctance to consult with the TPB. Like Zoning Appeal Boards elsewhere in Canada, the RRAC was not an instrument of planning, but a relief valve to accommodate pressures of development while preserving the exclusivity of particular districts within the restricted area. Its *ad hoc* decisions balanced the residential and business interests of the property owning middle class

and so ensured that a more comprehensive, rigorous, and equitable zoning plan or process would never be adopted. The problem under control, interest in zoning declined and by 1924 the TPB was complaining of public apathy, one member claiming that people did “not appear to understand the importance of zoning from a monetary standpoint.”¹⁷ More likely, the people who mattered understood all too well in their own restricted, residential way.

A parallel “solution” undermined the TPB’s efforts to plan suburban expansion. The pre-war problem of suburban surveys spreading without control or design was largely eased by the slump in home construction from 1914. Like many Canadian cities, Hamilton was left with a supply of building lots which far exceeded demand, and in many cases surveys remained incomplete for decades. Even the independently planned suburb of Westdale, first advertised in 1913, had a significant number of vacant lots until after World War Two.¹⁸ There was no effort to integrate individual developments into a coherent plan and in design most developers remained committed to a grid street plan relieved only, if at all, by an occasional curve.

Cauchon’s dream of suburbs on the “mountain tableland” could not proceed as long as a large number of more readily accessible building lots remained available below the escarpment. Beyond this, the city resisted annexing the area despite frequent petitions from residents and developers to do so. The provision of municipal services attracted mountain residents, while the cost of providing them deterred the city from responding favourably, particularly after problems in the water supply led to widespread health problems on the mountain. Much of even the built-on land was unserved, and geological conditions made the cost of servicing significantly higher than it was below the escarpment. Only in 1929, after the demise of the TPB and the improvement in municipal finances, was the area annexed.¹⁹

The attempt of TPB members to fulfill the second task given in 1915 and recommend appropriate town planning legislation brought to the surface many basic differences on the question of the Board’s powers which had been left unresolved in the original and half-hearted creation of the TPB. Despite their changing composition, the Hamilton City Council and Board of Control were consistently loath to give the TPB any independent powers or responsibility. In particular, the authority granted to Town Planning Commissions under the Ontario Planning and Development Act (1917) was denied. The legislation authorized local councils to create Commissions which would act with the authority of the municipal council to carry out the duties of the act, chiefly the preparation of a comprehensive town plan and the approval of suburban surveys in the city and its five mile Urban Zone. The Act’s Planning Commission would have full access to the services of municipal employees and until a 1920 revision, would have its account paid by the municipality without prior political review of its estimates.

This was clearly the responsible commission envisioned by Cauchon, but it was not the responsibility the Hamilton TPB was to enjoy. In its annual appointment of the TPB from 1918 onwards, the City Council emphasized that the board was a purely advisory body and not a Planning Commission under the Planning and Development Act. Attempts by the TPB to gather piecemeal the powers granted under the Act proved futile. Its reports were reviewed by the Board of Control before submission to City Council, and the executive Board frequently amended, redirected, or eliminated the itemized recommendations. A proposed act submitted in November, 1920 to extend the powers of the TPB was turned down by the Board of Control in spite of support from the Chamber of Commerce. Controllers were concerned that the TPB of the proposed act would usurp some of their own powers and that the strong authority given the TPB in land use control could reduce property owners’ rights. A request two years later that the TPB be notified of new suburban surveys was turned down by the Board of Council, and two requests the following year to revise building laws and publicize surveys were simply set aside or referred to other committees of council.²⁰

The virtual ignoring of the TPB by the Board of Control and City Council by 1923 was in part the result of clashes which arose as the TPB attempted to fulfill the third part of its 1915 mandate and offer recommendations for the planning and improvement of Hamilton. The vague wording of this part of the mandate gave everything and nothing to the TPB, but subsequent events showed that municipal politicians were more willing to commission advice than heed it. A wartime report recommending guaranteed loans on home-building did assist in the movement which led in 1919 to the creation by federal legislation of a Hamilton Housing Commission charged with distributing low interest loans to builders. Later reports fared less well. A proposal to purchase land for a wide boulevard above a trunk sewer being constructed in a diagonal line across the city was accepted in 1921, but the follow-up proposal to construct the boulevard was rejected 18 months later. A further recommendation to open up major streets to the harbour “to the public use and enjoyment of the citizens of Hamilton” was twice deferred by the Board of Control in 1922 and finally rejected the following year. Finally, a 1923 attempt to control the development of and limit emissions from west-end factories was defeated by the intervention of a Controller and the city’s newly appointed Commissioner of Industries and Publicity, C.W. Kirkpatrick.²¹

The TPB’s lack of success in having its proposals approved after 1921 was not simply due to the controversial nature of the recommendations themselves. The composition of the Board changed significantly in the period from 1915 to 1922, and the response of politicians changed with it. T.S. Morris’ idea of a small TPB dominated by politicians had lasted for only three years; from 1918, the addition of citizen members caused the Board to grow steadily until by 1921 the original

seven-man commission had doubled in size. Political representation declined from a majority to only half the TPB, and even this half did not attend meetings regularly. With the exception of one year, the mayor was no longer a member after 1919. The exception was George C. Coppley, prominent in Board of Trade advocacy of a TPB in 1915, and a member of the TPB since that time. Under Mayor Coppley's chairmanship in 1921, the TPB enjoyed a polite if not affirmative response to its recommendations from Board of Control; with the mayor's absence the following year, the Board summarily dismissed most of the TPB's proposals. Coppley was not the only politician who had withdrawn from the TPB. Political membership fell from one half of the TPB in 1921 to one-quarter in 1922, one-fifth the following year, and one-sixth by 1925. While willing to appoint interested citizens to a planning board, politicians were not immune from the declining interest in comprehensive planning which both the municipal and the parallel Chamber of Commerce TPBs were complaining of by 1924. The Council's appointment in 1923 of Industrial Commissioner Kirkpatrick demonstrated a faith in an "economic gospel of regeneration" distinct from Cauchon's "scientific town planning"; one of Kirkpatrick's first assignments was a trip to Britain to seek out branch plant investment.

The lack of public interest and decline of political participation led to a distinct decline in influence which was aggravated as active members such as T.B. McQuesten and J.J. Mackay left the TPB to promote their particular planning interests elsewhere. Yet the Board did not dissolve immediately after the loss of McQuesten in 1920 and Mackay in 1923. On the contrary, some of its most productive work was done in the period from 1924 to 1928. To counter public and political apathy, citizen members were, from 1924, no longer chosen at random, but on the nomination and as the representatives of local professional, neighbourhood, or interest groups. Committees were established to deal with zoning, housing, traffic, and legislation. The long awaited zoning map was finally completed in 1927 and won the approval of such diverse groups as the local branch of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association and the Trades and Labour Council. Yet after 1923 the TPB stopped submitting recommendations to the City Council. After receiving lukewarm response to a 1924 publicity campaign, it cooled its promotional efforts. And after the completion of the zoning plan in 1927, the meager TPB budget was reduced from \$500 to \$200; the following year an appropriation was budgeted but no Town Planning Board was appointed.²²

The watershed had been 1923 - 1924. The appointment of the Restricted Residential Areas Committee and Industrial Commissioner C.W. Kirkpatrick to perform zoning and development functions which the TPB had tried unsuccessfully to appropriate reinforced the lesson taught by years of rejected recommendations: comprehensive planning did not fit in with the economic priorities of local politicians who favoured the familiar and politically controllable system of

economic boosterism and *ad hoc* control. Its role in fulfilling the economic priorities of the City Council thereby eliminated, the TPB saw its remaining political influence fade as well in the declining proportion of political appointees and departure of influential members Coppley, Mackay and McQuesten. From 1924 the TPB operated on the two agendas characteristic of a movement which has lost its influence while retaining a core of devotees. While the loss of prominent boosters and the indifference of politicians made it unable to perform a viable advisory function, the dedication of remaining members such as T.S. Morris fueled the continuing development of a comprehensive city plan and zoning scheme. After the completion of its mission, even this remnant succumbed to public and political indifference and disappeared, taking the TPB minute books, city plan, and zoning scheme with it.

With the TPB in eclipse by 1924, the initiative in fulfilling some of its plans shifts to the agencies its former boosters began working through. The examples of J.J. Mackay and T.B. McQuesten are particularly appropriate as they pursued complimentary transportation and beautification projects unsuccessfully through the TPB and later were able to work cooperatively through distinct agencies to see the projects to completion. Mackay was a Good Roads and boulevard proponent who was associated with two major boulevard projects in the city: the Harbour Boulevard and the Mountain Brow Boulevard. McQuesten pursued beautification and parks expansion, both through the boulevard projects and in a park belt plan. Their work illustrates the influence of local boosters on the commissioned reports of professional planners, the shift of the boosters' political activity from advisory to administrative agencies, and the consequent difficulty of using the fate of town planning commissions or boards as the primary gauge of the success of particular planning initiatives.

Noulan Cauchon's 1917 "Reconnaissance Report" included a plan for a boulevard which would encircle Hamilton Harbour, following an existing road through the city and across the Burlington Beach strip, but requiring new construction on the opposite, northern shore, and transformation of an existing western section into a formally landscaped entrance to the city. Although silent on his inspiration, Cauchon's proposal was almost certainly Mackay's work; two years earlier the surveyor had presented an identical proposal complete with maps to the Board of Control, and he had been credited in the Tye-Cauchon "Report on the Railway Situation" with having furnished "maps, surveys and suggestions regarding the harbour development."²³ Mackay's persistent advocacy of the Harbour Boulevard plan also led to its inclusion in the 1919 Hamilton Harbour Plan, for which he acted as advisor of "parking and boulevard treatment"; the Harbour Plan included construction of the 17 mile circular drive, 10.5 miles of which was to pass through parks or adjacent to water, as part of the total

reconstruction of the harbour for commercial and recreational uses.²⁴

The second boulevard promoted by Mackay and Cauchon was to extend along the brow of the escarpment above the city and, with low-gradient access roads, was to facilitate suburban expansion on the “mountain tableland” where Mackay was active as a surveyor and real estate speculator. The access roads were the subject of a further Cauchon study commissioned by the city. The 1919 “Report on Mountain Highways” envisioned a complex system of switchback accesses framing a modified version of an open air, semi-circular Greek theatre built into the side of the escarpment which the planner had first proposed in the 1917 “Reconnaissance Report”; after considerable setbacks, only one of the planned roads was completed.²⁵ In Mackay’s last years on the TPB, culminating with his chairmanship in 1923, the Board stepped up advising specific actions to advance both the Harbour and Mountain Brow Boulevards. Right of ways were still to be secured on the mountain, and work on the purchase of an existing access road and construction of Cauchon’s “Mountain Highways” had stalled. At the harbour, factory development had to be controlled to ensure waterfront access, existing roads needed improvement, and right of ways had to be secured through undeveloped areas. Most of the recommendations were summarily withdrawn by the Board of Control or referred to the Works Committee where they were subsequently rejected.

Political opposition to the boulevard proposals must be seen as the result of general resistance to expensive proposals for municipal expansion in the early to mid-1920s. The defeat in a 1921 plebiscite of six ambitious capital expansion projects — including the “Mountain Highways,” the escarpment theatre, and a \$6,114,600 plan to establish a municipal gas plant and distribution system — inaugurated a period of fiscal restraint in which talk of the “current depression” was common and successful mayoralty candidates rode to office on pledges to hold the line on expenditures. Such pledges clearly put the advisory TPB at a disadvantage in municipal politics and so it became necessary for Mackay and McQuesten to pursue their boulevard and beautification plans through other agencies, chiefly the Suburban Area Commission (SAC) and the Board of Park Management (BPM). The five members of the SAC were appointed by the City and County Councils and the province to five year renewable terms and were authorized under the Ontario Highways Act (1915) with the laying out, construction, and maintenance of major suburban roads outside city limits. Costs were shared on a 30:30:40 basis between the city, county, and province, to a ½ mill municipal and \$4000/mile provincial limit. The seven members of the BPM were appointed to three renewable terms by the municipality and were authorized under the Ontario Public Parks Act [1883] with the development and maintenance of the municipal park system within a guaranteed annual ½ mill appropriation and to a 2000 acre limit.²⁶ Neither agency had shown much ini-

tiative or tested the limits of its authority until the late 1910s when development-oriented professionals began to dominate both and work in cooperation to achieve projects which combined planning and business interests. J.J. Mackay had joined the SAC in 1918, and T.B. McQuesten had come to the BPM in 1922, joining lawyer and real estate developer C.V. Langs. In the course of the 1920s, the two bodies began working closely together on the boulevard and other transportation projects to circumvent the restraint policies of the municipal government. In a number of joint agreements, the SAC was given right of ways through park lands which lay along the routes of two boulevards. Before the arrival of McQuesten and Langs, the BPM had received and refused unsolicited offers from real estate developers owning brow surveys who looked on a jointly developed brow boulevard and brow parks as a means of raising property values. The two bodies now cooperated in steering complex negotiations between the county government, two townships, real estate developers, the SAC, and the BPM to purchase lands and extend the Mountain Brow Boulevard westward from city limits to pass through land being developed by Langs.²⁷ Similarly, the BPM embarked on three major “Entrance Beautification” projects in cooperation with the SAC’s desire to improve the image of the city in the eyes of tourists.

The BPM was clearly a key agent in the achievement of projects proposed in Cauchon’s reports which beautification and transportation boosters had initially tried pursuing through the TPB. Yet in the case of parks as with boulevards, the role of the professional planner in the local process is ambiguous in that it more often involves the reiteration of locally boosted projects than the introduction of new ideas.

Parks played a large part in Noulon Cauchon’s concept of the healthy and efficient city. Claiming in the “Reconnaissance Report” that the unifying natural principle of town planning was the fact that the sun’s rays are the ultimate source of the planet’s energy, he shaped land use to achieve maximum benefit of these rays for the maximum number of citizens. Vitalism and Social Darwinism were interwoven as Cauchon found in parks a source of rest and regeneration which gave citizens the energy necessary to excel in business and industry. Hence parks were not easily dispensable; the necessity of recreation to develop efficiency and mental and physical vitality was the necessity of parks.²⁸

Cauchon set out four grades of parks distinguished by size and function. Small parks in the centre of town were to be formal and ornamental; larger parks in residential areas were less formal and more recreational; still larger parks were to be established on the outskirts of the city to be geographically and spiritually “nearer to nature”; and the largest natural parks were established outside the city where, “wild-er and freer,” they allowed access to the unsullied realm of nature for citizens bound up in urban realm of culture. The four grades were to be mixed in the creation of a park belt



FIGURE 2. First Prize entry in 1928 competition for redevelopment of Northwest Entrance.

SOURCE: *The Journal Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, April 1928.

which would encircle the city to become a “great rampart against ill-health and the evils of congestion.”²⁹

The escarpment face would form the southern portion of the Hamilton park belt while the eastern and western portions incorporated valleys which carried creeks from the escarpment to the bay. The Red Hill Creek in the east was to be shaped by dams to create pools offering “a pleasurable canoe route of easy portage from the interior areas to the Bay and vice versa,” as was the Chedoke Creek Valley to the west. The Burlington Beach strip enclosing the harbour was to be landscaped for recreation while the “Causeway” dividing the harbour from marshes at the very head of the lake was to be made into a formal entrance for the Toronto-Hamilton highway and Harbour Boulevard. Of these lands, only the mountain face and portions of the causeway were under public ownership in 1917.

The agency through which any creation of a park belt would be directed was the BPM, yet Cauchon did not consult with the Board when drawing up his scheme. Rather, parts of the park belt plan show the influence of Mackay's Harbour Boulevard plan while others appear to have been the outcome of discussions with Cauchon's chief backer in Hamilton, T.B. McQuesten.³⁰ In the fifteen years following its creation in 1900, the BPM had adopted a modest and largely *ad hoc* policy of expansion, pleading that maintenance of existing facilities absorbed most of its budget. The shift to a more deliberate policy of park expansion came only towards the end of the 1910s as plans were made for the development of two parks located within ½ mile of each other in the eastern end of the city: Gage Park and Scott Park. While Gage was a formal, landscaped park which consistently claimed the largest single appropriation in the BPM maintenance budget, Scott Park was, from 1919, developed as a centre for a wide range of professional and amateur athletic activities. Both were on major roads serviced by streetcars, but while Gage extended south from Main Street into a middle class area, Scott Park extended north from King Street into a working class district. The two parks exemplified distinct ideals. Their location in an area identified by Cauchon as the geographic centre of the mature city of the future, and their deliberate and costly development over the course of a decade marked a departure from the conservative *ad hoc* administration of the early years of the BPM.³¹

Two factors account for this shift in BPM administration. First, its membership changed with the replacement of members who served short terms and demonstrated no personal commitment to parks, by members who remained on the Board for decades to oversee the creation of a comprehensive park system. The two most prominent were McQuesten and Langs. A convenient complementarity united the two men. McQuesten was an advocate of beautification who pushed so hard for the acquisition and development of Gage Park that it was reputedly known among local politi-

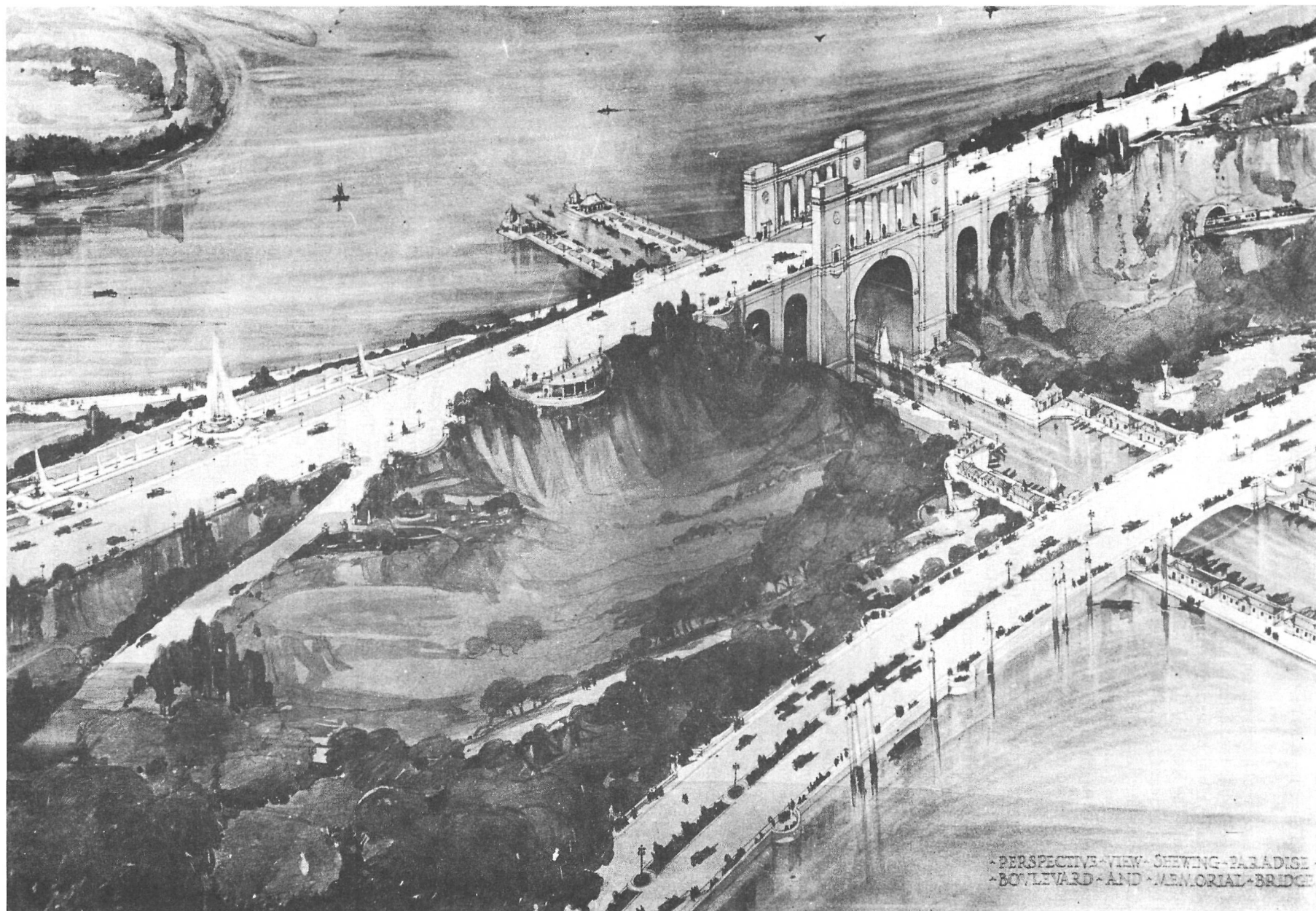
cians as “McQuesten's Park.” Langs was a believer in the expansion of sports facilities, and was credited as the moving force behind the development of Scott Park. Both had served as aldermen before joining the BPM. Both were key members of the professional elite who were involved in economic development and Liberal Party politics. Both sat on the BPM until shortly before their deaths within a year of each other in the later 1940s, and both also sat on the Board of the Royal Botanical Gardens which they were instrumental in creating in 1941.

A second factor in the metamorphosis of the BPM was a doubling of its mill rate in 1921. Largely an administrative function carried out as part of the transfer to the BPM of lands and debts acquired for park purposes by the municipality since 1900, it nonetheless increased the budget, consolidated the authority and confirmed the autonomy of the Board. The expansion which followed in the 1920s did not fall directly into Cauchon's four grades, but achieved a similar diversity of functions distributed over the area of the proposed park belt. Roughly three types of parks were developed in the period: recreational, formal, and natural.

As already noted, athletic facilities were developed in Scott Park through the 1920s. Similar facilities on a smaller scale were developed through the decade at Victoria Park in the west end and Eastwood Park on the harbour. Provision of a beach, dock, and bathing pavilion at Wabasso Park on the north shore of the harbour turned the former farm, whose initial acquisition had been rejected in a plebiscite and enabled only by provincial legislation, into a popular summer park. In 1924, the purchase of the Hamilton Golf and country Club at the city's western limits was completed, giving the private club of which Langs was a director funds to develop new links in the country, and ensuring a home for a newly created civic golf club.³²

In location and development, the BPM's commitment to formal parks demonstrated the concern its members shared with the SAC for the image projected by the city to travelers. The three formal parks developed in the period were all located at major highway entrances to the city and, with the exception of Gage, were designated in the planning stages as Entrance Beautification projects. Gage Park was located at the crossing of the main roads, King Street and Main Street, entering the city from the east. The orientation of its major ornamental feature, a fountain, was towards the Main Street.

At the western entrance to the city of highways from London and Brantford, and on land bordering McMaster University, the BPM created a formal sunken garden. Carried out as a relief project while the campus itself was under construction in the late 1920s, the \$70,000 project created a long central pool surrounded by landscaped terraces and became a showcase of flowers and shrubs.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW - SHEWING PARADISE -
BOULEVARD - AND - MEMORIAL - BRIDGE -

FIGURE 3. Third Prize entry in 1928 competition for redevelopment of Northwest Entrance. On the advice of the judges, the redevelopment was undertaken by the landscape architects of the First Prize team, and the architect who drew up the Third Prize Scheme, John Lyle.

SOURCE: Ontario Archives, John Lyle Collection.

The most prominent entrance to the city was from the northwest along the Toronto-Hamilton highway as it passed along a narrow stone ridge — Cauchon's "Causeway" — into the city. The height of the ridge above the water on both sides and the view it gave of the city made it a potentially dramatic entrance; the presence of gravel pits, shacks, and billboards made it in reality quite dismal. Development of the area had figured prominently in all Harbour Boulevard plans. Construction of the Toronto-Hamilton highway from 1914 to 1922 increased pressure for improvements to this entrance and in 1927, after resisting recommendations from the TPB for years, the City Council transferred its land in the area to the BPM. Within months an architectural competition had been announced, "open to British subjects resident in Canada" for the aesthetic improvement of the Northwest Entrance. Noulan Cauchon was approached at McQuesten's request for advice on planning the competition, but declined the opportunity to serve as a judge so that he could submit an entry instead.³³

Implementation of the plan was carried out as a relief project and involved extensive reshaping of the ridge. At the height of the work in 1931 - 1932, it was one of the largest relief projects in the city. The final plan created terraces, lookout points, a monumental High Level Bridge, a sunken Japanese garden, and a rock garden created by reshaping a former gravel pit with 500 tons of rock trucked from across the city.

The creation of two large natural parks at opposite ends of the city demonstrated a deft interweaving of opportunity and planning by McQuesten and Langs. In the west end, 377 acres of land and water lots were transferred to the municipality in 1927 and thence to the BPM in payment of \$200,000 in back taxes by the ambitious, influential, and foundering McKittrick Properties.³⁴ The deal certainly worked to the benefit of the business interests involved, but together with the new Chedoke Civic Golf Course, also gave the BPM a foothold in the western portion of the park belt envisioned by Cauchon. This foothold was expanded later in the year with a purchase of 26 acres in the middle of the Chedoke Creek Valley.

Two years later the BPM began the acquisition of land in the area marked by Cauchon as the eastern portion of the park belt, the Red Hill Creek Valley. Whereas the transfer of McKittrick land had been engineered and approved by municipal politicians, the proposed purchase at Albion Mills where Red Hill Creek dropped over the escarpment sparked considerable opposition. In normal circumstances, money required for park purchases was raised through debentures formally approved by the Board of Control. Yet when in March, 1929, the Board was presented by McQuesten with the request of \$149,000 for the purchase and improvement of 645 acres at Albion Mills, it refused, prompting the first test of the BPM's independence. The issue was complicated by the fact that the land was a careful assembly of six sepa-

rate properties. Circumventing the Board of Control, the BPM applied for the debenture directly to City Council, but was met after a long delay by a formal motion opposing the purchase.³⁵

The Council had not simply opposed the purchase, but had commissioned a report by its solicitor and municipal staff into the authority and limits of the BPM. In response, the BPM increased its requisition to \$198,000 through the addition of 20 acres, engaged its own solicitor to handle the transaction, and dropped plans for an already agreed upon transfer of 70.5 acres of harbourfront land to the municipality for industrial development.³⁶ The staff report vindicated the BPM by showing that the purchase would still leave total holdings within the 2,000 acre limit set under the Public Parks Act. A letter from BPM chairman C.V. Langs confirmed that financing of the purchase would also be within the BPM's 1 mill share of the municipal budget. City Council was left with no alternative but to approve the debenture. The BPM immediately granted the SAC a right of way to extend Mountain Brow Boulevard eastward, began reforestation of the property, and announced plans for the creation of lakes through dams as envisioned in Cauchon's "Reconnaissance Report."³⁷

At issue in the Albion Mills purchase was the question of the BPM's financial appetite. While Linda Martin describes the 1920s as "lean times" for urban park development in Canada, the ten years since 1919 had seen a doubling of BPM land to 1,040.5 acres; Albion Mills raised this to 1,707 acres, making the Hamilton park system one of the largest in the country.³⁸ The BPM budget had been doubled with the 1921 increase of the mill rate and doubled again in the following decade, a rate of increase greater than the increase in municipal funding, and maintained by increasing revenues from park rentals and concessions. The expansion and development of park lands had necessitated borrowing almost \$1,200,000 at a time when the BPM was already committed to spending over half of its budget on the servicing of debts assumed in 1922. Through policy and force of circumstance, the BPM had rapidly increased both its holdings and its appetite for money, a park development which clearly aggravated municipal politicians who preached economy. By continually incurring long term debts, the BPM ensured that its mill rate could not be reduced, even though a ½ mill appropriation would have been nearly sufficient to cover expenditures on simple maintenance throughout the 1920s and could well have been brought in by budget cutting municipal councillors. Forcing the city's hand through ingenious financial manipulation by members well versed in civic politics demonstrated the vital difference in power between the administrative BPM and the defunct advisory TPB. In a similar vein, the creation by the BPM of the Royal Botanical Gardens in 1941 as a separate, land-owning body could be seen as a means of circumventing the 2,000-acre statutory limit on city parks. The RBG had all the markings of a subsidiary holding company: it was deeded land by the

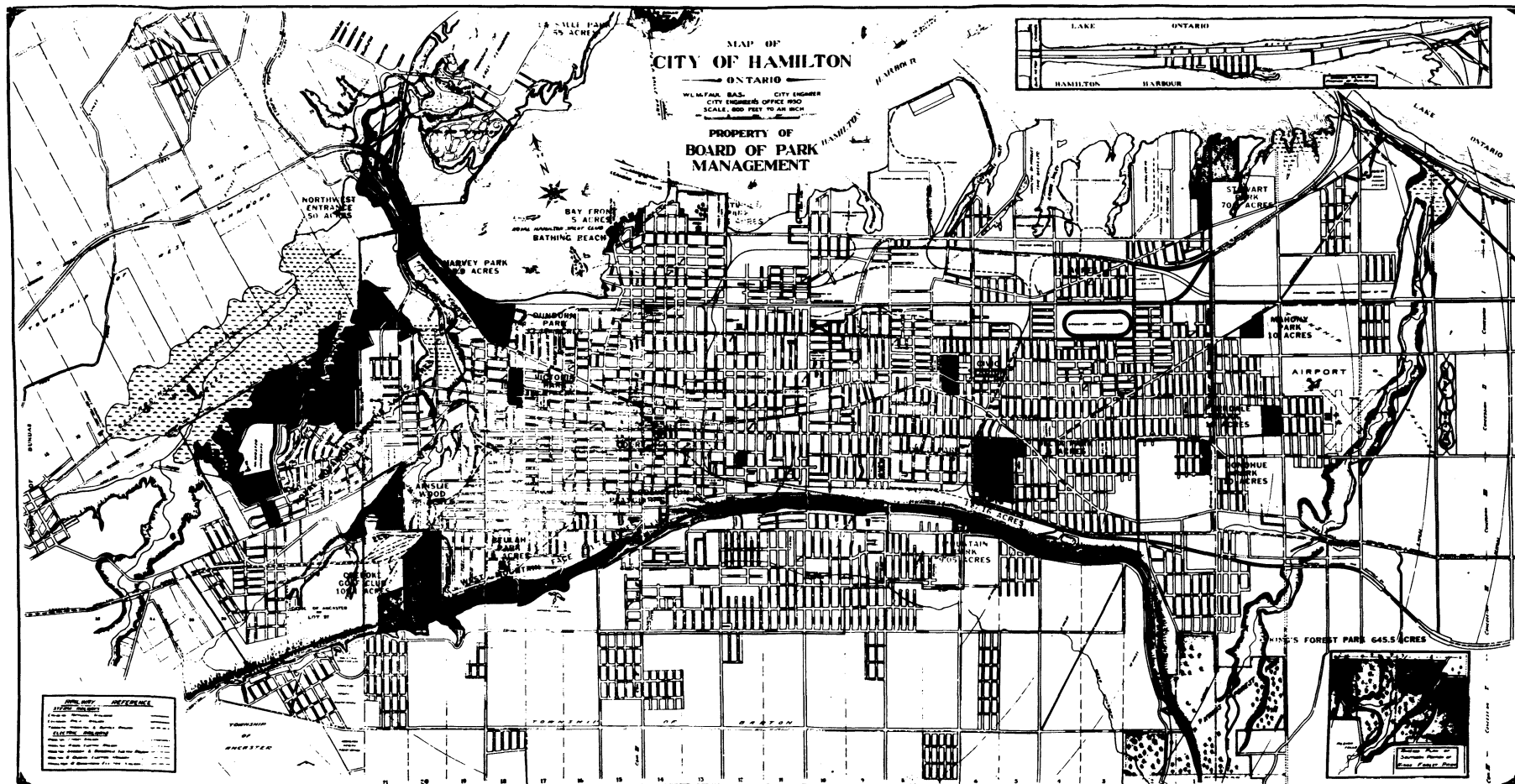


FIGURE 4. Map illustrating Board of Park Management holdings in 1930.

SOURCE: Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections

BPM, it was chaired by BPM members McQuesten and Langs, and it quickly expanded beyond its legally circumscribed parent, due in part to land transfers from the Department of Highways authorized by the provincial Minister of Highways, T.B. McQuesten. By 1948, the BPM held 1,630 acres and the RBG 1,800.

In her study of town planning efforts in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Elizabeth Bloomfield emphasizes the importance of "the interaction between outside planners and the local community." Two succeeding plans, active planning advocates, and the consultative methods of Thomas Adams and Horace Seymour made the interaction in Kitchener-Waterloo particularly open and led to the adoption of a politically realistic town plan and zoning by-law which exemplified in modified form the priorities of the City Efficient. In the different political circumstances of Hamilton, Ontario, the interaction was shorter and more restricted, and the results less congruent with the current ideals of the planning profession.³⁹ Following the goals of the major local boosters of the planning movement as they were frustrated within and fulfilled outside of the Town Planning Board gives a different view of the role of the planner and the success of the movement than might be assumed by focusing on the professional and institutional vehicles of planning alone. On the surface, Hamilton's experience with city planning paralleled that of many other Canadian cities: a movement born of boosterist enthusiasm, established in the form of an advisory board of citizens and politicians, fertilized by a professional report incorporating current ideals and conventional panaceas, and stifled in the *laissez faire* and economist atmosphere of post-war civic politics. On close examination, the movement was propelled past its boosterist inception by a small number of activists who ensured that their particular interests were included in the consultant's report and who abandoned the Town Planning Board when it became clear that its usefulness as a vehicle for those interests was limited, leaving an uninfluential rump of true believers to oversee the expression and demise of their ideals. The very real problem of political opposition to city planning was then circumvented by those activists whose concentration on a particular, limited aspect of planning was better achieved through administrative bodies such as the Suburban Area Commission and particularly the Board of Park Management, which possessed the legislated authority denied the TPB by the Hamilton City Council's refusal to turn the advisory body into a Planning Commission under the Planning and Development Act. As a result, those parts of Cauchon's "Reconnaissance Report" which were implemented in some modified form were the parts for which the professional planner was least responsible and in which the TPB was least involved.

Ironically, the implemented parts of the Cauchon plan would be classed under the City Beautiful rather than the City Efficient phase of the national planning movement. If, as Van Nus has suggested, professional planners adopted

"efficiency" for political as well as professional purposes, it can be argued that local beautification advocates with more experience, influence, and access to local politics simply adopted different tactics in pursuit of goals judged "outdated" by advocates of efficiency among professional planners. This suggests that it is necessary to look both beyond professional planners to trace the content of local, commissioned plans, and beyond the fate of local planning boards to judge the relative success or failure of either beautification or efficiency planning. In local Hamilton politics, the City Beautiful and City Efficient emphases were not sequential but co-existing phases of the broader planning movement. A brief union was achieved with the formation of the Town Planning Board and expressed in Noulan Cauchon's reports — which, with their adoption of local causes, combine both emphases — but unravelled as it became clear by 1923 - 1924 that systematic town planning for efficiency was politically and economically unacceptable to municipal politicians. Unlike zoning, beautification schemes did not challenge the existing pattern of land development. In the case of boulevards, they more often could be shaped to fit into the drive to improve the city's image in the eyes of automobile-borne tourists. In either form, they were labour intensive projects suitable as relief work. Further, challenges over their costs could be deflected when the plans were undertaken through the agency of bodies whose administrative powers and budgets were dependent on provincial legislation rather than the municipal council's will. The Board of Park Management's successful resistance of municipal efforts to curb its expansion showed that given the right advocates and conditions, the City Beautiful might be more politically attainable than the City Efficient.

NOTES

In citing works in the notes, short titles have generally been used. Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

HPL Hamilton Public Library (Special Collections)

MBPM Minutes of the Board of Park Management

MCC Minutes of City Council

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16. 1922 MCC p. 280, [11/4/1922]; p. 874, [24/10/1922]; p. 877; 881, [31/10/1922].
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22. 1924 MCC p. 161, [26/2/1924]; p. 264, [8/4/1924]; *Hamilton Spectator*, 23 April 1926; 16 October 1926.
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