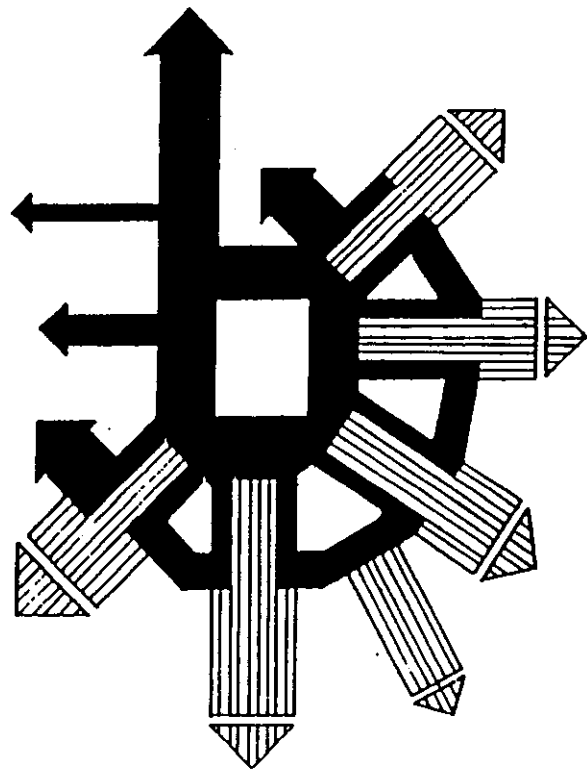


PATHS AS A POSITIVE FORCE

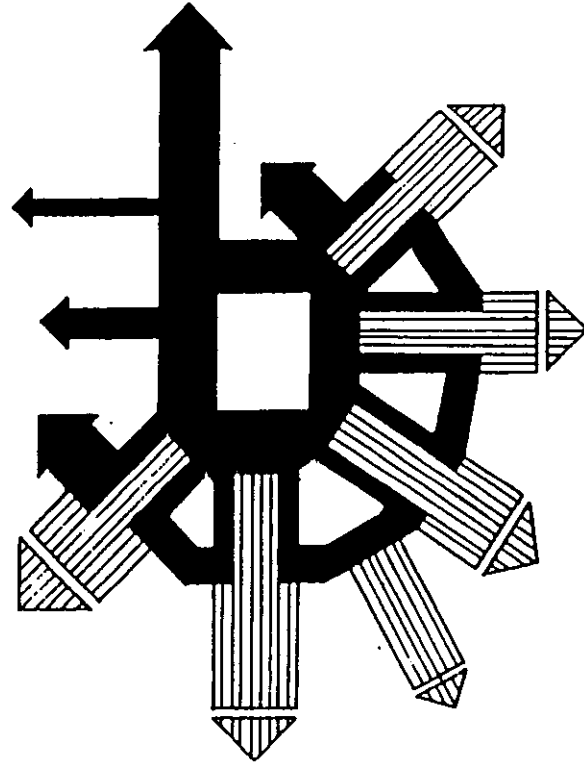
IN
ARCHITECTURAL CITY PLANNING



BY JOSEPH K. FISCHER

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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

JOSEPH K. FISCHER

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IN

ARCHITECTURAL CITY PLANNING

ARCHITECTURAL DEGREE PROGRAM THESIS DESIGN

THESIS DESIGN COMMITTEE

Andrew Seager, Professor of Architecture, Thesis Studio Critic

Robert Barnstone, Faculty Member, Thesis Critic

Raymond Ogle, Architect, Thesis Consultant

PROJECT : DESCRIPTION / PROGRAM

Using the historical and physical data of the city of Rensselaer, Indiana, I will use paths as a force for reorienting the open space in the city redefining the relationships between buildings and the street and reinforcing the lost but still important connections the city needs between it's most significant institutions.

Documents produced would constitute a "visionary" replanning of the city to be used as an intellectual tool to stimulate dialogue and educate the people of Rensselaer.

To my mother
and our shared
love of life in
small towns.

Acknowledgements

Several people have aided me with their expertise. All or part of this work was read or reviewed by Andy Seager, Robert Barnstone, Frank H. Fischer, Ray Ogle, and Mary H. Fischer, all of whom made significant constructive suggestions which improved the volume.

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INTRODUCTION

I have redeveloped and reconstructed the city of Rensselaer, Indiana. In doing so I may have displaced a number of people for which I feel compelled to to extend my sincerest apololgies. Like many academic studies the gulf between reality and my drawing paper has no boundaries. I was doing an exercise designed to reveal significant meanings in the production of architecture, by reconfiguring the compositional structure of the city of Rensselaer. I must say that your city has charms and unique opportunities architectually, many of which may be lost to you by your every day existance and familiarity with the city. To my regret few of these amenities touch directly on my thesis and as such are not addressed in this work.

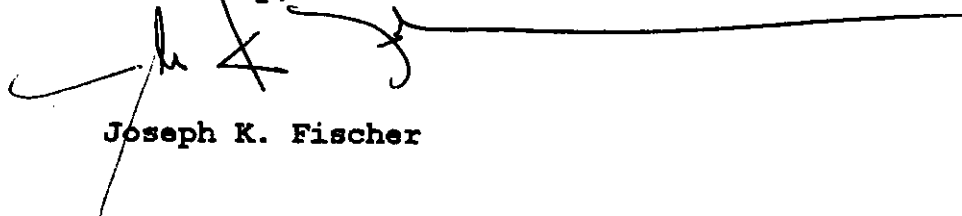
I used Rensselaer to explore the "path" as a positive force in architecture, planning, and in our lives. The work presented herein is a recording of the lessons I drew from an architectural study of your city. Path, it should be noted, has two distinct meanings by definition, both of which hold

profound influence over architectural design. Path is a term that architects commonly use in it's simplest root meaning, "....a track usually made by foot travel, or a way or track in which anything moves". In architecture and planning, this is most often refered to as "circulation" and is used to organize buildings or cities from a functional point of view. A portion of this work was to elevate the organizational function of the path in the city to a more profound level. Path becomes the subtle but real connection of meaningful elements of the city to help solidify an image of the city and generate a stonger and more easily grasped architectural planning goal for Rensselaer in the future. This brings me to the second meaning of paths, "... a way or course of life or thought". Where understanding path as an architectural planning tool is valuable, understanding path as a description of a common course of thought in society is potentially more powerful tool for planning.

For all of the Urban theories that are available, all of the planning stratagies, all of the professional expertize that money can buy, I must confess that my conclusion led me to believe that change in our cities must start elsewhere. It is the committment and singleness of mind and purpose with which

you apply yourselves to your jointly held goals that will in fact produce results. The success of anyone's efforts in planning is ultimately the simplicity and rationality of the goal weighed against the strength of commitment to achieve order and meaning in our lives. Successful architectural creation, at any time in history, is a measure of the strength of the builder's character.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph K. Fischer', is written over a long horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.



River Walk

Part I

The Importance Of The Social Contract To The City

It has become a favorite American pastime to decry the American city and to ignore the plight of the city, as if it were a dying institution. It is a common response to not coping with our problems. The state of our cities is in flux and as such should not be judged as either good or bad but rather in need of direction. This is a fine but important distinction. Positive suggestions as to how we can meet some of the challenges may seem trite, but problems are most effectively solved by a strong, simple conceptual foundation and the discipline over a span of many years to adhere to the tenets of the foundation. Architects would not list this as a skill on a job application but in fact are basically trained for exactly this kind of problem solving. We have an aptitude for starting and finishing long range building problems without losing site of the original intent.

Actually, for the first time in the history of man, there is a reasonable possibility that within several generations our

cities physical problems can be almost completely resolved. Increase in national and/or individual resolve could mean the virtual elimination of the "ugly" American City. As a national investment the preservation and controlled growth of our physical plant is imperative. We are are not an expanding nation any longer, although our economy is still based on those rules. Simply stated we need to look inward and begin to see our cities as alive and well five hundred years from now as well as today. Whether we achieve this in the year 2050 or 2100, or if we will be living in beautiful or in ugly cities in America, depends largely on the strength of of the vision and the moral tie we make with that vision. Debates as to the goals we set for ourselves and how we go about trying to reach them, are of no value unless our human dignity and moral values are rewarded by the acheivement of these goals. The promise of salvation was most effective when it was coupled with a strong vision of hell. It is possible that we need a stronger vision of hell in order to create a

strong drive to attain salvation. This is not the realm of the institutional government, but rather the responsibility of individuals of persuasive intellect.

Never in history have we had a greater challenge and a greater opportunity to prepare a society for a shift in social, moral and economic speed. Never have we been in more of a position to bungle it and fragment the pieces of our society. Cities are a reflection of the state of our societal health. A fragmented and disjointed or self-centered belief system results in a fragmented and disjointed city. The power of the city is at it's height when the institutions of the city are capable of representing deep and meaningfully important, cultural and social beliefs. The Church at the center of the middle ages European city is not always respected, but the underlying moral tenats are still valid, thus defining a daily commitment to the dignity of man.

The county courthouse at the center of middle American cities must be reinvested with the strong tenets of our democratic beliefs. Our Federal government's rapid expansion and faceless autonomous bureaucratic nature has robbed the county courthouse of it's ability to project the middle American moral and cultural personality. Renewal of the city in America is very much a part of the struggle between government and the right of citizens. Citizens will begin to feel the need to identify closely with a local community; one to defend themselves from an overwhelming Federal Government, or two, to reorganize as the Federal Government recedes in power.

America should work to be the world pioneer in peace time urban redevelopment for two reasons: first cities have grown so fast that the need for considered and reasoned reorganization and physical planing is greater than it ever has been, second we have the financial and technical means to

do the job if we want to do it thus saving our communities the pain of social revolution discussed above by agreeing to concentrate our resources on the growth of a more permanent infrastructure on a local level. Put simply, we are not an expanding or colonizing nation, our industrial growth is slowing, and we are not at war. It may be time to take a lesson from our European forefathers and begin to set up house for a long time.

We can be proud of the fact that we have achieved the highest standard of living the world has ever known, and even have it within our grasp to eliminate our social upheavals. Traveling abroad in modern and ancient countries, democracies or dictatorships, impresses one with America's greater sense of social responsibility and respect for the dignity of the individual and equality of opportunity. This is both a value and a curse to our culture. Our sense of individual freedom does not allow for an over riding control of our environment,

In fact, we protect ourselves from the tyranny that often produces the single-minded strength and commitment needed to produce powerful city plans. We are the living example of the dreaded "decision making and plan by committee". The real damage however, is not the arriving at concenses, but rather the subtle manipulation of planning by the aspiring entrepenures in our society in the name of capitalism. This is another firmly held American cultural belief that results in an inability to successfully control our environment. America has some very difficult decisions to make, and those decisions are deeper and more profound than the laws we pass. They are the kind of decisions around which successful laws are written.

The "ugly" American city seems to be universal. All human settlements have an over crowded, used, or trashy aspect. As far as American cities are concerned we are, esthetically speaking, pretty insensitive. We are ready to accept littered

highways, rusty old auto junk yards, unsightly and unnecessary utility wires and poles in front of our most beautiful buildings. There are screaming billboards and gaudy neon signs, dilapidated and deteriorating residential and commercial slums with out seeming to seriously challenge the fact that it does not have to be this way. If we do not do something about it, our cities of the future will be even less fit to live in. We can run away from the ugliness of the city, but the suburbs will deteriorate even faster than the city. It was a weakness inherent in our pioneer expansion mentality. We must make our cities clean first of all. Then we need to preserve and strengthen the physical plant, and lastly we need to build with permanance until the cities are once again full. This is not a short term "urban renewal project", as we know them from the "new deal" and "the great society" as promised by the expanding Federal Government. It is a committment to an improved human dignity, like agreeing

to behave in public with good manners. This is the fundamental difference between European society and American. We rebelled against the "High Society" of European culture because of the class structure. Having won our revolution, we celebrated by extending unprecedented freedoms to ourselves. As noted several times above, these freedoms are stumbling blocks to some of our goals. We must not give up our freedoms at any cost. Hence the planning of the cities of the future must start with a willingness of the local citizens in a city to socially and personally enforce the restraint required to behave toward our common causes with a human dignity and a singleness of purpose. This is done by simplifying the codes or laws under which we live in common. We start by being able to judge what is beneficial and what is superficial what is fundamentally an offense to our society to be forbidden and what will not be tolerated and what is acceptable. It is a clear understanding that more rules are not needed.

Our cities are unfortunately, for the most part, not things of beauty. They are not restful places to live in. We have patched them up here and there, trying to cure some specific problem. We have had little or no success over-all with plans to create a city for people. A city of which we can be truly proud . As cities move into the future, they could become more beautiful and more livable if every American becomes interested in doing something about the world past their door step and windshield.

Our approach unfortunately has often been too piecemeal and fragmented. We have allowed large amounts of tax money to be spent in the name of urban renewal. The projects' motives are often unclear. The connection to long range planning is non existent and most damaging is the American short attention span. Americans are impatient and getting even more so. A fault in our society, highlighted by the current American credit card crises, is a desire to spend now to

gratify our perceived needs rather than move slowly to accumulate possessions over a span of generations. As an active participant in the architectural and construction industry I am shocked in the escalation in the last twenty years of impatience. We move faster demand and promise more, discard more and believe we can change plans, without losing sight of our goals, in midstream at an alarming rate.

We must become aware of and do something more to shape the American city of the future in a way we can be proud of. A warning to the builders and planners, yours can not merely be an interest in building things after somebody else makes up the decision. Your interest likewise has to go far beyond the disinterested providers of service. You should have an active hand based fortunately on an enlightened self interest in all community problems as citizens as well as technicians. We as groups have to sign the social contract

first and promise to raise the dignity of human life. We must not support selfishness.

The problems of our American cities can not be solved by government action, Federal state or local. Most of these efforts are struggling for lack of a unifying plan into which their efforts can be channelled. Historic preservation of buildings is an important aspect of the citie's future. It often operates under selfish motivations, denying property rights to individuals and making urban growth unattractive through over regulation. This comes when a self promotional special interest is allowed to participate in setting goals for the future. The same is true of all of our city insitutions, private or public, they are not working in concert. This then should become the battle front of the average citizen.

A conceptual plan must be agreed upon, and reasoned on the real strength of character in the community. The citizens must be allowed to arbitrate the actions of the bureaucratic institutions which we have empowered in our communities to represent and implement the city's plan. All proposals for additions to the city involving the city plan should be reviewed and recommended for acceptance or rejection by the existing authorities, and then considered by a citizen's review board for appropriateness to the goals of the city's visionary plan. Acceptance by this board changes the plan. Rejection is final and public. This is bureaucratically acceptable form of the tyranny.

Essentially the city, as we know it, is over 5,000 years old. Until recently, however, with few exceptions, there was a limit to the size and functions of the city. The medieval walled city was a complete, compact unit. It served a useful protective function for its citizens, and it could be

strategically located and remain useful as long as it did not grow too fast or was not destroyed by war or fire. Buildings were built to last, and a sort of natural urban renewal, a process of replacement and repairs, kept the city from getting too run down.

The industrial revolution changed all this. The world's population has trebled in the last century and will continue to rise rapidly in the century ahead. Technological advances no longer make it necessary to keep the majority of our population on the land raising food and fiber. Automobiles make it possible to live and work at far distant points and live in metropolitan cities or their suburbs. Unfortunately, our political organizational units of local, state, and federal government have not yet adjusted to this fact. Rurally oriented state and federal legislatures and provincially minded local governments have not faced up to the realities of what needs to be done if life in our cities

is to be natural, or normal. The Indiana corn farmer is infinitely better represented politically than his more numerous middle income city cousins. The federal government has paid out more in crop subsidies than it has for all its urban renewal and housing programs put together.

We have made great progress in housing in this county where over sixty per cent of our families have bought or are buying their own homes. This tends to assure a stable society, political moderation, and a respect for individual dignity and opportunity. We can not be as proud, though, of the fact that with all our progress, the census reveals that one-fifth of our housing is in a dilapidated or deteriorating condition, and we offer almost no alternatives to the single family house.

Not all our slums are in housing. American cities have all too many deteriorating commercial and industrial properties

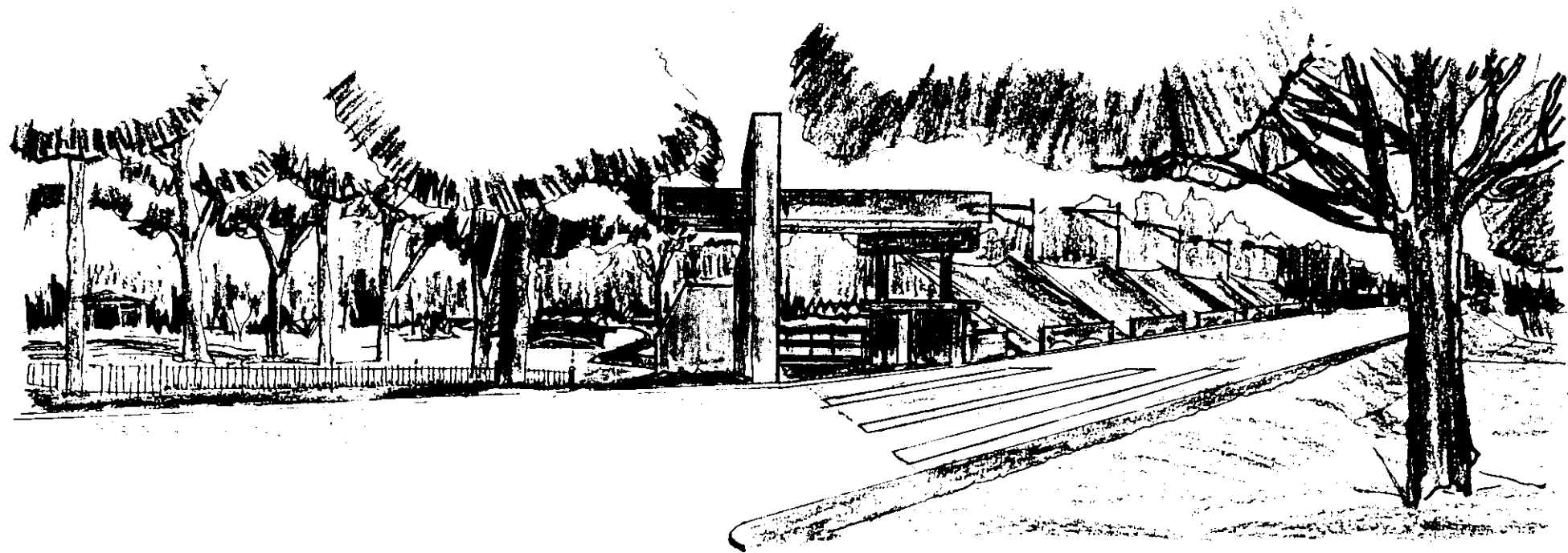
and parcels of improperly used land. From that point of view slums are not just a big city problem, but represent the bulk of our deteriorating middle American towns. Haphazard strip zoning, fringe areas, abandoned industrial plants and the absence of, or lack of, enforcement of proper building and housing codes, have resulted in serious problems. Rapid unplanned growth in our American cities and land speculation have contributed heavily to developing slums by causing artificial increases in land values in some areas and devastating loss of value in the traditional city centers.

We can afford the cost of the mortgage to pay for the reconstruction of our cities if our capital expenditures are justified by a long range commitment to our goals, and second a commitment to build with permance. Wasteful and inefficient construction, characterized by buildings which need substantial new capital improvements in less than fifty years mean that we are still paying interest when we have to

remortgage our city. If the expenditures were made over a longer period of time, and attention was paid to the quality of construction with an eye to longevity, we would be allowed to repay our mortgages, and the building trades would go from being one of the most wasteful industries in our societies to one of the least, almost overnight. This is the kind of shift of mind set that must occur in our society. We are still a wealthy nation, but it is not impossible for us to bankrupt ourselves.

We must reinforce our efforts to renew the central core of our cities. A tree with an unhealthy trunk is dying. It is essential to start the process of a cultural change as an approach to initial planning to select a meaningful and powerful source of past cultural potency. Define the path, beginning and ending the path with natural generators of activity and social significance. Construct and elaborate the path and the components of the path as time and resources

will allow. Make the maintenance of the path and the uses of the spaces along the path a source of community pride; a thing to be cherished and respected. As time goes by and the value of land rises and the importance of the center is reestablished the center can begin to reach out and connect other nodal centers. In stable communities the plan will eventually become mostly maintenance and replacement. In growing cities the struggle to fulfill the plan will go on until the community reaches its natural comfortable population base, as fixed by any community's supply of natural resources (water, drainage, industrial and commercial potential...ect).



Future Xavier Park

Part II

The Importance Of City Planning To The City

Those who are familiar with American midwestern cities are well aware of the relentless grid imposed by the rapid expansion west. Often a closer look reveals unique variations found in the individual grid layouts. Some cities are orderly, well-planned, and visually delightful with a strong feeling of unity, a relation of parts to the whole, of past to present, of buildings to open space, reflecting a thoughtful and tasteful response to internal and external pressures of change and growth in their history. Others, with a random placement of buildings and appurtenances, appear to result from little or no planning, but instead a hurried response to an immediate need or pressure, an accidental incident in the plant expansion program of the city rather than a carefully calculated move. It's an esthetic confusion like a shop window into which objects for sale have been thrown pell-mell, giving no pleasure to passerby and making it hard to notice anything in particular.

Midwestern American cities were built with an early enthusiasm for the neo-classic and a profound spirit found in the ecelectic architecture from the civil war to the turn of the century. The word city, derived from the latin word meaning citizenship, aptly describes the nature of political order to social order found in America. The city has become the center of traditional living values and the ongoing drama of many distinctive, esoteric customs of everyday life. As a physical and social environment it exists solely as a highly advanced state of social organization for the enrichment of human life. It is too late for the human race to retire to the nomadic life of our ancestors. As a setting for human activity, the city should no doubt strive to be a convenient efficient place to labor, live, and learn. The physical environment of the cities natural setting; buildings, roads, utilities, and landscape, is a envelope encasing the residents. In its ultimate state of protective enclosure it insulates them effectively and efficiently from the

vicissitudes of weather, creating when possible; 1) a congenial micro-climate of cooling shade where there is sun and heat and of warming sun where there is chill, 2) it should dispel or mitigate the obtrusive annoyance of unwanted, thought-disturbing noise, 3) it should promote personal safety in removing or reducing to a minimum vehicular traffic encounters by providing attractive pedestrian places. We should strive to furnish the city with it's greatest asset, a harmonious setting, individually wrought from the land. Treating the city's social environment as a suspension fluid. Making unaggressive movement of residents within the envelope possible. Unlike the physical environment, which is discernable and can be viewed and measured, the social environment is an experience and not so easily unraveled and evaluated or manipulated directly. Both the setting and the social environment exert a strong influence upon the mental and physical health of the residents everyday life.

Whether the forces of growth and change that shape the environment and effect the day to day activity of institutions in the city are to be permitted, made spontaneously possible, or encouraged and actively supported is one of many perplexing problems and choices to be encountered by today's city administrators in charting the future course of the city. One thing, however, is certain. These forces cannot long be resisted or ignored. Every city is dedicated to continuity and growth: it is established, fostered, and diligently maintained as an enduring institution never to be permitted to die.

Along with enduring indefinitely, the city is also expected to grow unceasingly, keeping abreast of changes in the social order and the hierarchies of a uniquely American shifting of power authority based on the wielding of wealth and influence. This requires changing organically to meet the

pressure and need of specific situations, resolutely shunning the taint of internal stagnation, yet always remaining a stable entity, firmly rooted to the past and the present. If science, the truth of the physical world from the depth of the seas to last star in the expanding universe is the goal of our culture and the destiny of mankind, then the monastery and cathedral give way to the schools of higher learning and so it goes with the market giving way to the shopping center, cottage industry giving way to the industrial estate, arterial highway and urban mass to the rural settings of our past, ect. Our cities are repositories of the conduct of our society and the architecture of the city weighs heavily in symbolic significance as a statement of value and depth of character in our culture.

Today, as always, there are slow but powerful changes taking place in the city. Changes due to shifts in population and the perception of the seats of power and authority and an

expanding knowledge in scientific and technological development, all necessitates change. Changing social conditions growing out of our rapid urbanization of the last 150 years has created a dependency on government, replacing self reliance. If, in responding to the pressures caused by these changes, the city is to be something more than a chaotic collection of buildings on a parking lot, serving no one conveniently or adequately. Then there is a compelling and immediate need to review and re-examine the city plan as a physical set-up for tomorrow's activity, and as a framework of effort-design to obtain the maximum use of physical plant and funds, so that needless duplication, false starts, and waste can be avoided.

As a graphic, two-dimensional representation of an external physical environment, the city plan is not only an accurate map of the existing physical plant but often falls short as a guide to the future organization of the city, failing to

reflect proposed aims, aspirations, functions, and activities, or documenting the cities dedication to continuity and growth. What objectives merit consideration as design criteria against which alternatives can be studied and checked to anticipate the needs of future city activities? What yardstick shall we use to measure how well a master plan will serve the city in meeting the perplexing problems that stem from the complexities and multiplicities of a dynamic social and physical environment?

No long-range plan of any value can be evolved until those who equally share the responsibility of guidance and planning, assume the initiative in determining the long-range objectives, instructional programs, financial policy, and methods of response to be used by the city in meeting specific pressure situations. They must determine by a comprehensive study of all the factors, by consultation of authority inside and outside of the city, by all the means

available to them, what physical plant and funds will be needed to accomplish the program adopted as city policy. The functional aspects of the city are influences which lend themselves easily to measurable surveys of space climate, geology and soil, utilities accessibility, direction of expansion, and peripheral physical and social influence. While control of them is not always readily available, the problems are generally apparent so that plans with alternatives can be made to anticipate and persuasively channel city expansion. Unraveling the cities philosophic goals is another matter. It is often an extremely difficult task, since they are never explicitly stated. Thus the type of functions and activities to be officially sponsored and supported, the balance between the wide variety of social pressures, levels, and controls require endless sensitivity. These major concerns must be decisively resolved whether by the mandate of a strongly centralized government or by the many voices of autonomous individuals, who in accordance with

convention and mores collectively make an assessment of the planning proposal.

It is often the nature of cities to be long lived non-profit, social organizations. Cities are generally limited in resources with little opportunity to accumulate a surplus capital hence dependent on philanthropy or government largess for expansion. City administrators planing for the future, determine how to grow and change. Physical city expansion, either new buildings for housing, or services, or business or alterations and addition to existing structures, is predicated on substantial and quite unpredictable change of economy. The pressure for a new facility exists long before financially it is feasible. Actual dates then as targets for an orderly arrangement of planning and building, while important, are considerably less important than a sequence of actions based more realistically on objectives and the availability of resources to reach them. Since

change, due to internal or external pressure or of fluctuations in the cities financial position that make response to the need possible or impossible, may occur rapidly or slowly , time in terms of planning may be actually compressed or expanded an indefinite, unforeseen amount. Hence, with our predictive apparatus being what it is, we are ill-equipped to predict change. Specifically we may recognize trends, forecast movements and fluctuation, but even these, not in a sequence of time. Opportunity, choice contingency, and courses of action must be arranged without a time reference and with out a precise selection of course. Actually the unknown becomes a criterion of planning.

Since the future city is to be built on the past and the present, and since the relationship and dependency of city activity and city structure must exist harmoniously for a long period of time, the most promising approach to city planning lies in a system of selective change. This may be

based on a changing emphasis on the organization of parts as their importance relates to what is currently being developed. In this way a rush of change may be met without destroying physical plant or resources and can be parried to adopt change to existing structure or existing structure to be made to meet the change. No plan should contemplate wasting an existing structure; planning means more than replacement. Each building should be a permanent social and cultural attachment and should remain as a cultural contribution to the city, if necessary to be developed and redeveloped to suit entirely new purposes. Only, if necessary, are surface accouterments to be considered less permanent. The task of planning is to provide for substantial new additions into a mature and established landscape in such a way that new functions and new structures can be absorbed without disrupting the old scale, the previous rhythm and balance. Change eased into the site by osmosis can be more easily absorbed than by eruption. A

modification or deviation in the character of the architecture, even a radical departure in style, could be acceptable if the city's fabric is held together by fifty-year old trees.

At a macro-scale, the city may be understood as the paramount web of paths, tying together the elements; institutions, cores, systems of roads, utilities, and open and recreational landscaping. At this scale the city plan reflects the idea of a maximum envelope of development amounting to a scheduling of land and building units to be developed and an arranged schedule for perimeter penetrations in an ordered sequence. It reveals long range developments without necessarily committing administrators to follow an exact perimeter, use a specific land parcel or prevent revisions in short term planning, as need or decision dictate. However, on the micro-scale, the path incorporates elements of planned persuasion, networks of roads, and utilities. Landscaped

centers act as a reminder to future city administrators to occupy areas already developed and intended for use, and often force the the attachment of significant structures to the most active of paths.

Whether it is a small town, or the urban scale of a larger city, or a series of harmoniously joined neighborhoods, or the shopping center subdivision sprawl, each in it's own way, is isolated by roads, planted buffers, agricultural or industrial plants. The major spacial form, the perceptual quality and collective identity of the city, should be determined in advance to clearly express and unalterably preserve the unique character and personality of the city. City building form should depend solely on criteria of structure imposed by the site and function of the building.

Predictability of the structure of paths and related spaces is conferred by, 1) marked locational rhythms of land and

buildings, 2) by circulation patterns, 3) systems of roads and certain traffic movement, 4) to identify direction and to afford a sequence of views as the observer passes through, 5) and by open landscaped areas that provide a variety of spaces, open friendly, inviting. These, as built in stabilizers, may be used to keep the plan on a long run course, preventing it from bending before every change in economic emphasis or administrative policy. More importantly if bent, the plan can be permitted to recover and resume its predetermined direction. People inevitably wish to see what is being decided, and decide most things in view of the present and not the future, city building as opposed to city planning. The path offers a more welcome and better understood method of giving a understandable and persuasive character to particular places. At once efficiently and beautifully adopting the land to human use and as servant to architecture, adds luster to the buildings and offers an environment to integrate various architectural styles. A

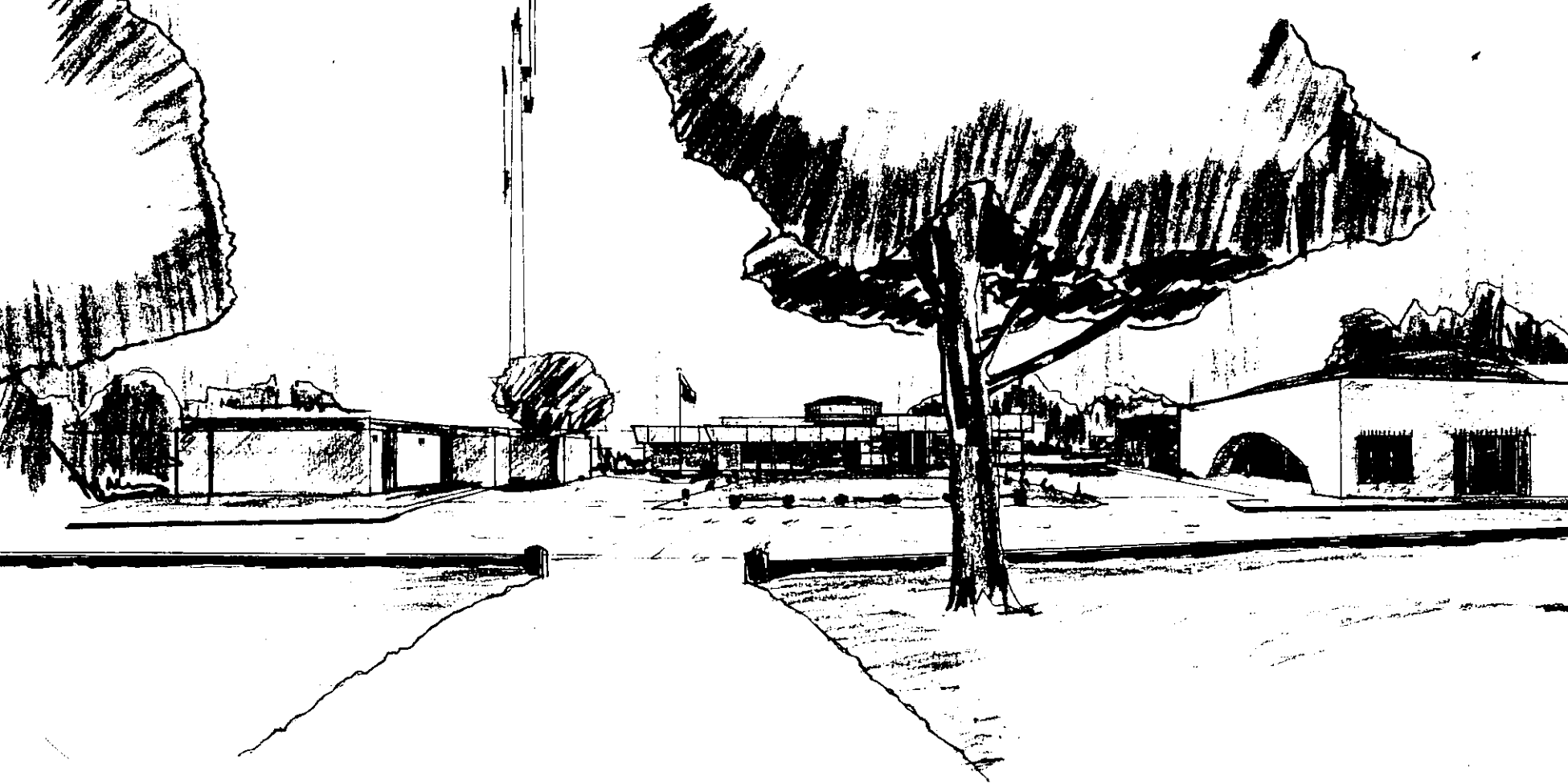
layout of the major landscaping, using dominant plant types, large specimens or concentrations, can unmistakably mark out paths and it's key nodal points, but it must be carefully and specifically anticipated well in advance of the actual land use. This will achieve a powerful effect on aesthetics. While it resembles architectural three dimensional art, landscaping differs in that it deals not with concrete, brick and stone, but with living growing material, some of which may scarcely reach full maturity in a life time. Whereas even the most ambitious projects of architecture and sculpture can be realized in a few years. Still another aid in the process of form making to be used by skilled designers to obtain visual variety is the principle of the unity of opposites: the vertical versus the horizontal, quiet versus active space, shady versus sunny, grassy versus paved, open versus tight. The unity of opposites is the balance in an aesthetic composition that comes not from a static but a dynamic arrangement of abstracted opposit that are unlike

and unequal, but always in equilibrium and expressed as seen along the path from event to event, resulting in control.

Contemplated in the plan should be the establishment of symbolic, permanent places of psychic or utilitarian value. Places to build and create visual messages reinforces the use of the city. Functional and symbolic gateways should mark entrances to landscaped centers, parks or piazza. The city needs clearly expressed confluences, traffic intersection or pedestrian crossing. The city must plan for landscaped details of striking individuality, using shelters, pavilions, terraces, walls, fences, statuary, fountains, pools, basins, and other architectural and sculptural features. All these enrich the environment immeasurably, encourage social contact or insure privacy, and provide an indispensable continuity of association. People need a feeling of immutable permanence in their cities despite the surface changes of architecture or landscape.

Work is required to forestall the restrictions and conformity of final arrangements that lead to frustration. Resulting ultimately in disinterest in the intent of any master plan. The criterion of flexibility asks that the long range plan be sufficiently flexible and maneuverable to permit unanticipated growth and change and the utilization of future wisdom and devices. The development of land use as an unfolding series of refining steps; in the land "manufacturing" processes from the first shaping of crude land to the ultimate forms of structure tailored to specific purposes should be general enough to permit a definable range or cycle of alternative uses. All forms, at any scale, should have varying degrees of incompleteness or susceptibility to successive additions and modifications. Each major land unit of the scheme and each major building should display at least one free edge open side to open land to allow for unanticipated dimensions without always

extending the perimeter or splintering facilities of similar function. Such a scheme will always have near land reserves and much needed open space. where the fixed order is necessarily limiting, alternatives should be provided elsewhere or nearby, perhaps even on a satellite city. Certainly, for the next fifty years, the city is to remain in a state of flux, spreading tentacles and undergoing minor skin grafts within the trunk. If it is to be truly dynamic, the city must depend for its power upon the generality and flexibility of its parts and upon locational rythms and balance of mass. A dynamic city, while controlled and stabilized, leaves many choices to be made by creative men in the future, for future visual form must rely in large measure on the skill of the designers of individual buildings to produce structures in harmony with their immediate neighbors.



Government Center

Part III

The Importance Of Path As A Focus For The City

The oriental bazaar, the medieval market place, the small-town drugstore and its neighbors, are old examples of a related collection of market shops. These are the same shopping /social centers that you will find all around the world and through out time and human culture. This is the fundamental role of the center of the city as we have known them traditionally. Cities/markets will carry on in all sizes for as long as man exists. The market is the end of many paths. It is often the most important of the activity centers in the city. The path to the market begins at the door of each house quite literally, in the city. Often, cities extend for many miles into the surrounding country sides, connected by paths. Paths, it should be understood, connect socially and architecturally significant features of the city. The more important the features of the city that the path connects the more used the path.

In the American city the path is a feature with it's own cultural adaptations. The City street grid being the most consistant city design feature. Adapted from the ancient garrison town model of the Romans and later the colonial powers, the grid was continued in America past it's colonial days as a readily subdivided unit for sale by land speculators. It also allows for America's democratic spirit to survive by giving everyone on the grid reasonably equal status and access to the institutions of the city.

Until the recent emergance of the shopping center, we had the supermarket, and the contemporary drug and dime store, prominate commercial features. The almost communal buildings of middle American cities, the anchor stores or draws as they would be known to the developer. None the less, their functions can basically be found in the oriental bazaar, the ancient Roman forum and Greek stoas, the Renaissance and medeivel square. The differences are in the subtle psuedo-

sophistication of a mechanized society. But, if you pull the plug on the power, it would not be long before the people of the city pushed their way past the automatic doors and the cashiers remember how to count change.

If paths that connect markets and other features of the city bringing people to the market are recognizable in cities around the world, then it is reasonable to assume that an understanding of paths would be a powerful force in architectural planning. By walking the market streets of the world and noting; what seems to be appealing, what seems to be distressing, what seems to be attractive, what seems to be repelling, perhaps a list of special elements, fixtures or features might be generated creating a valuable vocabulary for planning a successful city path. The creator of a successful physical cityscape should arm himself with a program of common physical realities and design axioms found in existing successful cityscapes. This list of common or

shared design axioms can be used in creating visionary reconstructions of the city, which making a tangible goal for the gradual long range improvement of the fabric of the city.

SPACE

It appears mandatory that the walking street should empty intermittently into very definitely articulated open spaces squares or the like. Yet the street itself, the passageways, the avenues, can be spatially quite narrow. This creates a sense of changing volumes. From long low passages into plazas which may actually be quite small but are perceived relative to the last volume experienced, quite vast by psychological contrast. Plazas must possess a sense of enclosure but does not need to be identified by any particular shape or size as such.

DIRECTION

The flowing of linear paths into broader open space must not lose the essential flow of the path. This is not to say that the path is static or singularly directional. Not only may the streets jog, meander or curve, but the architectural features must change and probably not be absolutely repetitive. The path should provide the controlled structure into which architectural features bordering on chaos are experienced as in context. Above all, to the pedestrian a quality of closeness must prevail on several sides. It is always better to crowd a space than to create unfillable expanses.

SCALE

As part of a fundamental planning strategy, the path must lead the pedestrian through a controlled set of arrested views. Our visual perspective should not be allowed to go anywhere near the horizon, particularly not in the midwestern plains states. As a rule of thumb, it could be shown that a

comfortable human focal length is six hundred to seven hundred feet, two city blocks. This is probably a maximum of unobstructed view. Constructing this view, which is not too long, which is partially obstructed, and which has a sense of changing scale, is the root of visionary architectural city planning. At the end of the path, visually, there must be a stop of vertical significance. Traditionally, in the European cities, found so charming by the American tourist, is the tower of the city's major church. This is rooted in European cities in a Renaissance city planning system allowing for increased open space in the crowded middle ages cities. This vertical emphasis seems to be a mandatory fixture, to which humans respond with positively. It is a useful tool for organization of the important nodes of a path and particularly at major changes of direction.

FORM

Architecture of the streets and the squares should be one of sympathetic individuality. Not only is there no need for it to be all the same, but conformance of the architectonic forms can be synonymous with monotony. On the other hand, an unusual change of styles, shapes, sizes, textures and so on, while it may help, may tend to be a deterrent as well. Since this is the realm of style and taste, and can be debated to no clear end, the final overall connecting architectural quality should, in most cases, be the quality of the building measured in terms of craftsmanship and form relative to intended use. The city should encourage high quality construction and uniqueness of purpose, avoiding the one size fits all buildings of the strip shopping centers of recent years.

CONTRAST

The use of sun, shade, and shadow is mandatory. The arcade is foolproof even if there is no tropical sun, as a matter

of fact whether it rains, snows or is sunny, the arcade or the awnings, parasols, or things of this kind become a medium for seasonal changing of patterns a built in sculptural mobile, as well as shelter. Water is an excellent city feature. Canals, lagoons fountains, are additions which have significant meanings to the history of the urban environment. Every city is founded on a source of water. It is the reason for virtually any viable city's continuation. This is followed closely by the historic importance and proximity of other civic elements. A view to the old town hall, for example, maybe a desirable connection to the social cultural past of the city. It does not have to be an intimate part, but it has to be near enough to imprint itself on one's consciousness. Touch of tradition exemplified in historic buildings significant, historic tradition is as a basis for city planing is often flawed, cities must grow change and rejuvenate themselves.

TEXTURE

A treatment of the ground or the pavement which helps control directional patterns is important. This has to do with building materials, lights, sculpture and so on, and the lesson here to be learned is to avoid a jungle of things yet a certain amount of variety should continue. It seems that many things can be added in terms of the floors, walls, and ceilings of the streets, as long as a sense of vitality in them some how remains. Activity is assured with the one paramount requirement of people. If we get all the sizes, shapes ages and colors that are usually required, then continuity and vitality will dominate all architectural features.

In the next section are a number of plan sketches which are intended to explore the relationship of the is list of design axioms to activities and the path. The rhythm of changing volumes and the meaningful connection of visual symbols is

paramount in these plan sketches of the city. It is well to note that there is some rationale behind their selection and the alterations to the city which are represented in them. The emphasis is on potential interaction between the pedestrian and the architectural features of the city. There are accompanying three dimensional visual impressionistic scenes which try to convey the quality of these areas or locations along the path. Whereas these are designed to be digested at a glance, the plan sketches, of course, must be studied to read into them the emphasis which are presumably brought out here.



Downtown

Part IV

Using The Path, Visionary Reconstructions of The City

Every city has a historic basis for it's existance, most commonly rooted , in America, in the exploitation of land for profit. European cities are often cited as more charming and urban. Ironically this more often than not stems from the monarchs, bishops or popes , dictators, forced visionary recostruction or reordering of the city. This is an American stumbling block. We abhor strong dictatorial control of our lives, but the capitalist entrepreneurial profit motive has no "pride of place". Visionary architecture is not a force in the democratic communities of America. Architects must fill this void. Communities must find ways to adopt a visionary plan for the future into the ongoing development of the city, and begin working toward the realization of these goals. Otherwise our midwestern cities will continue to unravel as the profit motive is allowed to continue using land as a cheap expendable natural resource. Rensselaer is no exception.

All urban areas are complex and interwoven fabrics, often it is difficult to see the Common thread that binds a town or village together. Let us begin then with a brief outline of the early history of the city of Rensselaer. This then is an effort to trace one thread from beginning to present. The expectation is that the story may give clues to help in the visionary planning. The effort is not to undergo urban renewal but to look for the existing strength in the city and build on them and creating a meaningful guide for making planning decisions in the future.

RENSSELAER

In 1834 Mr Yoeman struggles thru the lowland swamps with his apprehensive wife until they reach the rapids on the Rockwise or Iroquois river. The swamp and river are very plentiful with game. It is Mr Yoeman's intention to settle the area and layout and sell property in a new city next to the rapids. This land development and speculation is very popular

and successful way of generating a large wealth. Settling is hard work and the cabin remains unfinished through the winter. Upon the arrival of spring Mr. Yoeman leaves for an extended trip for this years supplies in his absents Mrs. Yoeman notes in her diary the arrival of native Indians as can be sell imagined she is less than pleased with her new neighbors. In fact she down right frightened. Her fears, as usually the case, are unfounded. The Iroquois tribe are fishing the rapids for food and offer her all of the fish that they do not want. the Indians had been fishing at the rapids in the spring for many years. Because of European settlers views on land development this is the very last we shall see of native Indians in this area.

Mr Yoeman's dream of developing a town at this location is ended by Mr. Van Rensselaer. A businessman from New Jersey who is having difficulty with his creditors. He engages in what was known as "floating". The Federal Government wanting

to be fair to the Native Indians give the land in the territories to the Indians by deed. The Federal Government then allows men like Van Rensselaer to buy the land through the Federal Government acting as agent for the Indian. Mr Yoeman was left with no option and buys the first lot from Mr. Van Rensselaer.

The city is layed out in a grid with one square devoted to the town hall. The grid still survives today as well as the townsquare and the original street names. Most of the street names are named for his wife. Not however to show his undying love but rather as a legal subtrafuge. He is after all bankrupt and as such may not hold property in his name. Obviously some development practices are older than we think.

The motive for this expansion is more obscure. Mr. Van Rensselaer being so frugal and being of dutch stock tried to control all aspects of trade and commerce in his new town.

Mr. Ivers goes into direct competition with Mr Van Rensselaer by laying out the city of Newton not more than One hundred yards from the city of Rensselaer. Mr. Ivers ploy did not work because prestige was in favor of the older town. In 1851 the town of Newton becomes Newtons addition.

By the 1850's the town contained three stores, two physicians, one lawyer and fifteen houses. It is the general opinion that the lack of progress is the result of high prices being charged for the property by Mr. Van Rensselaer. Another crises arises when the local mill must lie idle a good deal of the time. Another mill down the river is infringing on Rensselaer's mill's right to a monopoly. A third mill builds a dam and interferes with the older Rensselaer mill. Both mills are sued and effectively put out of bussiness.