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THE RIVER VALLEY

FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT/

Council of Community Services

November 22, 1962

COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
OF
EDMONTON AND DISTRICT

"THE RIVER VALLEY - FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT?"

Thursday, November 22 at 8:00 p.m.

in the Jubilee Auditorium

A joint meeting of the Community Planning Association and the Council of Community Services.

The following is reprinted from Community Planning Review (Vol. XII No. 3), the organ of the Community Planning Association of Canada. It is particularly timely in view of the joint meeting on November 22. Apart from discussing the River Valley, the meeting is seen as another step in the direction of increased communication and cooperation between physical and social planning.

SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL PLANNING - THE POSSIBILITIES OF PARTNERSHIP

The following is a collection of extracts from a panel discussion which took place during the 1962 Conference of the Ontario Welfare Council. Chairman of the panel was Professor Anthony Adamson, Division of Town and Regional Planning, at the University of Toronto. The two panelists were Miss Florence Philpott, executive director of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and Norman Pearson, planning consultant, Hamilton.

Mr. Pearson: ...To me the collaboration between the physical and social planners is essential, particularly in this business of working out the goals of the community, and I would like to see physical planners working, not in terms of a so-called "administrative neighbourhood unit" concept, but through a whole series of neighbourhood groups (or whatever the proper social term may be), working with skilled social workers, so that we understand the nature of the animal we are dealing with - instead of looking at the problem in terms of satisfying a developer or trying to solve administrative problems...

Miss Philpott: In the social planning field, we have been identified primarily with voluntary endeavour. This is not what we state as our objective and, in fact, it is not true in our actual operations; but, in the minds of the public, and therefore often in the minds of the politicians, we are identified with the voluntary welfare endeavour which, in the total, is a very small percentage of all health, welfare and recreation...

Prof. Adamson: In the actual operation of physical planning, the first thing that is done, and could be continually done every year, is the study - the survey of the existing conditions in the city. The physical planner makes a very thorough study of the population. He knows pretty well exactly how many children there are going to be; how many are in the cots, so to speak; how many people are getting old and are likely to be over 65. He could probably, with little trouble, find out how many people had lost the index finger of their right hand. All these things can be found out statistically. These figures are used largely to deal with schools, traffic, and the like, but I have never been in a planning office that went into the problem of social pathology. I don't know whether they ever worked out how many people were going to be run over at the corner of Main and Elm, or how many people were going to desert their husbands; there are not the facts available to help social planners...

Miss Philpott: In social work we have said, for as long as I can remember, that the basic service in any community is good family counselling - the development and strengthening of family life, family relationships. Yet what usually happens is that, in large urban communities, the population moves out to the fringe areas - the suburbs - and the services are still located in the downtown area. We plan for these suburbs what stores ought to be in them, what supermarkets, what buses and streetcars will serve them. It seems to me that the time has come when social planners have to get ahead of this game. We can only do it in collaboration with the physical planners and study the developments we anticipate in, say, the next five years...

Mr. Pearson: Having worked in quite a wide range of communities, I think that planners still are tempted to use the statistical pathology to justify an attack on some area in terms of urban renewal. Planners who want to push forward with any renewal or redevelopment programme would be very keen, I believe, to find out how many people were killed on the corner of Main and Elm, and where the tuberculosis cases are; but I have not seen many who constantly refer to these things or their effects. I think this is quite a failure in our profession.

I know very few cities that are really consistently following any master plan that has very much to do with any social goal. I think we have a great many planners who say, "How are we going to handle the number of cars, and how many shopping places must we have?" But many physical planners are working with a peculiar set of notions of the kind of physical community they want to create...

...I don't know how much our profession has developed any really advanced ideas about what they are actually doing. Here is where social planning could be a tremendous help to the physical planners - in correcting some of their conceptions, or misconceptions, about the kind of structure they are building. Coming from Britain where we have a rather closer relationship with social planning, and where our plans did help us to forecast where the hospitals and even the "sin strips" were likely to be, where we were dealing with a wider range of community objectives, I feel that there is a terrible deficiency here - and it is a direct result of the obsession with growth...

Prof. Adamson: I think a very important point was made by Mr. Pearson when he said that physical planning is dominated by middle class needs. The suburbs are the supreme example. This basic middle-income group control the political attitudes which, in their turn, make town planners plan. There is a feeling against any non-conformity, not felt at the social planning level.

We have heard that the trend in social planning was, first of all, prevention. In physical planning also, we try to talk prevention. We try to say: "Don't extend the pipe out to that area because it is likely to lead to problems of assessment and higher taxation and other economic matters"...

In my opinion, area planning imply does not work, and joint planning areas have proved completely ineffective. Everybody talks about regional planning and area planning in the physical field, but nobody does anything about it.

The other trend that is noted in social planning is that it is within the community rather than within institutions. I don't know that there is an exact parallel in physical planning with that trend.

We might ask Miss Philpott and Mr. Pearson what they would like to see, practically and positively in the field of co-operation between the two forms of planners.

Miss Philpott: What I would like to see is a further development of what has already been started here in Toronto between the physical planning groups and our own Social

Planning Council. In the last month, plans have been made for redevelopment of one entire area, and we were asked to collaborate with the physical planners in suggesting the kinds of services that would be required. We social planners can involve the people in that area, working through one of our area councils, to explore what seems to be the major needs that we can anticipate, and the services that should be located there.

I would like to see further conferences such as we had last year on the needs of people living in a public housing project. (We concluded in that conference that the needs of people living in housing projects were no different from the needs of people living any place else, only they were more visible because they were more concentrated.)

I would hope for closer and more frequent collaboration between physical and social planners. At this point I cannot see us setting up what you might call a joint organization. I think we have to learn to work together, to collaborate and to communicate, and eventually we will find out how to work out some sort of a system.

(At this point the Chairman noted that there was usually more money for physical than social planning, at least in the larger cities; he asked about the use by social planners of the statistics and other data from the physical planning survey.)

Miss Philpott: We have the very best co-operation in Toronto. We call our physical planners all the time for information. And, within the last couple of years, we have found our information being used by the physical planners. If we can decide who has the greatest competence to develop certain types of information, then we will have better and more effective collaboration.

Mr. Pearson: I would like to see the physical planners in any community sit down regularly with their social planning counterparts and talk about goals and objectives - the neglected part of our whole physical planning operation - about the kind of surveys we do so often in physical planning when we collect information that just "misses the boat" where the social planners' objectives are concerned. I think we could economize in that way.

I think the physical planners' strength is in being able to talk about the shape of things, the developmental aspect, the three-dimensional part; but I think we need a lot of guidance on the kind of stresses and strains that may be created by, say, putting a new expressway network through a city. I think the social planner has to try to relate to the physical planner, so they can be of mutual help.

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