
THE
GROUP PLAN
OF THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS OF THE
CITY OF CLEVELAND

REPORT MADE TO THE
HONORABLE TOM L. JOHNSON MAYOR
AND TO THE
HONORABLE BOARD OF PUBLIC SERVICE

BY
DANIEL H. BURNHAM
JOHN M. CARRÈRE
ARNOLD W. BRUNNER
BOARD OF SUPERVISION

Excerpts from the original Group Plan document courtesy of The Western Reserve Historical Society.

AUGUST M CM III

TO THE HONORABLE TOM L. JOHNSON, MAYOR, AND THE HONORABLE BOARD OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Sirs:—The opportunity of grouping the principal buildings of a city of the size of Cleveland and providing them with proper setting in the way of approaches and other accessories, has never before come to any city, and your Commissioners have felt the great responsibility of the task, which, notwithstanding its marked limitations, has splendid opportunities.

It is very inspiring that public opinion should have risen to a full realization of this great opportunity. The problem has been discussed in the City of Cleveland for several years. The citizens have become familiar with its importance and many suggestions have been brought forth, from time to time. Your Commissioners have felt that their duty was to study this movement from its inception and to consider every suggestion which has come to them, whether of a public nature or made privately by individuals. They have also felt it incumbent upon them to discuss the matter with your public officials, your several Boards and Committees and with many of your citizens, so as to be perfectly familiar with the local conditions with a view to meeting all practical requirements.

They have found from its inception that the tendency was to develop the grouping of the buildings in the district between the public square and the lake, taking advantage as much as possible of the lake front between Erie and Seneca Streets; so much so, that prior to the appointment of the Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, acting in consultation with its professional adviser, had recommended placing two of the important buildings of the group—the Court House and the City Hall—on the four blocks bounded by Lake Street on the south, Summit Street on the north, Seneca Street on the west and Erie Street on the east. Regardless of the decision to purchase these blocks, and regardless of the lake front, the Commission has nevertheless seriously considered every other possible solution of the problem. Four important buildings had practically been determined upon, namely, the Post Office, the County Court House, the City Hall and the Library, with a prospect of more buildings, among which is an Auditorium.

Of these four buildings, the Post Office was determined as to design and site, beyond any possible change. There were contemplated at this time a park and public playground on a large tract of land north of the railroad which the city is reclaiming from the lake.

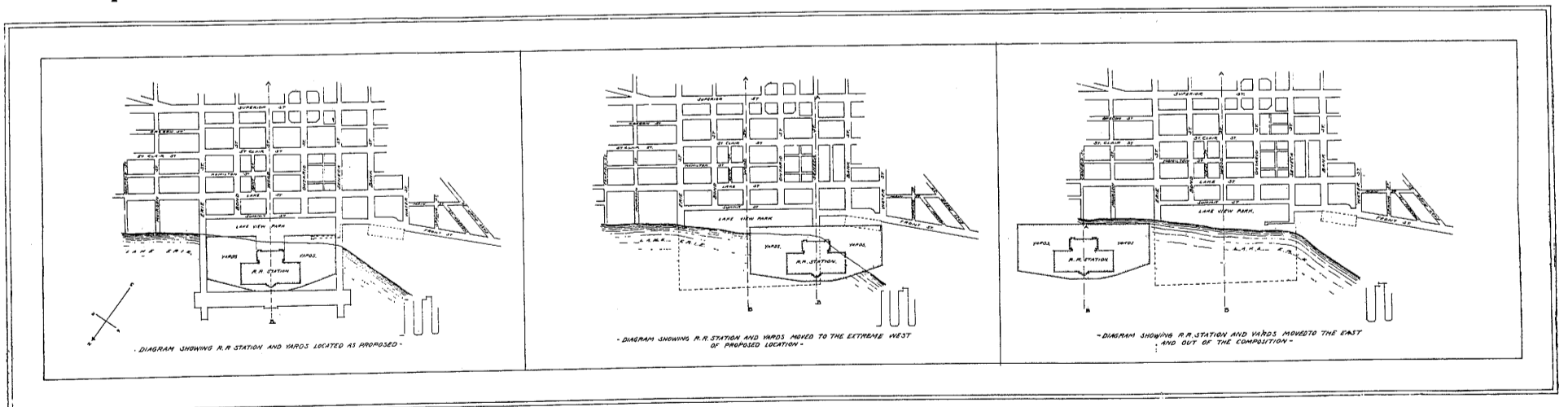
Since its appointment the Commission has made numerous studies, and has spent much time in consultation and in the consideration of local conditions. Some of these studies are quite complete, and each is suggestive of different solutions of the

Your Commission finally decided to place this axis approximately on a line with the center of Wood Street, to develop the Court of Honor or Mall east and west of this axis, and to provide on the south end of the Mall and on the east of this axis for a building similar in character and size to the Post Office, which will balance it and give absolute symmetry at the head of the composition. The treatment of the other end of this axis, however, has required much study.

With ideal conditions, the Commission would have preferred to carry out the popular idea of a park and playground with an open esplanade, where Summit Street is to-day, with the County Court House and the City Hall balancing each other on the sites already under condemnation.

The conditions, however, are not ideal, and your Commission is convinced that they are not only not ideal, but not practicable, for the reason that the railroad forms an insuperable obstacle. It goes without saying that the railroad cannot be removed. The future of the City of Cleveland, its growth and prosperity depend not only upon maintaining the railroad, but in providing it with every legitimate opportunity to transact its business and to expand on parallel lines with the growth of the City. Yet as long as the railroad remains on the lake front, any large park built on the reclaimed land cannot be made either practically or artistically a part of the rest of the scheme on the higher level, because of the intervening freight yard with its unsightly tracks, its many trains and consequent ugliness.

The conditions are bad enough with the present requirements of the railroad, but these will constantly increase and expand and, though the City might resist temporarily any encroachment upon its park, eventually it would have to allow the railroad to extend further and further north. The stretch is altogether too long to be covered with safety. In all of the cities of this country where railroads approach the towns through tunnels, it has been a matter of great inconvenience, danger and detriment to the towns, and in time they have been forced to abandon their tunnels or introduce electricity as a motive power. While this is possible in a terminal station like the Grand Central at New York, it does not seem feasible at the present time in a through station like Cleveland. But this is not the only obstacle. Your Commission believes that a large park on this lower level with a northern exposure fronting on such a large lake, would be very difficult to make attractive, and during many months of the year it would certainly be a most dreary, unattractive and useless feature.



DIAGRAMS SHOWING RAILROAD STATION AND YARDS

problem. The Commission is fully convinced that with the conditions definitely imposed and those which are only partly so, the most advantageous grouping and development can be obtained in the territory already considered by the Chamber of Commerce, the main axis of the composition necessarily running north and south from the new Federal Building, now under construction, the secondary axis running east and west along the lake front. The determination of the exact position of the main axis was of the utmost importance, as the width of the Court of Honor or Mall depends upon the relation of this axis to the rest of the composition, and the amount of land required for the scheme, as well as the cost of its development, is influenced thereby.

The position of the railroad station creates another very serious difficulty, as the building is so large and important in its character, that it must seriously influence the composition if brought entirely or only partly within its limits. When taken in connection with its approaches and yards, the land covered by the railroad station will be very extensive in length. The curves on the west make it impossible to move the station far enough in that direction to take it out of the group plan boundaries. The grades on the east might be overcome, but the station would have to be moved at least a mile in that direction to be out of the line of the composition.

In view of these difficulties, your Commission is of the opinion that, if the railroad station is to remain within the lines

