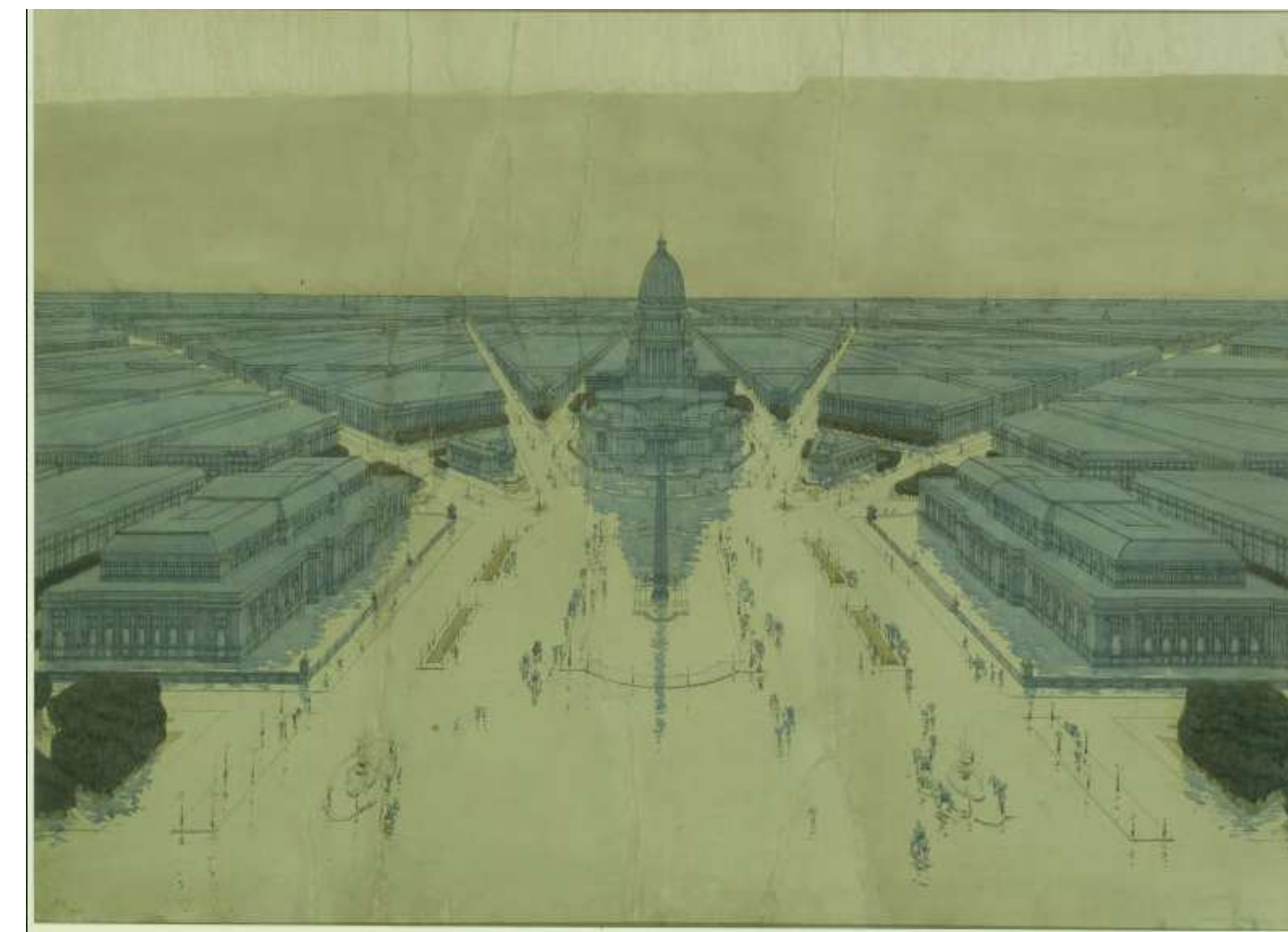


“Make No Small Plans” Daniel Burnham’s Greatest Success

Jenna Tischler, Art and Art History



Overview

As the director of the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, Daniel Burnham helped create an idealistic, urban "White City." This utopian space was characterized by classical civic ideals and architecture. Influenced by the idea of the city as a hub of civic and cultural engagement, Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago touted open spaces, waterfront views, a radial-centric street system, and a bustling cultural center. As the commissioners sought to implement the plan, they faced multiple challenges. Ultimately, they abandoned the plan due to its lack of foresight on the rise of the automobile and shortcomings in dealing with accommodations for the urban poor. However, while the physical plan may be evidence of his shortcomings, his greatest achievements lie within his influential ideas of public space and urban planning that are still visible, applicable, and widely implemented today.

Short-term Limitations of Plan

- Radial-centric street plan short-sighted
- Commissioners more focused on exercising municipal control over city center
- Social aims of plan—reducing poverty and inequity—failed

Long-term Impact

- Brought together professionals from relevant industries to create a unified vision
- First plan to incorporate engineering, architecture, mass transit, urban planning, civic needs, and sociological trends
- Set the standard for subsequent urban planning



Acknowledgements

Project Advisor: Dr. Lillian Joyce

Burnham research tends to focus on single elements of his work, and is either written to flatter his ambitions or critique his shortcomings. By combining the two viewpoints and finding an intersection in their arguments, this research fills a niche currently missing in urban planning historical research and analysis.