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{ REPORT
No. 245.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK AND PLAYGROUND SYSTEM OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL.

MARCH 12 (calendar day, MARCH 13), 1924.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BALL, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 112.]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (S. 112) providing for the comprehensive development of the park and playground system of the National Capital, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the recommendation that the bill do pass, with the following amendments:

Strike out the first section and insert in lieu thereof the following:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That to preserve the flow of water in Rock Creek, to prevent pollution of Rock Creek and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, to preserve forests and natural scenery in and about Washington, and to provide for the comprehensive, systematic, and continuous development of the park, parkway, and playground system of the National Capital, there is hereby constituted a commission, to be known as the National Capital Park Commission, composed of the Chief of Engineers of the Army, the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, the Director of the National Park Service, the Chief of the Forest Service, the officer in charge of public buildings and grounds, and the chairmen of the Committees on Public Buildings and Grounds of the Senate and House of Representatives. At the close of each Congress the Presiding Officer of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint, respectively, a Senator elect and a Representative elect to the succeeding Congress to serve as members of this commission until the chairmen of committees of the succeeding Congress shall be chosen. The officer in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds shall be the executive and disbursing officer of said commission.

On page 3, lines 1 and 2, strike out "the Secretary of the Treasury" and insert in lieu thereof "the Chief of Engineers of the Army."

NECESSITY OF THIS LEGISLATION.

It seems imperative to adopt at once some effective method of systematic park development for the National Capital.

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In recent years, and especially during the past few months, many forest-covered tracts in the outskirts of the city, including valleys and streams of great natural beauty, admirably located for park extension and of inestimable value for that purpose, have been destroyed, the trees cut down, the hills and valleys leveled. The diversion into sewers of the springs and rainfall of the valleys tributary to Rock Creek must be stopped or the beauty of the stream will be destroyed.

Washington has already fallen far behind many other American cities in the matter of outer parks and parkways. These are urgently needed if the city were never to increase its present population. They are essential to provide for its certain and rapid growth.

THE L'ENFANT PLAN.

The plan of the Federal City provided by the marvelous foresight of Washington, Jefferson, and L'Enfant was bounded by the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and on the north by what is now Florida Avenue, including only a little less than one-fifth of the District of Columbia.

Besides generous grounds for the Capitol and the Presidents' house, and the broad expanse of the Mall connecting them, the L'Enfant plan reserved for parking at intersections of avenues and streets a considerable number of square, circular, and triangular spaces. These beautiful reservations are so conspicuously located in the central portions of the old city that the casual visitor may get the impression that the Capital is well provided with parks. However, not one of the parks reserved in the L'Enfant plan except the Mall is large enough for athletic fields or recreation purposes, now demanded as essential features of a park system. Gradual reclamation of marshes of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers will in time provide for outdoor sports for those who can reach the river areas, but many extensive stretches of the old city, entirely occupied by buildings and densely populated, are wholly without playgrounds for children or adults. The outer areas, as we shall see, are sadly lacking in park development.

THE DISTRICT OUTSIDE THE AREA OF THE L'ENFANT PLAN.

The L'Enfant plan, prepared in 1791, provided for the city's growth of almost 100 years. Since 1890 the city has overleaped the old limits and is growing to-day more rapidly than ever. The present population is nearly 500,000. Government activities, including the Naval Observatory, the Bureau of Standards, Walter Reed Hospital, Mount Alto Hospital, United States Soldiers' Home, St. Elizabeths Hospital for Insane, Bolling Aviation Field, Fort Myer, Arlington radio station, etc., are spreading far outside the old boundary.

The lands acquired for park extension and their cost during the entire history of the Capital City are shown in the following table:

From L'Enfant's time, 1791, to 1890.....	None.
In 1890, Zoological Park, 170 acres.....	\$200, 000
In 1890, Rock Creek Park, 1,640 acres.....	1, 200, 000
In 1896, Potomac River Flats addition.....	26, 684
In 1907, Piney Branch Parkway, 22 acres.....	76, 980
In 1910, Montrose Park, 16 acres.....	110, 000
In 1910, Meridian Hill Park, 10 acres.....	470, 000
In 1912, Fort Davis and Fort Dupont, 41 acres.....	21, 334
In 1913, Rock Creek and Potomac connecting parkway, 159 acres, authorized cost (nearly all appropriated).....	1, 300, 000
From 1913 to 1923, none whatever, except very small triangles or points at intersection of streets.....	165, 000
Total cost.....	3, 589, 998

Total acres, 2,058.

As compared with this, Chicago, besides a wonderfully extensive system of city parks and connecting boulevards, has acquired forest reserve of 24,000 acres outside the city and is proceeding to acquire 10,000 acres more.

Chicago had at one time a bond issue of \$30,000,000 for park extension. San Francisco had expended before 1912, \$7,500,000 on Golden Gate Park alone and it had 33 other parks. Boston spent over \$21,000,000 on extension of its park system between 1893 and 1920. St. Louis has recently authorized the expenditure of \$87,000,000, a considerable part of which is for park extension.

The following table gives the value of park properties in all the cities of the United States exceeding 300,000 in population in 1916 and of the same cities in 1919, as stated in the United States Census Bureau publications, General Statistics of Cities, 1916, on page 87, and Financial Statistics of Cities of 1919, on page 291. (Last available statistics.)

	Value of park property in 1916.	Value of park property in 1919.		Value of park property in 1916.	Value of park property in 1919.
New York.....	\$649,220,675	\$287,402,447	Buffalo.....	\$12,531,350	\$11,277,121
Chicago.....	59,695,473	60,462,151	San Francisco.....	34,145,000	40,926,886
Philadelphia.....	30,613,964	43,400,017	Milwaukee.....	5,156,231	7,354,550
St. Louis.....	13,597,814	15,908,828	Cincinnati.....	7,393,354	8,189,371
Boston.....	69,209,900	69,306,900	Newark.....	14,076,998	14,511,724
Cleveland.....	28,972,354	29,583,500	New Orleans.....	6,297,300	7,561,515
Baltimore.....	7,253,984	7,960,304	Minneapolis.....	7,998,282	8,792,010
Pittsburgh.....	18,189,776	18,654,047	Seattle.....	9,456,923	9,728,141
Detroit.....	29,312,620	33,070,137	Washington, D. C....	4,745,660	5,168,477
Los Angeles.....	10,619,177	11,324,733			

According to these figures Washington is at the bottom of the list, both in 1916 and 1919.

The value of park properties of New York as given is over \$687,000,000, a sum far greater than in any other city, but omitting New York, the average value in all the other 18 cities is just about \$22,000,000, while the park property of Washington is valued at \$5,168,477, less than one-fourth of the average.

It is unquestionably true that the National Capital as to outer parks has fallen very far behind Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, San Francisco, Seattle, and probably others. Examination of the reports of the park commissioners of those cities show this to be a fact.

THE UNFINISHED PLAN.

The Park Commission of 1901, composed of Daniel H. Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, jr., Charles F. McKim, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, recommended in their final report (S. Rep. No. 166, 57th Cong., 1st sess.), on pages 167 to 171, the acquisition of 53 additional tracts within the District for the proper extension of the park system. Out of this number only six have been acquired. Many of the most beautiful and important of these tracts have been destroyed. Several are now in process of destruction. With the exception of the areas now built over or being laid waste, the map No. D-288 of this Park Commission report, showing proposed park extensions within the District, stands to-day as a working plan ready for immediate use in acquisition of park areas.

The following are some of the steps most urgently needed for park reservations inside the District lines, practically all of which were included in the extension plan of 1901.

1. Acquiring the forest-covered valleys and the springs tributary to Rock Creek, to protect the creek from pollution and preserve the flow of water, already reduced one-half.

2. Establishing a Fort Boulevard following the hills encircling the city and connecting the Civil War forts. Many of these are still well preserved, with long lines of breastworks still uncouthed.

3. Widening Piney Branch parkway from Rock Creek to Sixteenth Street, so as to preserve the forest to the hilltops, embracing and preserving the Indian quarry there located. This is described by Doctor Holmes, of the Smithsonian Institution, as "the greatest aboriginal boulder quarry known."

4. Extending the Piney Branch parkway under and northeast from the Tiger Bridge. Unless this is done the bridge will shortly be rendered useless by complete filling of the east side of the arch, compelling a grade crossing of the heavy traffic of Sixteenth Street. It would immensely relieve traffic conditions to divert passenger traffic down the valleys of Piney Branch and Rock Creek to Potomac Park, passing under nine bridges and wholly avoiding the grade crossings.

5. Acquiring the Klingle Ford Valley, a natural entrance to the park from the west, and a necessary connection between the upper and lower Rock Creek Valley.

6. Acquiring the beautiful hardwood forest of the Patterson tract, lying within $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles of the Capitol Building, at an elevation 95 feet higher than the Capitol and overlooking the entire city and rivers and hills beyond.

7. Transforming the Anacostia River marshes above Bennings Bridge into a water park and the adjacent Mount Hamilton into a national arboretum.

8. Acquiring tracts in the outskirts at proper intervals for parks and playgrounds before they are built up and the cost increased.

9. Acquisition of all the lands fronting on the Capitol grounds not already in Government ownership, and of all the property on lower Pennsylvania Avenue near the Capitol, now occupied by unsightly buildings, and improving by proper park development all of such property not required for Government buildings. This is essential to prevent objectionable structures fronting on the Capitol Park and for the improvement of present unfortunate conditions on historic Pennsylvania Avenue.

FOREST AND PARK RESERVES OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

The Capital City has already expanded into Maryland and Virginia, and that expansion must continue indefinitely.

For proper extension of the National Capital park system the following lands should be acquired, subject to the action and cooperation of the State governments of Maryland and Virginia:

1. The Valley of Rock Creek northward from the District line practically to its sources, together with its feeders and branches, certainly so far as covered with forest. This is essential to prevent contamination of the stream and to preserve the flow of water which is already reduced to half its former volume.

2. Both banks of the Potomac from Washington to Great Falls, to preserve the forests, the very remarkable natural scenery, and stop defacement by quarry operations, this park extension not to interfere with future developments for water supply and power plant.

3. Development of park boulevards down the Potomac, on the Virginia side to Mount Vernon, on the Maryland side to Fort Washington, along the bluffs overlooking the river.

4. Acquisition of at least portions of the beautiful Sligo Valley just beyond Takoma.

5. Acquisition of the forest areas just outside the District, near the north end of Sixteenth Street, with provision for parkways centering at that point, as suggested by Mr. Greenleaf, landscape architect of the Commission of Fine Arts.

6. Cooperation with Maryland and Baltimore City for two park boulevards to Baltimore, one along Rock Creek Valley to its head waters east of Rockville, thence northeastward, the other from the north terminus of Sixteenth Street, utilizing the forested valleys and tributaries of the Northwest Branch and Paint Branch of the Anacostia River, the Big Patuxent, Little Patuxent, and Middle Patuxent, and the Patapsco Forest Reserve already established.

7. Acquiring several of the Civil War forts occupying the heights on the Virginia side of the Potomac, overlooking the Capital City.

8. Development of three park boulevards from the Virginia terminus of the proposed Memorial Bridge, one directly to Arlington Cemetery, one up the Potomac, connecting with the Lee Highway and with the projected park boulevard to Great Falls, and one down the river connecting with the projected riverside boulevard to Mount Vernon.

NECESSITY OF A DIFFERENT METHOD FOR PARK DEVELOPMENT.

There is no existing law providing for extension of the park system or authorizing Budget estimates for acquiring any additional park areas.

There is no department, bureau, commission, or official, either of the Federal or District Government, authorized to study or work out a systematic park plan.

There is no official legally directed or invited to submit recommendations or estimates for acquiring additional park areas.

The present method of passing a bill authorizing acquisition of a specified tract and a subsequent appropriation to provide payment for it is a failure. With the rapid broadening of Federal legislation

It is a physical impossibility for committees to make the detailed, comprehensive, and continuous study necessary to select the lands most suitable and most needed as the city expands.

When tracts essential to the park system are threatened with destruction, as has occurred many times, it is impossible to secure passage of a bill through committees and through both Houses, and to secure necessary appropriations in time to prevent the destruction. It is essential that some board or commission be authorized to take immediate action in such cases.

PROPOSED PERMANENT NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK COMMISSION AND ITS FUNCTIONS.

The practical solution seems to be to establish a permanent commission; to authorize such commission to select and acquire the lands within the District of Columbia needed for park extension; to authorize such commission to formulate agreements with officials of Maryland and Virginia, when such officials are properly deputized by the legislatures of those States, for the acquisition and control of the lands for park and parkway extension of the National Capital system, outside the District, such agreements to be subject to approval by the President; and to make regular annual appropriations of funds to be used by the commission for the purposes named.

COMPOSITION OF SUCH PERMANENT COMMISSION.

This bill, with the amendment proposed, establishes such a commission, which includes the Chief of Engineers of the Army and the officer in charge of public buildings and grounds, who for many years have had the control and administration of the existing parks; the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, representing the people whose taxes will pay a large percentage of the total expenditure; the Director of the National Park Service and the Chief of the Forest Service, whose training and experience will be of obvious value; and the chairman of the Committees on Public Buildings and Grounds of the Senate and House of Representatives, whereby each House of Congress will be directly in touch with the work of the commission and participate in the selection of the lands to be acquired.

No additional compensation is paid the members of the commission, who are all salaried officers. The officer in charge of public buildings and grounds, who is made the executive officer, has now an operating clerical and technical force. The expense of administration will be negligible.

APPROPRIATIONS PROVIDING PAYMENTS FOR SUCH LANDS.

The bill authorizes a regular annual appropriation of a sum not exceeding 1 cent for each inhabitant of the continental United States as determined by the last preceding decennial census. If the maximum amount were appropriated, this would amount, under the last census, to almost exactly \$1,000,000 per year.

The bill provides that three-fourths of this sum, approximately \$750,000, shall be paid out of the revenues of the District of Columbia and the general funds of the Treasury in the same proportion as other expenses of the District of Columbia.

Estimating the present annual appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia at \$25,000,000, this provides that practically 3 per cent of the total annual District appropriations shall be devoted to extension of the park system, surely not an unreasonable proportion. Of this \$750,000 per year, under the present arrangement for division of the cost, 60 per cent (\$450,000), would be paid by taxation of the residents of the District.

The remaining one-fourth of the total annual appropriation, or \$250,000, would be used to acquire lands outside the District of Columbia, and would be entirely paid from the general funds of the Treasury.

The total charge on the Federal funds therefore would be this \$250,000, plus 40 per cent of \$750,000 (\$300,000); total, \$550,000.

This \$550,000 annual charge upon the Federal Treasury amounts to a trifle over one-half of 1 cent per year for each inhabitant of the continental United States.

Of course Congress will determine each year whether the maximum amount authorized shall be appropriated or a less sum. If a less sum, each of the foregoing figures will be reduced accordingly.

SUMMARY.

Acquiring land for park purposes should not be regarded as an expenditure. It is an investment. It is changing capital from money into land. It is the most permanent of all investments. A park is indestructible; it constantly and surely increases in value; it is for the enjoyment of all future generations.

At present there is no law authorizing any extension of the park system. The Budget Bureau can not even submit estimates for any extension not authorized by law. We are at a standstill. The devastation goes on.

If this bill is enacted the progress will be slow and gradual, for the amount authorized to be appropriated each year will acquire only a small portion of the areas very urgently needed.

The commission established by the bill will presumably acquire first the areas imminently threatened with destruction and those which can be procured at most reasonable prices. It has an existing working plan in the Park Commission plan of 1901.

The amount appropriated by Congress from year to year will determine how rapid progress can be made. If the maximum amount authorized by the bill is appropriated, the average cost to all the residents of the District of Columbia will be \$1 per year. The average cost to all American citizens outside of the District will be one-half of 1 cent per year. It is confidently asserted that the overwhelming sentiment of our citizens will favor this expenditure, to make and keep ours the finest of all capitals.

The bill will permit continuous and systematic extension and we believe it provides for a practical, economical, and permanent solution of the problem of park development for the National Capital.