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# THE IMPORTANCE OF CITY PLANNING IN DAVAO

## FOR GROWTH

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ATENEU DE DAVAO

(Speech delivered by Atty. Wilgefortis F. Escudero, president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce, before the East Davao Rotary Club during its



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meeting at the Davao Insular Hotel.)

City planning is the guidance of the growth and change of urban areas. As such, it is aimed at fulfilling social and economic objectives which go beyond physical form and arrangement of buildings, streets, parks, utilities and other parts of the urban development.

City planning takes effect largely through the operations of government and requires the application of specialized techniques of survey, analysis, forecasting and design. Thus city planning may be described as a social movement. Each aspect has its concept, history and theories. Together they fuse into the efforts of modern society to shape and in the improvement

within which increasing proportions humanity spend their lives in the City.

In many countries, city planning has been broadened to cover larger areas as the need for orderly development of the entire physical environment has been recognized. In Great Britain this broader approach is termed "town and country planning".

The ultimate goals of modern planning are social, although the plans themselves are related to physical things. They are deeply involved with intermediate economic objectives. Within this philosophy, city planning would probably seek:

(1) The orderly arrangement of parts of the city — residential, business, industrial, etc., so that each part could perform its functions with minimum cost and conflict;

(2) an efficient system of circulation within the city and to the outside world, using to the maximum advantages all modes of transportation;

(3) the development of each part of the city to optimum standards, as to lot size, sunlight and green space in residential areas, and parking and building spacing in business areas;

(4) the provision of safe, sanitary and comfortable housing, in a variety of dwelling types to meet the needs of all families;

(5) the provisions of recreation, schools and other community services, of a high standard of size, location and quality;

(6) the provision of adequate and economical water supply, sewerage, utilities and public

service.

In any community, these goals, might be supplemented by special goals, such as the preservation of historical areas, for the protection of property values, or the efficient conduct of government. On occasion, the goals of some powerful special interests might be inconsistent with those of others; e. g. the preservation of slum property values and the provision of adequate housing. Furthermore, the statement of ideal goals required the use of relative terms, such as "adequate", "high standards", etc., which are relative rather than absolute and change from time to time. Therefore inherent in the concept is the recognition that an ideal is not a fixed objective, but itself will change; that the ideal city can be striven toward, but never achieved.

Zoning is the legislative method of controlling the use of land through establishment of standards and requirements of concerning the use of land and buildings, the proportion of the lot to be covered by them and the density of population. Primarily applied in urban area, it is accomplished by division of the city area into zoning districts, each housing specific conditions under which land and buildings maybe legally developed and used.

It is also aimed to evolve the establishment of a rational balance between amounts of land for various urban activities, and their distribution in relation to market forces and system of transportation and vehicular circulation, in the interests of a more comprehensive and creative

approach to city planning.

While not alone an answer to urban growth problems, it is, combined with other city planning techniques, a major instrument for gaining greater physical order in cities. The objectives of zoning are among others: (1) the reduction of fire hazards, control of congestion in houses and neighborhoods, assurance of light and air for comfort and health, conservation of commercial districts provision for off-parking, control of height and bulk of buildings, position on the lot, and, indirectly control of density of population, areas of control include zoning for exclusive agricultural and related land uses to prevent urban sprawl, refinements of proportioning and locating land uses in relation to market forces, greater flexibility to relieve the hardships and monotony caused by some of the earlier arbitrary zoning patterns and restrictions, provisions for combining various related land uses in planned unit development standards through award of bonus allowances for floor area in relation to lot size, the concept of zoning by performance standards rather than strictly by permitting or excluding certain specified types of activities and possibilities of zoning for improving the appearance of cities.

Zoning has inherent in it certain limitations. It cannot shape new areas or reshape old ones without other instruments for carrying out certain general plans, such as urban redevelopment, subdivision regulations, capital improvement programming and the design and construction of influential public works. Yet, it is an instrument of great potentiality in systematizing urban development, providing a better functional and aesthetic order, and particularly, in carrying out general plans for cities in all parts of the world.

HOUSING: — Home is the place where people in general fulfill the basic domestic and personal functions of family life. Physical and mental health, working efficiency, emotional security and social status are all purely to be influenced by housing conditions. Housing and household equipment are normally a major item of consumer expenditure, often larger than food, and the purchase of a house is likely to be the biggest single financial commitment a family ever makes. A suitable home is vital to the modern family, but the average family cannot produce such a home on

its own initiative.

Housing is also of direct significance to the community and the nation, even part from its importance to the individual family. The largest single use for urban land is residential property. Services for home protection and convenience are a major item, in the municipal economy, while the neighborhood social pattern created by housing practice may be a dynamic factor in class and race relations. Moreover, since each dwelling is a base point in the web of urban activity, traffic and transportation are primarily a problem of communication between homes and other facilities. Insanitary, obsolete, ugly, overcrowded or inefficiently located residential districts not only affect the lives of the occupants but are also a burden and a threat to the rest of the community.

At the national level, housing is important not only because it affects health and welfare and is closely related to such political principles as "equal opportunity" and "minimum standards", but also because it is a vital factor in the national economy. A large number of workers are dependent on residential construction for employment directly or indirectly, and housing credit is an important aspect of both the investment market and fiscal policy.

Housing emerged as a major problem and public issue because of dissatisfaction with existing conditions. Housing problems are continuously created by population movements of all kinds and by industrial changes and the development of new resources. Deficiencies in the home production mechanism were almost universally evidenced in Greater Manila and is beginning to be felt in Davao City, by:

- (1) the enforced occupancy of an enormous number of dwellings seriously substandard by accepted criteria;
- (2) the rapid spread of physically and economically blighted areas, undermining civic amenity and efficiency;
- (3) the frequent recurrence of severe housing shortages, causing overcrowding and an inflexible or explosive housing market;
- (4) a narrow "effective market" for dwellings constructed by ordinary private enterprise, often limited to upper income families;
- (5) the inadequate planning and design of much new housing; and
- (6) extreme fluctuations in

rate of home production, endangering the national economy. 6

As a result of these deficiencies a strong movement for housing reform is now taking shape in our country.

More people already live in cities and industrial centers that can be supported by employment opportunities in existing countries. The level of living of the migrant populations are therefore declining both terms of physical and social movement and from the point of view of family income. Thus the demand on national resources for housing and unurban development has greatly increased at the time when large investments are also required to create many jobs for the employment of new city dwellers.

Economic imbalances have grown out of this situation. This outward physical symptoms are poor housing and inadequate community services, choked-up city traffic and excessive travel time work; and filth, squalor and disease. Gang activity juvenile delinquency, crime and vice versa are the more conspicuous social problem of economic disorganization and the physical decay of the city. These conditions affect an ever growing number of people but primarily they involve newcomers in the lower-income groups who become slum-dwellers and squatters in the communities to which they migrate.

The problem of housing and urban reconstruction have grown into major issues in our country. Thus, the government have assumed increasing responsibility for the planning and financing of housing and community improvement programs and separate government department or agencies for housing urban development have been established. In order to facilitate the execution of housing and urban development programs, separate financial, loan and banking institutions of a public or semi-private character have also been organized, and great efforts

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have been made, by government to stimulate private financing of housing. Special agencies have been established to take care of social aspects of housing, urban redevelopment, slum clearance and squatting.

The share of the family budget spent for housing varies considerably. However, low-income families find it more and more difficult to obtain adequate accommodation without jeopardizing other essential needs. To overcome the serious gap between the "economic" and the "social" rent. (that is, between cost of construction and maintenance of acceptable housing accommodations and the amount families are able and willing to pay for them) government directly or indirectly subsidize builders, as well as house-holders in the low-income groups. These measures are sometimes supplemented by rent controls to ensure:

- 1) an adequate security of tenure
- 2) rents within a reasonable proportion of the family budget; and
- 3) the maintenance of existing accommodations.

The principal issue in the developing countries, like our country, remains the assessment of an appropriate share of national resources that must be devoted to the financing of housing and urban development programs in relation to overall economic development. The financing of housing for people in the lower income groups continues to be a critical problems  
(To be continued)

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CITY PLANNING IN DAVAO FOR GROWTH

By WILGEFORTIS F. ESCUDERO  
(Second of a series)

The worldwide problems of housing and urbanization represent an area in which the role of the social scientist comes into sharp focus, not only in the realm of theory and planning but especially in the realm of action. In view of the concentration of people in urban area, failure to plan for and guide the growth of the city would inevitably deprive a very substantial part of humanity of the right to a decent living in a decent environment. Three types of research and survey may be useful in this connection. For the determination of national policies and broad, regional development programs a general but true picture of social and economic trends may suffice. More

precise data are necessary for action at the local level in connection with community planning and land use. Finally, in specific project for a residential community and neighborhood must be based on definite knowledge of a multitude of economic, social, cultural, physical and other facts. Suitably designed surveys can provide an appropriate basis for a continuing evaluation of the social implications and consequences of various development programs.

I have discussed this perspective of city planning, zoning and housing, so that you may be able to appreciate the attempts

which our city government is embarking. Under this frame of reference we, the civic minded residents of Davao City, particularly the Rotarians can extend their share in discussing and cooperating, with our local government officials and agencies for the consideration of a realistic, responsive and comprehensive development program on city planning and zoning.

Our present zonification plan, under Ordinance No. 281, approved in 1972 covers only a small portion of the city embracing the area from Talomo River in the south and up to Panacan River in the north. Portions beyond these rivers are not yet classified. Observations made by our Chamber in cooperation with the Development Bank of the Philippines and MDA point out that with the rapid growth of the city in recent years, there is a need for an expanded development plan. Many business entrepreneurs who desire to invest in the City areas noted that the classified heavy and/or industrial zones are limited to an area which are available for sale or lease. Thus, industry proponents hesitate to establish their projects sites may be classified in the future as non-industrial zones — and this would require the transfer of their plants and entail much expenses in money, time and business dislocation.

It is also noted that the industrial zones, the ordinance only classified 3 or 4 sites as industrial zones and a greater portion of the present zonification plan is classified as either residential or commercial zones.

Specified industrial zones are not adequately provided with facilities, such as roads, power, light, etc., which are basic to industries. Industry proponents complained that the establishment of their projects in these zones would affect adversely the viability of their projects.

(To be Continued)