

*Etchings* • JANUARY 1948

RETURN TO FILE

*Gordon M. Wilbur*



A view of the Philadelphia of the future showing modern commercial buildings and well-spaced apartments.



**T**oday the Philadelphia story is a tale of two cities. One is Penn's noble conception . . . a city of planned beauty. The other is our contemporary Philadelphia, a 20th century industrial giant, at times slowed down by the dead weight of this 17th century ideal . . . a plan that could not possibly foresee today's need for traffic highways, wide streets, airports, terminals and vast land areas for industrial development.

This co-existence of the modern and the makeshift is common to almost every large city, for most cities just grow and, as they become industrialized, populations spill over into outlying sections. As a result, the pleasant residential communities of yesterday become neglected and obsolete. In Philadelphia, this withering touch has reached out over 13% of the city.

In preparing this issue of Etchings, we are indebted for data to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Photographs by Ezra Stoller, New York.



Proposed new approach to 30th Street Station will help speed traffic through center of city.



How can this creeping obsolescence be arrested? How can the Philadelphia tradition of planned beauty be adapted to our present and future needs? How can the actuality of a better Philadelphia be realized? In 1942, the Mayor appointed the City Planning Commission, a group of 5 citizens and 4 public officials, to study these questions. Under their direction, a preliminary plan for a better Philadelphia was impressively dramatized at the recent Greater Philadelphia Exhibit viewed by almost 400,000 persons. Here the cold statistics of civic blight were graphically presented in terms of increased government cost, tax delinquency, decreased revenues . . . pocketbook realities to every taxpayer. For services in one area of 18 blocks, for example, the estimated expenditure by the city and the school



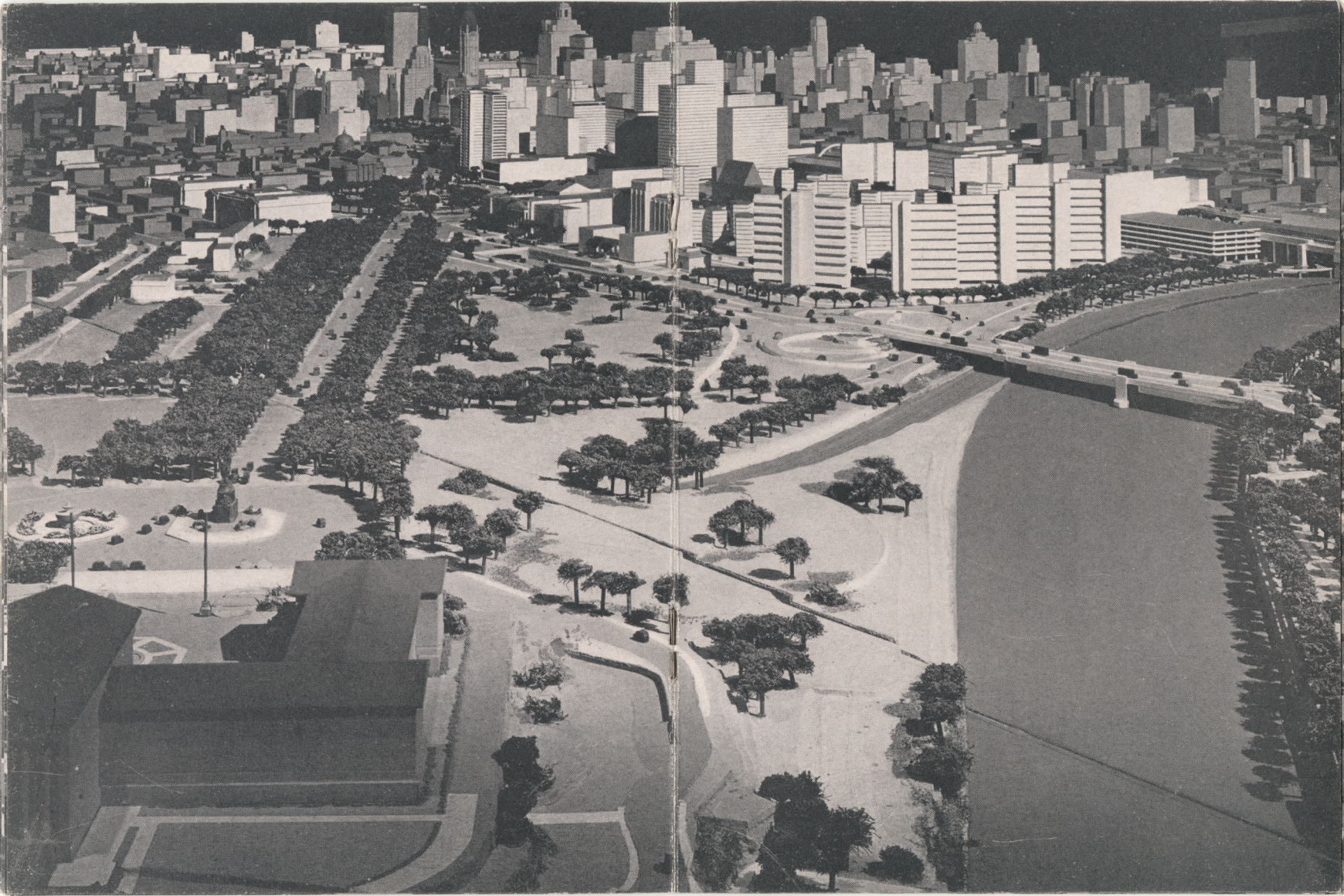
Group of modern apartments adjacent to  
an industrial section.



district was \$271,394 while revenue amounted to only \$160,980. Thus it costs the taxpayer over \$110,000 a year to maintain this one deteriorated neighborhood.

Other areas, some centrally located, not only fail to attract new industries, but are actually causing migration of established concerns because of poor traffic access and high transportation costs. This drain on our industrial vitality is of importance to every business enterprise, every wage earner in the city. Community liabilities such as this are harmful to the social and economic health of the entire city. The continuance of such a condition threatens to bring the city face to face with bankruptcy within the next half century, according to competent authorities.

The Greater Philadelphia Exhibit was





A spacious, tree-lined setting for Independence Hall. (Top right) Proposed new Mall.

a visual conception of what must be done if this blight is to be halted and sub-standard areas be replaced by modern dwellings and improved surroundings. In progressing toward this goal, the Planning Commission recommends each September, a number of projects to be launched during the following 6 year period. Thus, under this flexible procedure, projects which are not completed, are regularly reviewed and considered in relation to the overall picture existing at that time, and priority given to those improvements most urgently needed. Under provisions of the 1945 Redevelopment Act, the Redevelopment Authority is empowered to condemn property in blighted areas, enlist private capital and public agencies in financing the purchase and rehabilitation of these communities, and to contract for redevelopments plan-





Redevelopment of Delaware River frontage  
showing express highway and yacht basin.

ned by the City Planning Commission and approved by City Council. The cost of clearing such land, however, must be met partly by public funds . . . an investment that will yield interest over the years as a result of planned improvements.

We who live and work in Philadelphia must find the means of doing this, for City Planning is everyone's concern. It is citizenship in action, our own conscious directing of the city's growth. It can be achieved by the cooperation of each of us, working with neighborhood and civic groups, studying community needs, helping formulate plans and enlisting the energy and enthusiasm of our neighbors in the cause of a Better Philadelphia.

Our Mayor, recently re-elected on a platform of continued community improvement, stressed this to visitors at





Spacious recreation areas are planned for  
the Philadelphia of the future.

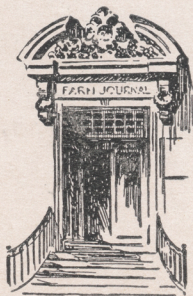
the exhibit in a message which reads in part: "A feeling of real civic pride is important. It would be wrong for me to tell you that the Better Philadelphia you have just seen will be an actuality a year hence. I firmly believe that a good deal of it will be realized within the next ten years. Much of it is in progress now. The exhibition suggests how to achieve a Better Philadelphia. The cooperation of you, the people, is vital to its realization. Let us work to make Philadelphia sound and vigorous economically, a really good place to live in, a city we will be proud to pass on to our children. With your help, it can be done."

Gatchel & Manning, photo-engravers for over 50 years, hope that this brochure may serve to inspire interest and pride in the growth and development of a Better Philadelphia.





# CITY PLANNING



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