





# PLANNING NEWS

Vol. 1 No. 10

Elm Lodge, Ames, Iowa

December 1936

## SECOND IOWA CONFERENCE ON PLANNING HELD AT DES MOINES

An awakening of public officers and citizens to the possibilities of city and county planning was definitely indicated by the attendance and interest that were accorded the second Iowa conference on planning, at Des Moines, December 10.

County planning has attracted the notice of county officers. There were 22 members of county boards of supervisors, and 11 county engineers in attendance. In at least two cases, the entire county board was there.

Delegates to the conference came from 38 counties, according to registration cards. It was known that other counties were represented, but those attending did not register.

Agriculture proved its interest. In addition to six county agricultural agents and those county supervisors who also are farmers, there were 18 persons who indicated membership in the Farm Bureau.

Municipal officers, including mayors, one city manager, city engineers, etc., totaled 14; there were eight members of city planning commissions. Registrations further included four state representatives and two state senators, 10 club women, 13 Chamber of Commerce and other business association members.

Total registration was 162; several did not register.

The conference was called by Chairman Dwight G. McCarty of Emmetsburg, who was chosen at the first state-wide planning conference at Ames, last April, to consider and plan for another such event. Mel H. Harvey of Des Moines was

secretary and in charge of local arrangements.

The conference elected Walter W. White, Spirit Lake postmaster, to become chairman of a more permanent state planning organization. M. G. Hall, city engineer and a consulting engineer of Centerville, was elected vice chairman; Mrs. Kate Terry Loomis, secretary of the Cedar Rapids city planning commission, secretary. Additional persons who will comprise an executive committee include Jess Exline, Appanoose county farmer, and Mrs. Harriet Rinehart of Winterset.

Principal speaker at the conference was M. W. Torkelson, director of regional planning for the state of Wisconsin, and Works Progress Administrator for his state. For many years a bridge engineer and an executive officer of the Wisconsin state highway commission, Mr. Torkelson came into the Planning field in 1929 when Wisconsin first undertook a study of its problems and began to plan for conservation and better use of timber lands.

Mr. Torkelson told the conference of this land planning program, and how, through zoning, unproductive lands had been removed from settlement and how Wisconsin was advancing in practical planning methods.

Speaking under the subject "Planning a Public Works Program," Mr. Torkelson cited specific examples where Wisconsin cities in possession of definite planning programs had taken advantage of the opportunities offered through WPA for making their communities more desi-

rable as places in which to live and as locations for industry.

In the matter of continuous planning, Mr. Torkelson stated that in his opinion a permanent central state planning agency is necessary to a permanent planning program, even for county and city planning, both for the purpose of providing leadership and for furnishing information, technical guidance and assistance.

The speaker illustrated his remarks with many stories of planning in practice in Wisconsin, incidents of actual occurrences which developed in the course of establishing a planning program and achieving results through its operation.

A plea for greater planning for soil conservation and for increased uses of Iowa agricultural products in industry was made by Otto S. Muntz, chairman of the Greater Iowa Commission, in his address on "Planning and Business".

Mr. Muntz foresaw a direct application of state planning to this field, with the state planning board in the position of leadership in conducting practical experiments, and in directing attention to possibilities for development of new uses for Iowa agricultural products.

He also visioned a state planning agency as definitely a coordinating unit, or "clearing house" between all other specialized state functions, fitting individual departmental programs into a coordinated state-wide plan, and preventing overlapping or duplication of effort.

Proper state planning in the past, Mr. Muntz declared, would have prevented many of the evils that today exist in depleted soils, depleted population and lack of progress in Iowa agricultural industries.

Evidence of direct interest in local planning organization came from questions asked by delegates seeking information on this phase.

Answering these questions, Prof. J. R. Fitzsimmons of Ames, who recently was consulted by one of the larger Iowa cities on the same subject, declared that local leadership is the prime requisite for planning organization.

Leadership within the community or county once established may rally around it the support of the progressive and interested citizenry, and take definite steps toward permanent organization. It may then seek information on methods of procedure from Iowa State College or from the Iowa State Planning Board. But the success of local planning, Prof. Fitzsimmons emphasized, is the leadership it attracts from within the county and community.

---

#### PLANNING BOARD HEARS OF PROGRESS MADE ON PROJECTS

---

AT A MEETING in Des Moines on December 12, supervisors of a dozen different projects sponsored by the Iowa State Planning Board reported on the nature and progress of their work.

Dr. Russell E. Jonas, Director of Research of the State Department of Public Instruction, described the survey of available high school facilities. Mr. J. R. Fitzsimmons, technical adviser of recreation and city planning, spoke on the state-wide survey of recreational facilities and programs which is being conducted under his supervision.

Dr. Charles R. Keyes, State Archaeologist, told interesting bits of Iowa History and illustrated his talk with examples of Indian pottery and fighting equipment which had been unearthed in the process of excavating Indian mounds in northeast Iowa.

Dr. J. J. Hinman, Jr., of the State Medical Laboratory, described water analyses being made under his direction from samples obtained by an earlier Iowa State Planning Board project.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Iowa Planning News completes its Volume No.1 with this issue. Back copies are still available only for March, June, September and November, and in very limited number.

A new mailing list is being prepared for use beginning with the January number.

Iowa Planning News has been issued without charge, and will be continued to those who desire to receive it.

Iowa State Planning Board  
Elm Lodge Ames, Iowa

Dec. 21, 1936

-----  
To the Iowa State Planning Board,  
Elm Lodge, Ames, Iowa

Please continue my name on the mailing list for Iowa Planning News. My correct mailing address is as follows:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street or Rural \_\_\_\_\_

Town or City \_\_\_\_\_

(This request does not obligate me in any way)

Mr. Mark Morris, Research Engineer for the State Highway Commission explained the state traffic survey which is being conducted under his supervision.

Prof. C. Woody Thompason of the College of Commerce at the State University of Iowa, spoke on the state-wide Tax Survey which is obtaining data useful in estimating the effect of various measures for tax revision.

Dr. Howard Bowen, College of Commerce, University of Iowa, described population and social analyses, results of which should prove useful in legislation.

Other project supervisors reporting on their particular surveys were: Norman Strand, farm statistics; K.S. Clancy, traffic accident analysis; Dean Swartzel, urban traffic; Harold Gaunt, urban land use; Eugene Friffith, base maps; Howard Chandler, public health facilities; Lloyd Smith, lake and stream improvement.

Mr. C.M. Moderwell, Chicago, Chairman of District No. 7, National Resources Committee, attended the meeting.

---

#### WASHINGTON PLANNING COUNCIL ISSUES REPORT ON RECLAMATION

---

THE IOWA STATE PLANNING BOARD library is in receipt of an attractive publication of the Washington State Planning Council, treating with Reclamation as a sound national policy. It is an inquiry into the effects of irrigation development on local, state and national economy, as demonstrated by the Yakima Valley.

Since the World War the economic depression which has existed in agriculture has led to the questioning, by many, of the soundness of further land reclamation by irrigation.

This report seeks to answer the questions: Has the national policy of reclamation of arid lands as carried out by the reclamation law of June 17, 1902 and its amendments, been justified by

results; and should this policy be continued on a rational basis, properly related to a sound national land use program?

The questions are answered in the affirmative, justified on the following grounds: (1) Federal reclamation projects repay directly to the government the moneys invested in them as required by reclamation law; (2) They contribute substantially to the nation's wealth; (3) They support national industries and services such as eastern manufacturing plants, transcontinental freight carriers, telegraph and postal services; (4) They do not produce crops which add to or aggravate present national surpluses, since these projects produce only relatively small quantities of corn, cotton, wheat and tobacco; (5) and finally, the irrigation development in the west cannot be carried on by any other agency than the national government.

The book is attractively done, with good illustrations, and supporting data, relating to the Yakima Valley project.

---

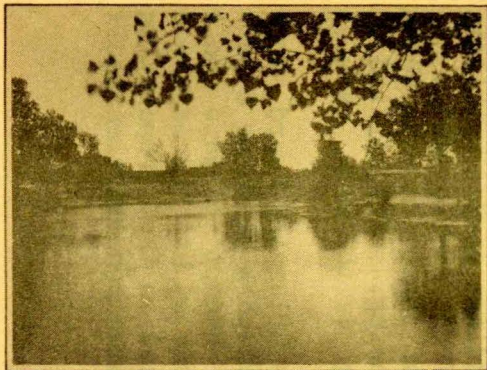
#### PLANNED PARK DEVELOPMENTS

---

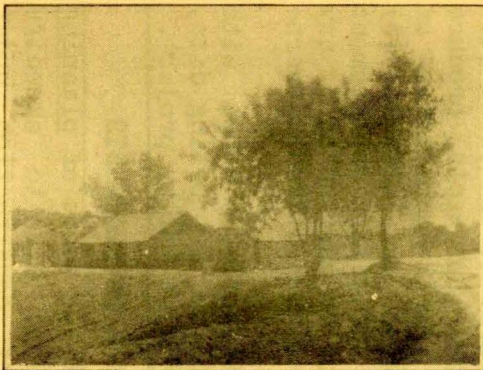
TO DEMONSTRATE the value of planning before development, also to expedite the beginning of construction under F. E. R. A. and W. P. A. work programs, the Iowa State Planning Board designing staff has prepared preliminary, general or detailed plans for 84 different state and local recreational areas and preserves, including parks, athletic fields and waterfront developments.

Distribution of these areas is shown on the map following. Illustrated on the following page is the city park at LeMars.

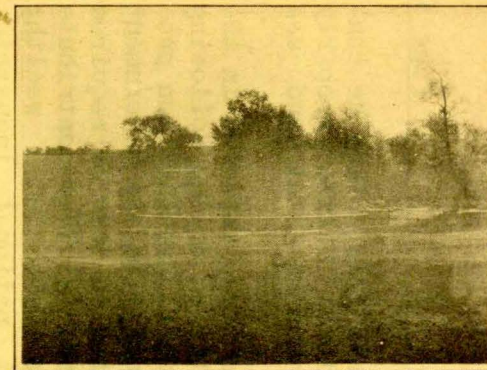
The Iowa State Planning Board does not consider such park planning a permanent function, except perhaps on a demonstrational basis, but has answered the call for speed in the preparation of plans from which construction could proceed.



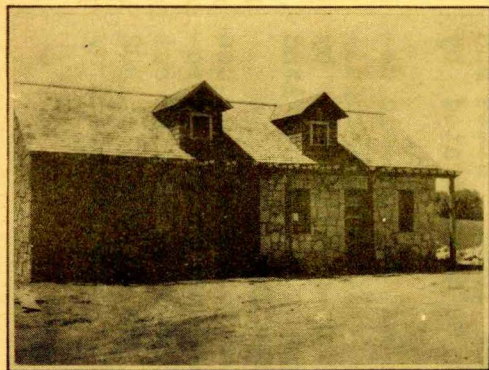
NORTH LAKE AND BATH HOUSE



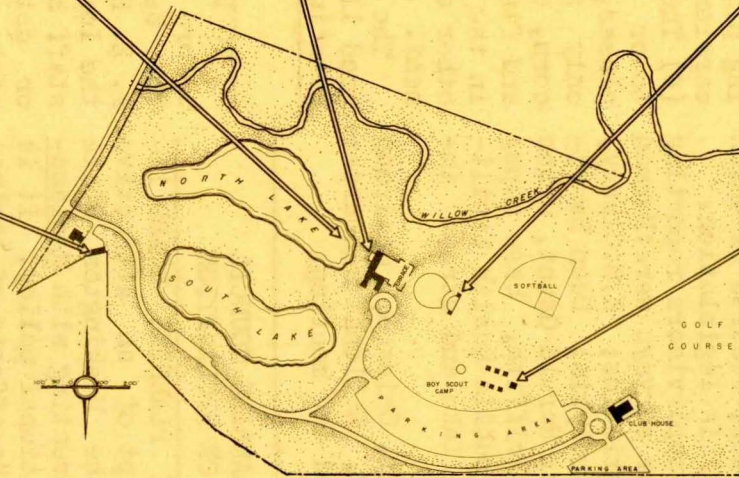
BATH HOUSE



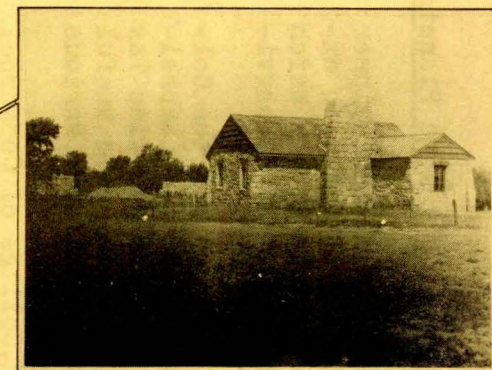
AMPHITHEATRE



SERVICE BUILDING



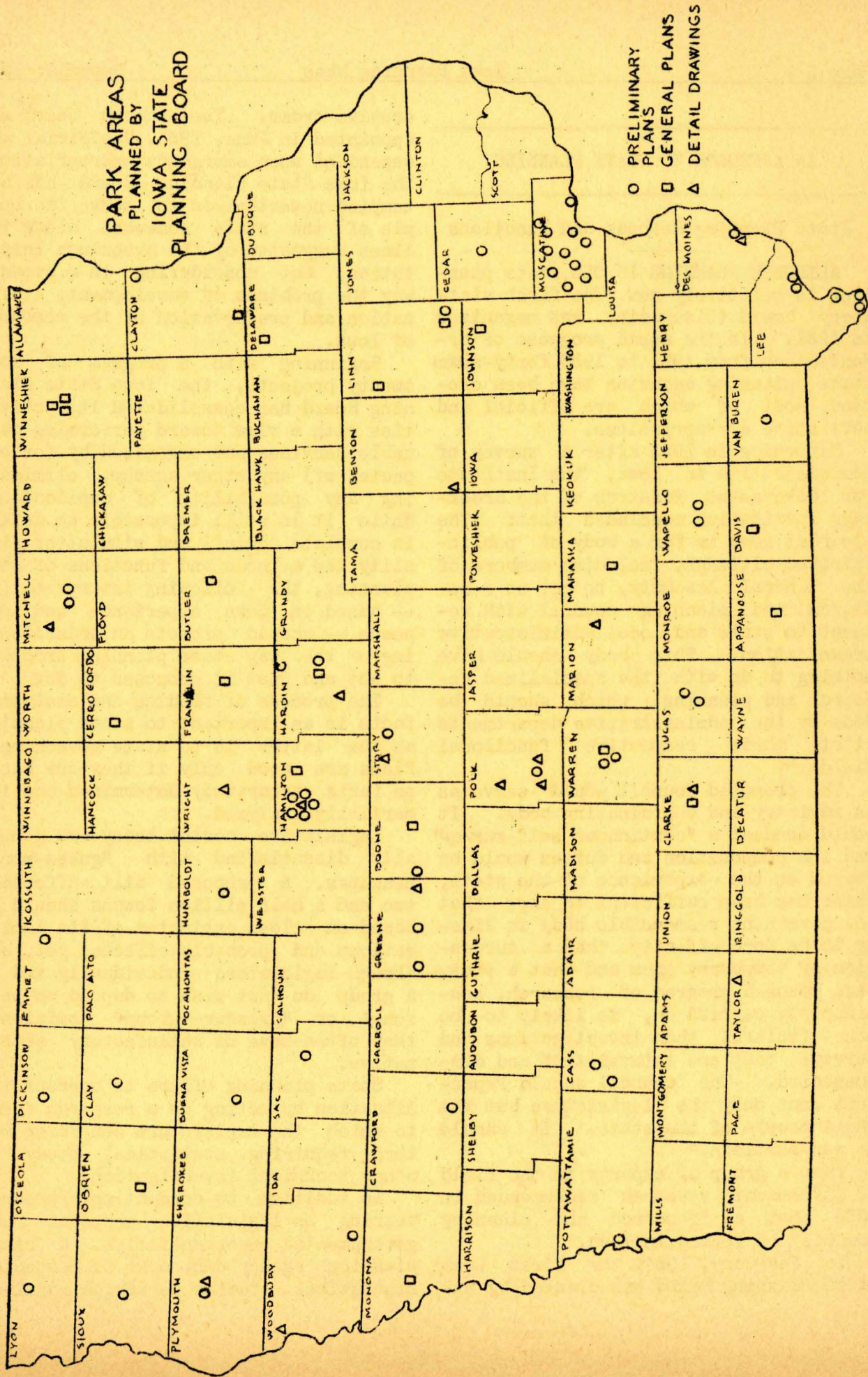
GENERAL PLAN



BOY SCOUT LODGE

**CITY PARK**  
 LE MARS IOWA  
 DEMONSTRATION PROJECT  
 DESIGNED BY  
 THE IOWA STATE PLANNING BOARD

# PARK AREAS PLANNED BY IOWA STATE PLANNING BOARD



- PRELIMINARY PLANS
- GENERAL PLANS
- △ DETAIL DRAWINGS

---

## AN APPROACH TO STATE PLANNING

---

### State Planning Methods and Functions

ALTHOUGH PLANNING IS OLD, state planning is relatively new. The first statutory board (Wisconsin) was organized in 1931. In the rapid progress of organization from 1931 to 1936 forty-seven state planning agencies have been created, most of which are official and have state appropriations.

Reporting in 1933 after a survey of administration in Iowa, the Institute for Government Research of the Brookings Institution concluded that: "The apparent need is for a body of public-spirited citizens, including members of the General Assembly, to act as a research and planning council with respect to state and local administrative organization. This body should have nothing to do with the specialized research and planning, which should be done by the administrative departments within their respective functional fields."

The proposed council would serve as an advisory and coordinating body. It would conduct a "continuous self-survey" and its composition and duties would be "based on the experience of the state, which has been sufficient to show that one permanent responsible body is likely to be more effective than a succession of temporary ones and that a state-wide planned program of research, continuously carried on, is likely to be more fruitful than investigations and surveys that are intermittent and disconnected. The council should represent not only the legislature but the whole people of the state. It should be non-partisan."

Thus a group of experts in the field of government research recommended in 1933 that a "research and planning council" be formed in Iowa.

In February, 1934, the first Iowa State Planning Board was created by ex-

ecutive order. The second board was appointed in June, 1935. Unofficial and dependent upon emergency appropriations, the Iowa State Planning Board has attempted nevertheless to serve the people of the state somewhat along the lines suggested by the Brookings Institution, but considering in a broader way the problems of development, utilization and preservation of the resources of Iowa.

Beginning with a program of some twenty projects, the Iowa State Planning Board has consolidated its activities with a view toward performing valuable services not organized by (or expected of) any other agency, eliminating any possibility of duplication. While it is still impossible to define in complete detail and with utter finality the methods and functions of state planning, the following interpretation -- based on Iowa experience and Iowa needs -- should promote an understanding of the way state planning proposes to act and what it proposes to do.

The process of finding and analyzing facts is as important to state planning as the latter is to state government. Plans are good only if they are based on facts accurately determined and impartially analyzed.

Legislative bodies today are generally dissatisfied with "guess-work" measures. A proposed bill affecting two and a half million Iowans should be based on close estimates of its implications and probable effects; yet, although legislators individually and as a group do not wish to depend on personal or "pressure-group" opinions, they often have no satisfactory alternative.

State planning offers to correct this situation by acting as a research agency to which the legislature can refer matters requiring statistical study or other technical investigation.

In addition to conducting research bearing on legislative proposals and governmental reorganization, a state planning agency can make such special statistical studies as may be required



by the state executive department with respect to problems not falling within the jurisdiction of any other one state agency but relating to matters of state-wide importance.

At regular intervals the state planning agency should report its own progress and accomplishments, indicate state problems requiring attention and suggest programs of research or action. These periodic reports should summarize existing conditions and trends in the state, insofar as they concern state planning, and should be directed to the general public as well as all branches of the state government.

In the final chapter on "Research and Planning" in the Brookings Institution's report on its survey of administration in Iowa, the authors suggested that Iowa might "so unify and coordinate its administrative, institutional, and intellectual resources as to obviate in the future the need of special and blanket surveys by outside specialists".

Lamenting the lack of an understanding relationship between research groups and the state government, and the absence of an effective follow-up after the publication of survey reports, the Brookings Institution proposed that the situation be corrected by the organization of a continuous self-survey -- a "research and planning council".

An opportunity for coordination exists in the field of government research. At present, according to the Brookings report: "Much of the research work done in Iowa is ill-timed and uncoordinated. Tax studies are valuable at one time; they are likely to be ineffective at another. Studies of county government should accompany studies of state government. When they are made at different times, one set of studies is likely to be out-of-date and forgotten before the other is finished."

To change this condition, the state planning agency should be assigned the duty of keeping an inventory of recent and current government research con-

ducted at institutions of higher education, etc., and the further duty of keeping such institutions informed of timely subjects for government research.

The increasing integration of state and federal activities in such fields as public works, relief administration, social security, etc., creates a further need for a coordinating agency in each state.

To encourage and aid Iowa counties and towns in their own self-analysis and planning programs, the state planning agency can provide a consulting service to answer requests from county and town planning groups. Such service would help the local groups organize surveys and studies, suggest methods of analysis and further procedure, but leave to the people of the local community the actual planning of measures for development and conservation of their resources.

The state planning agency should maintain contacts with state and federal mapping services -- should prepare and keep up to date a series of base maps for all Iowa counties and townships. These should be available to other state departments and to the public at cost. Maps of a special nature such as population distribution maps, uniform county school maps, etc., should be included when their nature and use warrant their preparation as part of a state mapping program.

One of the most important jobs of state planning is the preparation of a long-time public works program. Considerations of employment, public health and safety, recreation and many other factors are involved. Often it is necessary to choose between projects, to rank them as to priority, to rule against some because of their unsuitable character. A state planning agency is free to judge impartially, to consider all aspects and implications of each project, to review well in advance so as to avoid the illconsidered recommendations which result from haste.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

LA GUARDIA PLEADS FOR  
"NEW WAY OF LIVING"

---

IN WELCOMING THE DELEGATES to the New York Herald Tribune's Forum on Current Problems, recently, Mayor F. H. La Guardia, of New York, made an eloquent plea for the kind of national and local government which will help the physical sciences in the achievement of the "New Way of Living" for the masses of the people. To quote in part:

"Science could stop today and not do another thing for a hundred years and the government could not catch up with it. This is due, not to lack of intelligence, but entirely to the selfishness and greed of men.

"The people of our country have been given the educational background and the spiritual development to enjoy the better, the beautiful things of life. They are hungry for them. They ask, and yet while science has created 'the new way of living' in comfort and ease, and happiness, the political and economic way has yet to be found....

"Discoveries and inventions in the field of food have developed to the degree of assuring healthy babies, sound bodies and long lives, and yet we have rickets and undernourished children and people in want. Ventilation and fireproofing, decoration and landscaping have progressed to the state of blueprints and designs for sanitary, cheerful, comfortable housing, and yet we have firetrap, disease-breeding, dismal tenements.

"What a paradox in a country that will cheer and build monuments, and properly so, to inventors and scientists and discoverers of these new machines, but will seek to ostracize and brand another a radical who seeks to create the laws and establish the economics to make these things possible for all of the people.....

"Laws must keep abreast of science.. A country which has the inventive genius to create, develop and produce the

wonders of which you will hear in the course of this discussion of 'The New Way of Living' certainly must have the genius of finding a way to make this new way a reality."- The American City.

---

RECREATIONAL AREAS TRANSFERRED

---

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT recently signed the Executive Order completing transfer of recreational demonstration areas from the Resettlement Administration to the Department of the Interior.

The Order, signed November 14, places under the Interior Department the acquisition of lands as well as the development of areas, and embraces monies, options, contracts and all personnel, all official records, and other facilities necessary for prosecution of the program.

Although full responsibility for development of the recreational demonstration projects was vested in the National Park Service last August, following their transfer from the Resettlement Administration, responsibility for acquiring title to the lands and making payment therefor, remained with the Resettlement Administration until the Executive Order of November 14 transferred this responsibility to the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

Forty-six areas, located in 24 states, most of them near enough to large industrial centers to serve as outlets for the city dwellers of limited means, whose opportunities for open-air recreation have been few, are included in this transfer. Some half dozen had been sufficiently developed last summer to be put to use, and on 32 of the projects organized camping facilities have been or are to be built.

Recreation facilities of this type are proved and pressing needs of the low-income portion of the public, and it is the belief of the National Park Service that their development will mark one of the most popular and wholesome methods of land utilization ever attempted by any Government.

LOW COST HOUSING AND "GOVERNMENT COMPETITION".

---

THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND employment of the National Association of Manufacturers referred in a recent report to the "threat of federal competition in the normal housing field".

This report coincided almost exactly with the statement of Howard A. Gray, director of the P. W. A. housing division that "while only 500 families actually have moved into federally built low-cost dwellings, 26,186 workers have been given direct employment at the 50 project sites".

More important, however, to the individuals interested in low cost or low rent housing was the fact that, while objecting to "government competition", the Manufacturers' committee also urged industrialists to give their attention to the need of low cost and low rent housing in the cost range of two to three thousand dollars.

Recognizing a need for economy all along the line if two and three thousand dollar homes are to be made available, the committee expressed the view that "only by coordinated effort and mutual cooperation among various groups which supply land, materials, credit and technicians and craftsmen who add the services which make a home possible, can the normal processes of evolution be speeded to solve this important economic and social problem". The committee urged:

1. Reduction of the tax load on homes.

2. Research by producers as to the manner in which better homes can be provided at less cost.

3. Plans by employers and employees for more continuous employment in the building industries whereby a larger annual return will be assured the worker and lower unit costs will result. (This presumably means lower hourly wages, higher yearly pay.)

4. Design by engineers and archi-

fects of more satisfactory homes for the great bulk of the people.

5. Development by financial institutions of programs to aid families of small means to own homes safely and permit those seeking safe investments of funds new opportunities for putting their funds to work.

6. Furnishing by employers of specific advice and assistance to employees in home buying and rental problems.

The committee estimated the present housing requirements in America at around 6,000,000 home units.

As demonstrated by these two reports, there is more to be had from a government housing program than the houses built under it. Unfavorable though certain groups may be to government competition in housing, to the prospective home owner at least, it means the introduction of competition to a field where it did not exist before. Until the government began thinking about low-cost housing for persons in the lower income brackets, the building industries had taken scant notice of the field, assuming that these people would go on living in slums to the end of time.

In fields where competition among private enterprises has assured consumers of good, low-cost products, there has been no talk of "government competition." It is only in fields where a lack of keen competition has led to stagnation and indifference to anything other than maintenance of the status quo that the government has needed to step in and give a needed impetus.

Low cost government housing has provided five hundred families with homes. If in addition it has stirred a lethargic private enterprise into action by focusing attention on a field formerly ignored, it may prove a measure of competition healthful to industry as well as to the families directly benefited.

I O W A   S T A T E   P L A N N I N G   B O A R D

H. H. Kildee, Chairman . . . . . Dean of Agriculture, Iowa State College  
T. R. Agg . . . . . Dean of Engineering, Iowa State College  
Walter L. Bierring . . . . . State Health Commissioner  
J. N. Darling . . . . . President, General Wildlife Federation  
Mrs. Henry Frankel . . . . . Iowa State Conservation Commission  
P. F. Hopkins . . . . . Director, Iowa Public Works Administration  
George Keller . . . Administrator, Iowa Works Progress Administration  
Chester A. Phillips . . . . . Dean of Commerce, State University of Iowa  
Agnes Samuelson . . . . . State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
A. C. Trowbridge . . . . . State Geologist  
Fred White . . . . . Chief Engineer, Iowa Highway Commission

\* \* \* \* \*

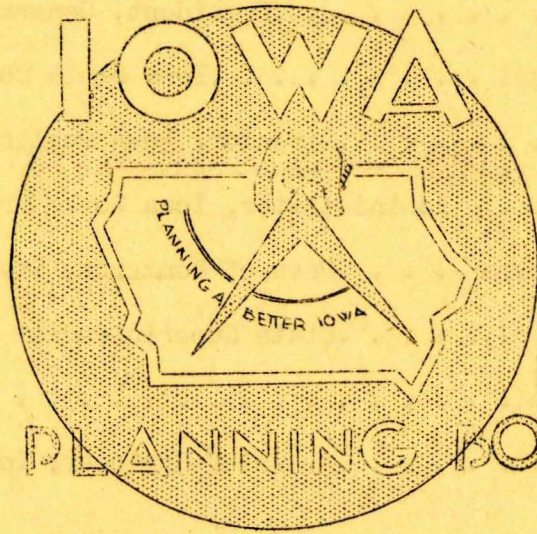
R. H. Matson . . . . . Director  
A. H. Wieters . . . . . Secretary

\* \* \* \* \*

C. M. Moderwell, District Chairman . . . . . National Resources Committee  
P. H. Elwood, Jr., Consultant . . . . . National Resources Committee

Material in the "Iowa Planning News" is assembled, edited and published, without review by the members of the Iowa State Planning Board itself. Additional items, corrections or new addresses for our mailing list will be welcome.

The "Iowa Planning News" is published by the Iowa State Planning Board under Federal Project No. 3 of the Works Progress Administration.



STATE PLANNING BOARD