The Seeds of Regionalism

Harland Bartholomew and the Origins of St. Louis Regionalism

By Mark Abbott

Harland Bartholomew at mid-century.
(Photo: Parsons/HBA)

St. Louis is usually not associated with regionalism. Some would even contend that St. Louisans take a perverse pride in their disjointed approach to regional issues. Local urban scholar Terry Jones goes so far as to argue that St. Louis is "fragmented by design."[1] What most St. Louisans do not realize, however, is that St. Louis was at the forefront of thinking about regional governance and regional planning for much of the twentieth century.

(Photo: Christopher Duggan, Lindenwood University)

In a way, this is not too surprising. Circumstances forced it to be. Because of the city/county divorce of 1876 where St. Louis City became a separate county from St. Louis County, the region was already hamstrung in its approach to metropolitan issues during the nineteenth century. While the city boundaries that were carved out in the 1876 agreement were anticipated to give the city enough room to grow for a hundred years or more, the streetcar brought development to the western fringes in less than half a generation.[2] Even before the arrival of the automobile, which accelerated urban growth, city leaders were talking about the need to annex parts of the county to control development taking place in the suburbs. By the time of the 1907 Civic League plan—the first comprehensive city plan in the country—the first generation of St. Louis planners was already quite aware that the "real city" was larger than the political city of St. Louis, and the city/county split was already putting this real St. Louis at a disadvantage in its competition with other major metropolitan areas around the country.[3]

Although legions of St. Louisans—both inside and outside the old political city—have attempted to formulate solutions to St. Louis' regional dilemma, the one person who stands out is Harland Bartholomew, the long time director of St. Louis' city planning department, as well as a noted professor of urban planning at the University of Illinois and the founder of the world's largest planning firm, Harland Bartholomew and Associates (HBA), which was headquartered in St. Louis. While Bartholomew has come under intense scrutiny during the last year due to Colin Gordon's criticism of his and HBA's role in contributing to the region's hyper-racial segregation in his book, *Mapping Decline*, Bartholomew was a leader both in the region and nationally in promoting regional coordination to direct out-of-control urban growth caused by suburbanization a generation ago.[4] Today, many St. Louis planners and metropolitan officials lament the fact that the region does not possess some form of metropolitan government or have a metropolitan plan. Yet Bartholomew and HBA drafted a guide or an outline of what a regional government might look like and what a regional plan might entail as early as 1948 for the Metropolitan Plan Association. As the region now faces the prospect of slipping into the third tier of American cities, maybe it is time to follow Bartholomew's lead sixty years later.

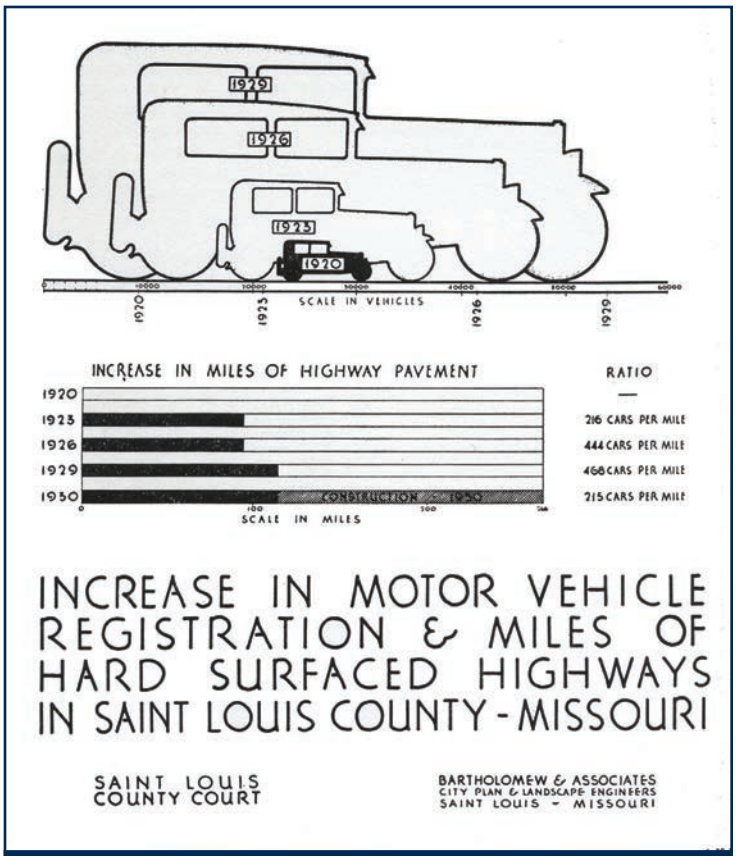
THE EMERGENCE OF ST. LOUIS REGIONALISM

Although St. Louis has a national reputation for its fragmented state, cities across America have been combating regional political disorganization since before the Civil War. Indeed, Boston was ringed by peripheral towns within six years of its founding in 1630. Even St. Louis had suburbs, such as Carondolet, before 1800. However, before the Civil War and well after, most suburbs around the country eagerly sought annexation to defray the cost of desired services. Consequently, regional coordination was seldom an issue since suburbs generally followed the lead of the central city whenever a particular situation demanded a regional response in an effort to entice the central city into wanting to annex them.

But as cities became larger through industrialization and with the advent of the streetcar, some suburbs—especially the more affluent ones—deliberately sought to avoid annexation to escape central city control and central city taxes. By 1900, most major American cities were ringed by suburbs that were determined to remain separate from the central city. Of course, St. Louis was even more entrenched in this pattern than most other cities because of the city/county divorce of 1876, as well as the fact that the Mississippi was both a natural and a political divider. While most St. Louisans did not anticipate that the city would grow out to its borders within a generation of the city/county split, by the time of the World's Fair in 1904, already St. Louis and Clayton were almost touching to the west and to the east, with several industrial suburbs sprouting up on the other side of the Mississippi in Illinois.

By the turn of the century, suburbanization was already causing regional problems for many American cities. The need to coordinate streetcar lines, provide water and sewer service, build and pave streets, and control pollution did not stop at the city limits as the "real city" grew beyond political borders. In some states, cities found sympathetic state legislatures and courts that allowed them greater power to annex surrounding areas.[5] But in Missouri, there was little the legislature could do to help St. Louis. Because the 1875 legislation that established the eventual split between city and county had made St. Louis both a city and a county, any annexation made by the city required a statewide referendum. As a result, St. Louis had few options for coordinating activity in St. Louis County with developments in the city.

Although the Civic League alluded to the already negative impact that St. Louis' inability to annex was having on the city in its 1907 plan, it was ten years before St. Louis' new, young planner, Harland Bartholomew, was even more forceful in his observations concerning regional fragmentation. In a document entitled *The Problems of St. Louis*, Bartholomew listed "the extension of the city limits, or power of the city to secure greater uniformity and permanency of development" as one of the four principal problems confronting St. Louis.[6] As he explained, since 1900 "great increases have occurred outside the city limits and no concerted effort has been made to permit the city to benefit by the increase for which it is responsible." But according to Bartholomew, "population increase [was] not the most serious concern of St. Louis." For him, the real problem was that new factories were locating in the county even though there was still an abundance of appropriate vacant land in St. Louis itself. As a result, many residents, many of whom were quite affluent, were leaving the city, causing "several large, local,



Bartholomew's office often used this chart to demonstrate the need for planners to incorporate rapid expansion of automobiles. In this one, the density of cars on highways more than doubled during the 1920s.

(Photo: Guide plan, Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area...1948, Harland Bartholomew and Associates. University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries)

Labor Day weekend of 1926 also kicked off the political season, including this cartoon opposing annexation by suggesting that it would cause a mass migration.

(Photo: *St. Louis County Watchman Advocate*, September 7, 1926; State Historical Society of Missouri)

formerly exclusive residence areas [to be] deserted by original owners and occupants, only to rapidly deteriorate, or in some instances, to be completely abandoned, to the great detriment of the property and depreciation of property values."[7]

What Bartholomew did not anticipate in 1917 was that the problem was about to get much worse for not just St. Louis, but also for cities across the country. Although he would later become an expert on its impact and strategies for addressing the challenges it wrought, Bartholomew did not foresee the degree to which the automobile was about to totally restructure urban America. In 1917, the Model T had been around less than ten years, and there were fewer than 8 million cars in the United States. However, between 1920 and 1930, American car registrations mushroomed from eight million to 24 million. At the very time that the political boundaries of American cities were being frozen, the automobile was doubling the size of the streetcar city on which those boundaries were based. In 1907, the streetcar was taking people from University City's "the Loop" to downtown in approximately 45 minutes. By 1917, the automobile was taking people from Richmond Heights and Ladue, several miles farther west to downtown, in the same amount of time.[8]

By the 1920s, American city leaders were becoming aware that they were facing a crisis. While the growing size of the real city was straining the services of the political city—suburbanites were clogging city streets with their new cars—the central city did not have the revenue or the power to control this growth. Although most major American cities were able to expand by a limited amount, the two cities that were the most choked off from their suburbs were Boston and St. Louis. Consequently, they were the most aggressive in trying to rectify the situation. Both attempted to persuade their state legislatures to give them the power to consolidate their adjoining suburbs inside their political structures. Boston tried repeatedly in the 1920s to get legislative approval, but was unsuccessful. St. Louis was not only able to convince the legislature that it needed more latitude in adjusting its boundaries, but it was able to convince statewide voters as well. In 1924, Missourians approved a format for modifying the city boundaries. Under the scheme, a board of freeholders (property owners) would be formed—nine from the city and nine from the county—that would come up with a new city map that would be eventually voted on by the entire state.[9]

After a couple of missteps, the board finally came up with a plan in 1926 which called for the consolidation of the City of St. Louis with the entire County of St. Louis. In effect, the plan called for the creation of a municipality that would have been 553 square miles. The County's response to the plan was quick and devastating. The editor of the Webster Groves newspaper told his readers that Webster Groves "would gain absolutely nothing from such a plan" and that a union with the big city of St. Louis would result only in Webster Groves being bombarded by evil influences like "saloons, soft drink parlors, pool rooms, dance halls and this type of undesirable so-called amusements."[10] With World War I still fresh in his memory, one county probate judge likened St. Louis to Germany and its autocratic government under the Kaiser, recalling, "We sacrificed our men and money to preserve local self-government for Belgium and France." When the election finally came, St. Louis County voters showed their disdain for the plan by voting against it two to one. In one mostly rural precinct, the vote was 274 to one against the plan.[11] Although outstate voters were not as vehemently opposed to the enlarged St. Louis, they voted against it by a healthy margin as well.

Yet, proponents of regional governance in St. Louis were not deterred. They were ready to try again four years later. But this time they came up with a radically different approach. Unlike the scheme in 1926, St. Louis regionalists in 1930 did not propose consolidation, but federation. Taking their cue from London and the London County Council that had divided the 117-square-mile county of London into 28 semi-autonomous boroughs in 1888, champions of a federative metropolis in St. Louis, like those around the country, argued that a dual-level system brought efficiencies to region-wide governance while retaining local identity and control. Similar to the national government and the states, the idea was that different governments would perform different functions. Municipalities would have responsibility for some activities while the larger federative government would carry out those that were of concern to the entire region and which needed to be coordinated to realize the greatest efficiency and rationality. As urban historian Jon Teaford points out, the concept was aimed at suburbanites who liked suburban life, but saw the need to address metropolitan

concerns. "Such a scheme," Teaford maintains, "appealed to many of the twentieth-century Americans who sought a reconciliation between city and suburb."[12] It was a way of having the best of both worlds. Suburbanites could have the sense of community and local control of the suburb, but still realize the economies of scale associated with centralization.

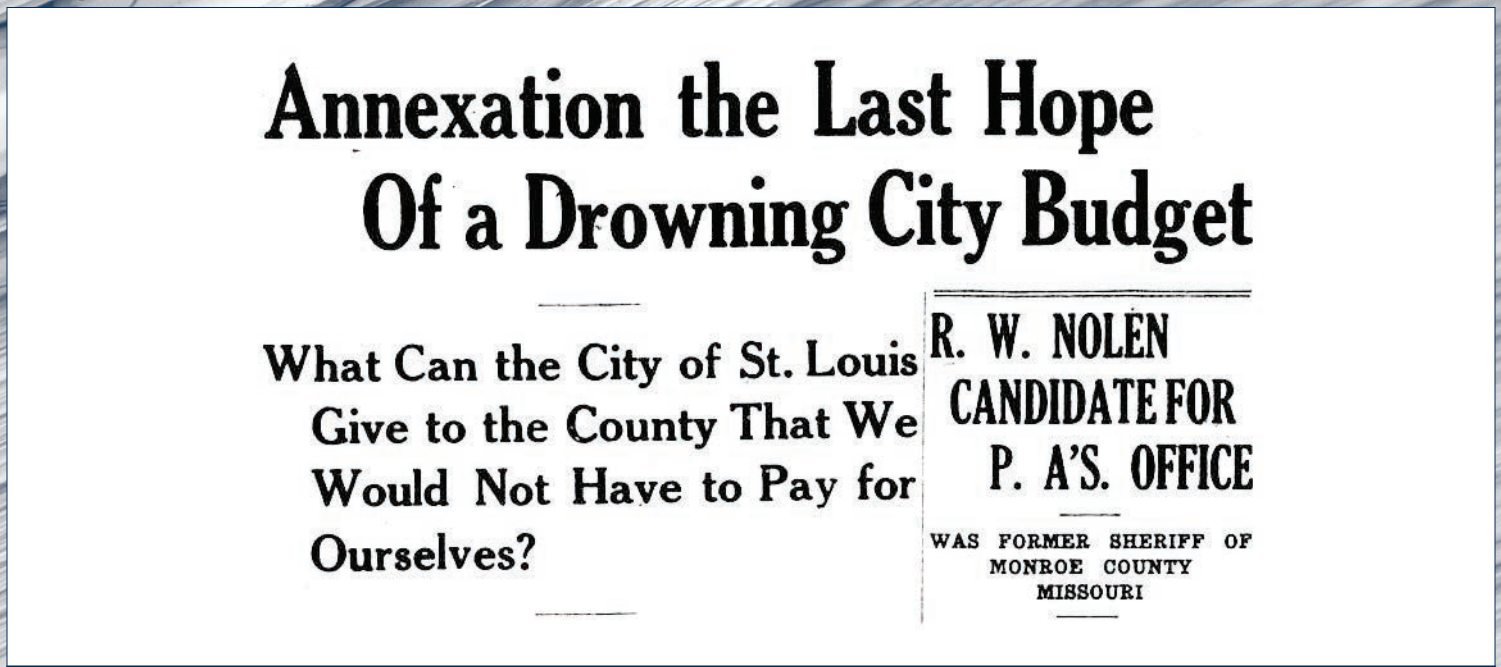
This idea of a federative metropolis had been discussed in a number of cities from the 1890s on. But St. Louis was only one of three cities (Cleveland and Pittsburgh were the other two) that attempted to push the idea through state governance for ratification. In St. Louis, what is interesting is that the push did not come from the central city, but the suburbs. Adjacent suburbs such as University City and Clayton had become home to many professionals and business-elites. These members of the new professional class, like their counterparts around the country, had been influenced by the ideas of efficiency experts like Frederick Winslow Taylor and wanted to apply the ideas of scientific management to governance. Devotees of rationality and order, these suburbanites were appalled by the wastefulness of the tremendous duplication of services that took place as each suburb tried to have its own school system, its own fire department, its own police department, and so forth. For them, the bottom line was getting better services for lower taxes.[13]

The leader of the federative model in St. Louis was Robert Roessel, the City Attorney in Webster Groves, who had been an active opponent of the 1926 consolidation scheme. Roessel and two of his anti-consolidation allies, Kirkwood businessman Joseph Matthews and Washington University Professor George Stephens, formed a committee sponsored by the St. Louis County Chamber of Commerce in 1929 to push for a federative construct. Bringing in federative government specialist Thomas Reed, Professor of Municipal Government at the University of Michigan, the committee developed a proposal for a "City of Greater St. Louis" and was able to successfully petition the state legislature to submit the proposal to a statewide vote in 1930.[14]

As in 1926, public sentiment proved to be violently divided. Outstate farmers seemed to be generally confused and apathetic about the issue. City businesses and the newspapers were for federation, but city politicians were generally against it, fearing a loss of clout. For the most part, the strongest suburban support came from inner ring, affluent suburbs such as University City and Richmond Heights. On the other hand, the greatest opposition came from the farmers in St. Louis County, as well as residents of detached suburbs, especially those with their own histories like Roessel's own Webster Groves. Indeed, the editor of the Webster Groves newspaper—the same editor who feared in 1926 that consolidation would bring pool halls and soda parlors to the city—suggested that if the petition passed, city police would replace local ones and that Webster Groves would end up like St. Louis where "gangsters run wild, murderers go uncaught and banks are robbed without any arrests."[15] In the end, the voters agreed with the Webster Groves editor. While the proposal won in the city and in a few close-in suburbs, it lost outstate and in most suburbs. In St. Louis County, the vote went 60/40 against. While the framers of the plan could have done more to specify what powers the new federative city would have, suburban residents were not ready to relinquish power to address regional interests in 1930.[16] Despite the fact that it took longer, federation plans were defeated in Pittsburgh and Cleveland as well.[17]

THE REGIONAL PLAN—A DIFFERENT APPROACH

By the mid-1920s, many regionalists across the country had resigned themselves to the improbability that any type of metropolitan consolidation would ever come about—at least not any time soon. Yet realizing that the automobile and industrialization had produced a new urban form almost overnight and that this "new" city presented new challenges and opportunities which demanded to be addressed, these "pragmatic" regionalists attempted to formulate an alternative strategy to consolidation and/or federation to confront the new metropolis. For those regionalists who were involved with or attracted to the new field of urban planning, they did not have far to look. Familiar with the concept of the comprehensive plan where cities would attempt to formulate an integrated or comprehensive tactical direction for the city as



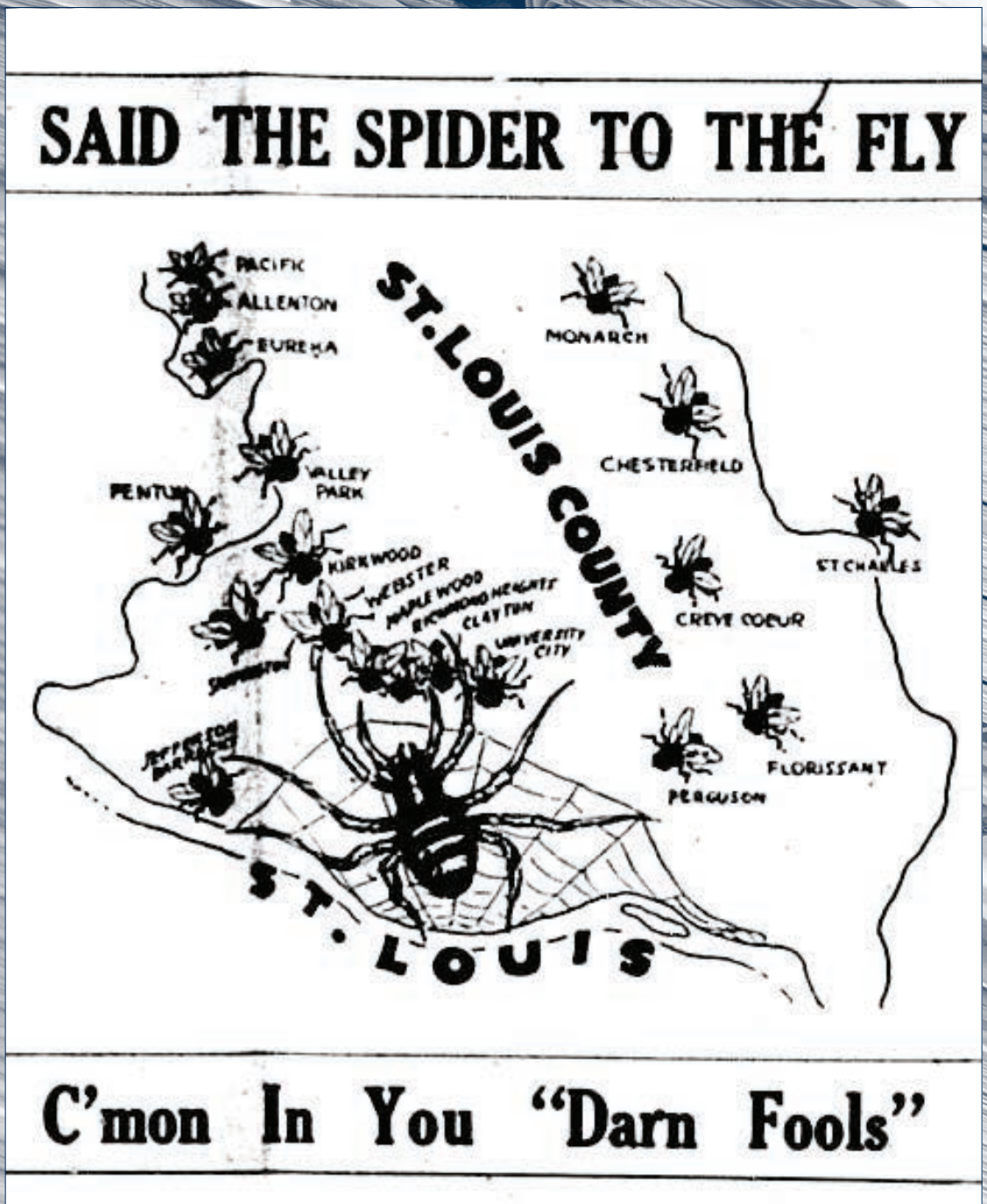
Annexation the Last Hope
Of a Drowning City Budget

What Can the City of St. Louis Give to the County That We Would Not Have to Pay for Ourselves?

R. W. NOLEN
CANDIDATE FOR
P. A'S. OFFICE

WAS FORMER SHERIFF OF MONROE COUNTY MISSOURI

Critics accused St. Louis city officials of nefariously proposing annexation to reap revenues from the burgeoning county.
(Photo: *St. Louis County Leader*, June 18, 1926; State Historical Society of Missouri)



In 1926, opponents of increased regionalism thought the city of St. Louis would swallow up the county and its interests, like a spider catching flies in its web.

(Photo: *St. Louis County Leader*, October 15, 1926; State Historical Society of Missouri)

Opponents of annexation thought taxes would increase, robbing citizens of hard-earned dollars during the Great Depression like a thug waiting to mug them from a dark alley.

(Photo: *St. Louis County Watchman Advocate*, May 10, 1930; State Historical Society of Missouri)

a whole for twenty years or more, these planning proponents advocated generating a comprehensive plan for the entire region and not just the central city. Such an approach would not deny local identity or control, but would seek to coordinate the actions and policies of counties and municipalities to address rationally metropolitan concerns common to the entire region.

The first efforts at formulating regional plans came on the coasts in the early 1920s. New York and Los Angeles began working on regional plans at almost the same time. In New York, the pressure came from the realization that the functional city stretched across three states. Transportation, sanitation, and economic activities of this vast region demanded coordination. In Los Angeles, the automobile had stimulated explosive growth in the 1910s and early 1920s that had overwhelmed the abilities of the suburban communities to provide adequate services. For both cities, something simply had to be done.

What is interesting is that St. Louis' own Harland Bartholomew was part of both regions' "all-star" planning teams. Seen as path-breaking work, these first two regional plans attracted "who was who" in the planning field in the early twenties. Although he was the youngest planner on both these teams, it was not surprising that Bartholomew had been sought to be a part of these massive undertakings. He and his firm already had an extensive list of completed, comprehensive plans around the country.

Due to the stir that both plans caused, other regions across the country drafted plans modeled after those of New York and Los Angeles. The most ambitious of this second wave of regional plans was prepared by San Francisco. The Regional Plan Association of San Francisco Bay Counties hired Bartholomew to coordinate the regional plan for the nine-county Bay Area. The first stage of the planning process was a report on the physical challenges facing the region. The report that Bartholomew generated became a template for regional planners across the country. Later, Bay Area planners would discover that he had identified virtually every environmental and infrastructural challenge that would plague the Bay Area for the next forty years.[18]

ST. LOUIS' ENTRY INTO REGIONAL PLANNING

While Bartholomew was quite active in regional planning throughout the 1920s, it was not until the end of the decade that St. Louis made its first foray into this new field with the formation of the St. Louis Regional Planning Federation in 1929. But, this new entity was essentially stillborn due to the onslaught of the Great Depression. Yet it was the Depression and the New Deal that brought the Federation and St. Louis regional planning to the forefront.

When Franklin Roosevelt came into office in 1933, he came with a long familiarity with and commitment to planning. Although many conservatives were convinced that he was intent on instituting Soviet-style state planning, Roosevelt was primarily interested in using planning to support rather than replace the market and free enterprise. Even the National Industrial Recovery Act, which created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) with its wage and price controls, was meant to save the existing business structure in the United States. But it was the Recovery Act that vastly expanded planning in American life in the thirties and was the force that brought regional planning to life in St. Louis.

Just days before the 1930 election, the *St. Louis County Leader* ran this cartoon on the front page, featuring a taxpayer fleeing the Four Horsemen of the annexation apocalypse, including threats of property confiscation.

(Photo: *St. Louis County Leader*, October 31, 1930; State Historical Society of Missouri)

The tie between the Recovery Act and planning was Title II of the act that established the Public Works Administration (PWA), which was designed to carry out and stimulate work relief projects. Harold Ickes, who was Secretary of the Interior and was over the agency in which the PWA was placed, created the National Planning Board to advise him on the selection and scheduling of these projects. While Ickes saw the immediate use of the Board in advising him on work relief projects, he encouraged the Board to stimulate state and local planning.

One of the initiatives which the Board eventually undertook was the formation of a subcommittee to oversee metropolitan or regional planning projects. Before the ink was dry authorizing the project, the St. Louis Federation applied for funds to support the preparation of a regional or metropolitan plan. At the Board's suggestion, the Federation was transformed into a commission that had representatives from the city government and seven surrounding counties. The first act of this new commission was hiring Bartholomew to write a preliminary report on regional conditions and recommendations. After this preliminary report, the commission authorized a follow-up report by Bartholomew, released in 1936. In this report, Bartholomew recommended forming a five-member agency that would be established by the Illinois and Missouri legislatures and would direct development throughout the bi-state region. Naturally, having been an active foot soldier in the regional planning movement for fifteen years, Bartholomew went on to recommend that one of the first acts of this new agency should be the preparation and adoption of a metropolitan plan. The emphasis of this plan, Bartholomew suggested, would be on sanitation, transportation, highways, and recreation problems facing the St. Louis metropolitan region.[19] It looked like Bartholomew was finally on his way to drafting a regional plan for his own region.

THE METROPOLITAN PLAN ASSOCIATION AND THE 1948 GUIDE PLAN

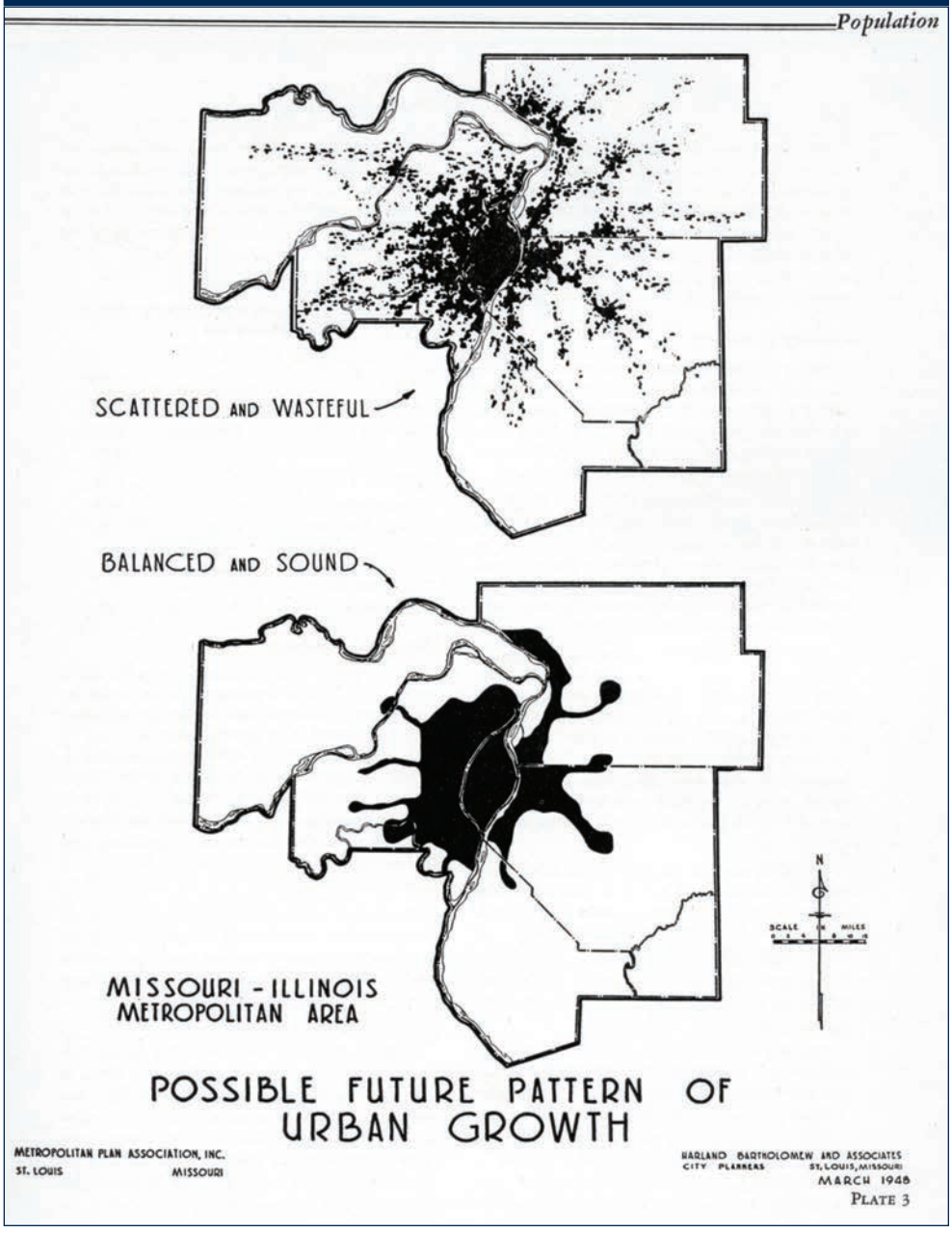
But again, Bartholomew was thwarted by the timing of events. A new economic downturn and World War II got in his way. As it did for cities around the country, the recession of 1937 and the onset of the war derailed planning in St. Louis. While the New Deal had stimulated planning activity, FDR's efforts to reduce spending and the mounting deficit in his second term took away the one source of planning support during the Great Depression. Although World War II "cured" the Depression, the war diverted all federal monies away from unnecessary social or economic activities, like planning, which were not seen as crucial to the war effort or maintaining the home front.

However, the war would ultimately lead many people to take city and regional planning even more seriously. The devastation of European cities, especially those in England that had withstood tremendous bombing, forced Europeans to contemplate how they were going to restructure their cities even before the end of the war. In America, a similar frame of mind was emerging. By the end of the war, most American cities had experienced a fifteen-year hiatus from development, and urban areas that had started to show signs of disinvestment before the Depression were in a catastrophic state of disrepair. Moreover, what building had occurred during the war had taken place in the suburbs, straining even further the overburdened regional services. Like their European colleagues, American planners were looking at the end of the war as both an imperative and an opportunity to rebuild the metropolis.

Most Americans know the story of "urban renewal" that brought about public housing, central city freeways, and massive clearance of perceived slum areas in the postwar period. What most people

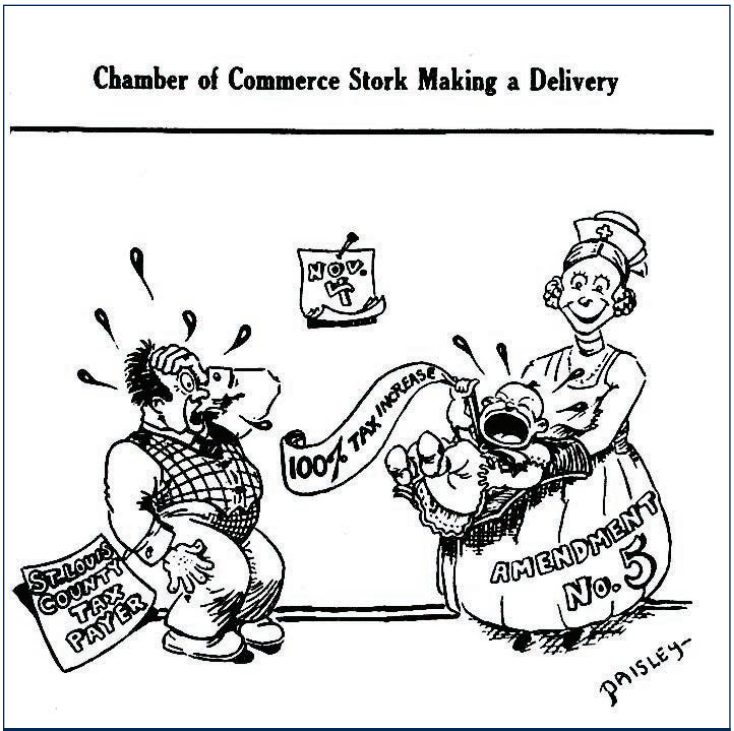
Bartholomew was one of the first planners to use the word "sprawl" to describe haphazard suburban growth. What he proposed instead was managed metropolitan growth where new development would be funneled out along transportation and infrastructure corridors that would maximize the use of resources and preserve open space—an idea advocated by today's environmentalists.

(Photo: Guide plan, Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area...1948, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, p. 15. University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries)



When the City of St. Louis acquired Lambert Field in 1927, it became the first municipal airport in the United States. This terminal at Lambert, designed by Minoru Yamasaki, was completed in 1956. (Photo: Christopher Duggan, Lindenwood University)

do not know is that Bartholomew was a central character in this story in St. Louis and elsewhere. His 1947 Comprehensive Plan for St. Louis is perhaps the most famous—some critics would say infamous—blueprint for rebuilding the American inner city.[20] It was this document that laid the foundation for projects like the Mill Creek Redevelopment Project, the Pruitt-Igoe Public Housing Project (though Bartholomew did not approve of high-rise public housing), and the expansion of Highway U.S. 40 in the 1950s and 1960s.[21]



Cartoons such as this one appeared in two St. Louis county newspapers on the same day, threatening a major tax increase through annexation that would be as unexpected as a crying newborn.
(Photo: *St. Louis County Watchman Advocate* and *St. Louis County Leader*, October 24, 1930; State Historical Society of Missouri)

What most people do not realize is that planners of the period, especially Bartholomew, saw the remaking of the American city as a two-stage process. Like many of his fellow planners of the period, Bartholomew felt that the central cities needed to be rebuilt, but this had to be accompanied by the simultaneous restructuring of the periphery. If suburban growth was not controlled, the infrastructure needs alone of the new developments would overwhelm municipal governance and resources. In effect, each region would be building a parallel city, each with its own separate sewers, water system, highways, utilities, and public buildings. As they did so, regions would be not only shortchanging the present, but the future, too. In Bartholomew's mind, the impending post-war situation convinced him even more of something that he had been thinking for twenty years. The new city demanded not only metropolitan planning but also the power to implement those plans on a regional basis.

Consequently, Bartholomew was undoubtedly behind the creation of a new regional citizens' group in St. Louis in 1944 called the Metropolitan Plan Association (MPA), which took up his call in the 1936 report for a new governing body that would direct regional development and planning. While it took three years to accomplish, the first order of business for the MPA was lobbying for legislation in both Illinois and Missouri to create an interim commission to "prepare a program of organization and administration whereby the affected communities of the area may most effectively plan and guide the development of the area in matters which are of concern to the area as a whole." The ultimate goal of Bartholomew and the MPA was for this commission to study "the advisability of establishing a permanent bi-state administrative body."[22]

Yet feeling that time was of the essence and that it might take years for this bi-state agency to be created, Bartholomew and the MPA felt it was necessary to outline what a metropolitan plan was and what this proposed bi-state agency might look like. So almost immediately after passage of the legislation, MPA hired HBA to

prepare a "guide plan" for the St. Louis metropolitan region.

As Malcolm Elliott, the president of the Association, explained in his foreword, the purpose of the plan was "to bring into clearer focus the major metropolitan-wide development problems." Moreover, it was intended to show "the proper relationship of these problems to each other and to the development of the whole metropolitan area as integral parts of one great interdependent economic unit." However, Elliott argued, the main value of the guide plan was in giving the new Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan Development Commission "a starting-point for its deliberations and in giving them a reliable and comprehensive view of the metropolitan situation."[23]

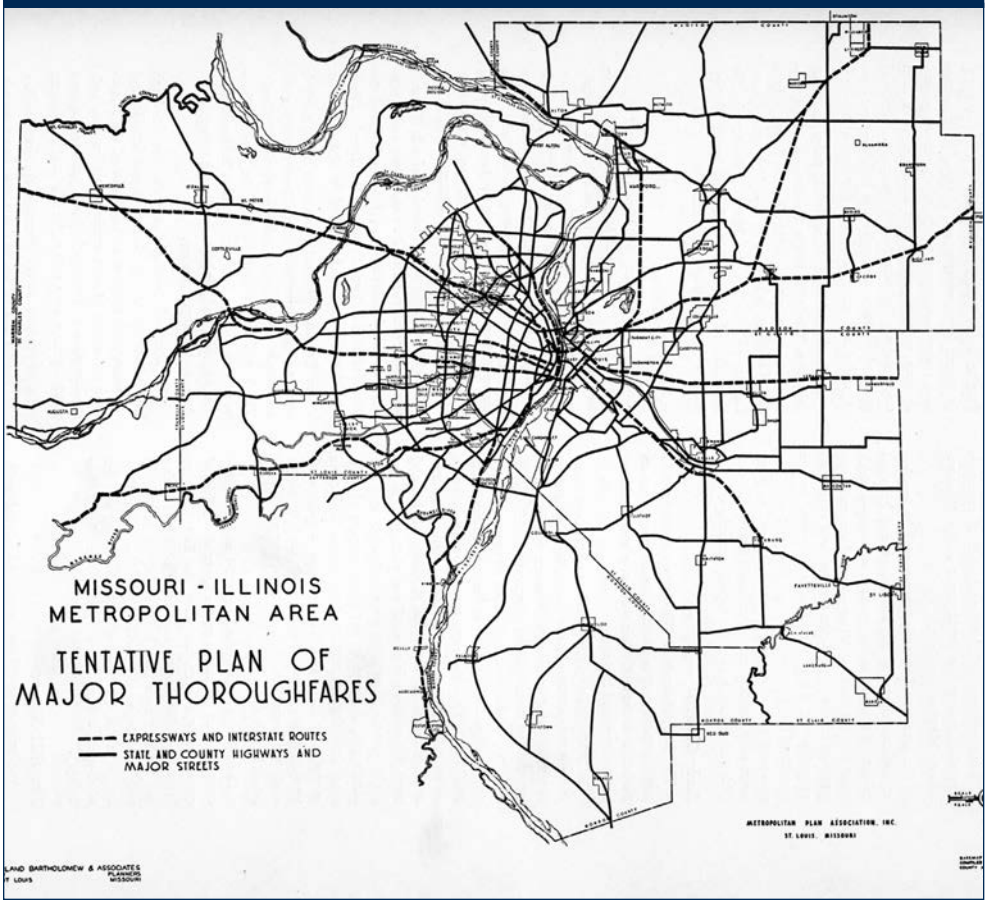
The plan was a concise document. It was only 54 pages long including introductory material plus plats and tables. The body of the plan was divided into four main sections that grouped the reports of the fourteen committees into which the MPA was divided, as well as a concluding essay on the function of the proposed permanent metropolitan agency.

But before discussing his main planning elements, Bartholomew opened the plan by laying the foundation of why a regional plan was necessary in the first place. He most wanted to convince St. Louisans, both those living in the city and those who resided in the suburbs, that the study area of the plan (which included the City of St. Louis plus St. Charles, St. Louis, Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties) was "basically just one big city." As Bartholomew explained in his introductory essay, the region had become an "urban community grown large," because of its geographical location, "unusual transportation facilities," natural resources, and the "enterprise of its people." But for Bartholomew this was both a good thing and a bad thing. Although the St. Louis region had become one of the largest metropolises in America, "growth brings change," Bartholomew reminded his readers. This region had outgrown the facilities that had served the pre-automotive city. What this meant, according to Bartholomew, was that these facilities had to "be re-designed and supplemented in scale with the changing city—the modern metropolitan community."[24]

Bartholomew went on to ask rhetorically, "Why hasn't this been done already?" He then responded, "The plain answer [was] that our governmental machinery has not expanded as rapidly as the physical growth." Instead of having one structure that could address the needs of the metropolitan area as a whole, a "multiplicity of governmental units" existed. In Bartholomew's mind, this had resulted in St. Louis becoming a disjointed, fragmented mess. "Plans for a great city," he told his fellow Greater St. Louisans, "cannot be prepared by a convention of communities." The modern metropolis required planning that was metropolitan in scope and perspective. "We need a new approach," he said, one that would lead to "big plans for the new big city." But for Bartholomew, planning was not enough. Plans, in and of themselves, would not allow the new, larger St. Louis to realize its true potential. According to Bartholomew, regional plans would be successful only if "certain administrative authority [was] established at the metropolitan level."[25]

Bartholomew was a major participant in the interstate movement from its inception in the 1930s to the passage of the National Defense Highway Act of 1956. Bartholomew's original plan called for more interstate and freeway coverage for Metro East, but no beltway (like I-270/I-255), arguing that beltways stimulate metropolitan sprawl rather than the "finger" growth pattern suggested here.

(Photo: Guide plan, Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area…1948, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, p. 25. University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries)

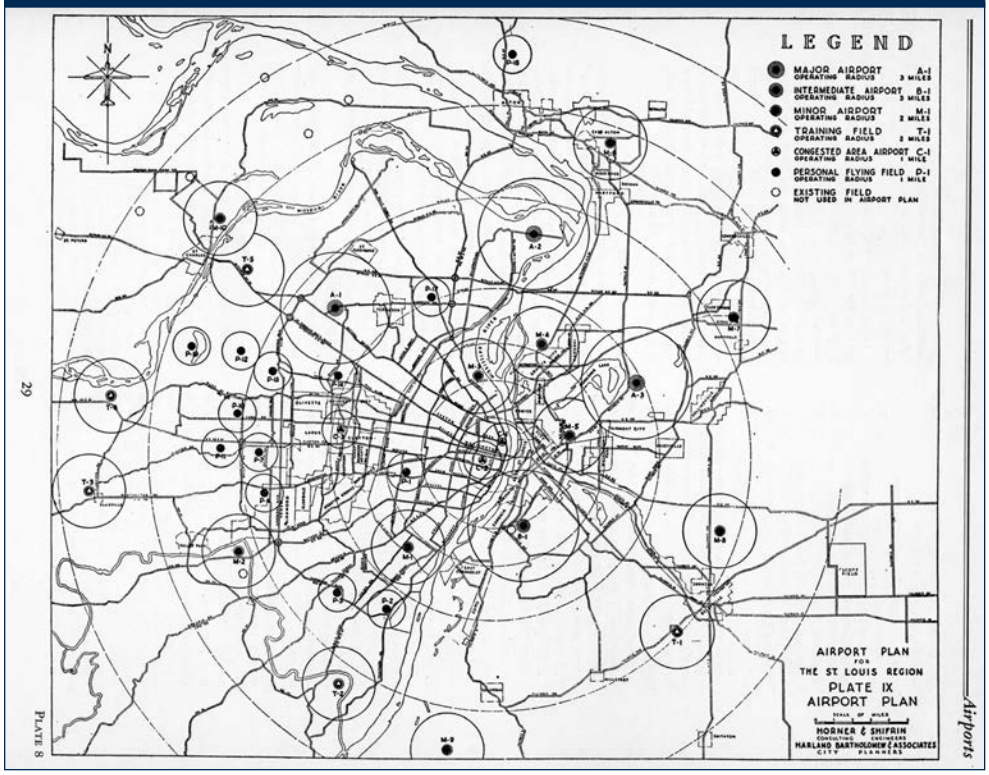


The problem for Bartholomew was that "city growth [was] not always advantageous." Although growth almost always led to increases in the number of available jobs and to commercial expansion, metropolitan growth could also lead to economic and social problems. Growth could cause a loss of affordable housing for the poor, traffic congestion, pollution, and myriad other problems. However, Bartholomew told his readers, "These are essentially difficulties that spring from neglect and poor planning rather than from basic faults inherent in the volume of growth." But, according to Bartholomew, growth did not have to result in a decline in the quality of life. Indeed, for him, the St. Louis region could realize its full potential by offering "its citizens definitely improved social and economic opportunities and gains." And for him, this could only occur if planning took place at a "scale commensurate with future needs and opportunities. It must be at the metropolitan level." If the new St. Louis did not plan at a regional level, Bartholomew warned, it would end up not only being a "vast heterogeneous sprawl," its continued growth, both in terms of population and economic strength, would also be choked off.[26]

Bartholomew was hardly some wild-eyed dreamer. He was every bit the realist and political pragmatist. What he had in mind was not a utopian neverland where a metropolitan super-government made all decisions according to a grand scheme (in fact, he had testified before the Board of Freeholders against consolidation in 1926).[27] Bartholomew knew that St.

Although many St. Louisans now laugh at Bartholomew's plan for 35 regional airports first suggested in his 1947 St. Louis Comprehensive Plan, he was merely trying to provide for the possibility of helicopters becoming commonplace. While that didn't come to pass, he was actually quite close to estimating the number of airports that were built.

(Photo: Guide plan, Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area…1948, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, p. 29. University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries)



Louisans—whether they were suburbanites or from the city—would never totally give up local control. Harking back to Reed and Roessel and the battle of 1930, Bartholomew framed his argument in terms of a balance between local and metropolitan-wide governance and planning. Likening neighborhoods and local communities to human cells, Bartholomew urged his fellow St. Louisans to see that "while the human body depends upon the health of its multitudinous cells, there are also vital single organs such as the heart, the lungs and the arteries, for example, upon which the body is equally dependent for maintenance and growth." For him, the parallel was obvious. "Unified, integrated functioning of both local and major organic parts," Bartholomew maintained, "is as essential to the large urban community as to the human body." Local communities should have control over their schools and parks, as well as their homes and local shopping areas. But the overall design and function of the metropolitan area would have to be regionally planned and governed because the whole metropolitan area would be affected. Bartholomew's message was clear. There were certain facilities that the whole community depended upon. "If good," he told St. Louisans, "the community will benefit. If not the community will be noticeably handicapped or even permanently crippled."[28]

None of Bartholomew's actual planning proposals were all that surprising in the context of a career that had already spanned almost forty years. At the heart of his regional planning strategy—as it was for his planning paradigm—was comprehensive land use and zoning plans. Just like in a city comprehensive plan, the main goal of the planner was to direct where growth was to take place and to explain why. While contemporary planners and regional policy experts are constantly talking about "suburban sprawl," it was a term that Bartholomew used sixty years ago for virtually the same reasons. Although he did not use the term "sustainability," Bartholomew was talking about essentially the same thing. However, for him, the bottom line was not environmental, but economic. The region could not continue to provide adequate services and to maintain a desirable quality of life if developers were allowed to build in a scattershot fashion. The key, according to Bartholomew, was to force suburban growth outward along well defined corridors that would maximize the investment in infrastructure.

This controlled pattern of growth could be achieved in two ways. The first was through zoning. It would not be enough for the planner to color in maps that showed where certain activities were supposed to take place. There would have to be the means of making sure that this is what would happen. Zoning gave the land use plan its power. Just as in cities (Bartholomew introduced the second major zoning ordinance in the country in 1919), a regional zoning ordinance would mandate with the force of law what activities would take place where. But if zoning ordinances were not grounded in a land use plan (as was the case in 1948 and now in 2009), some municipalities would have their own zoning ordinances while others would have none. The result would be chaos instead of order. Consequently, Bartholomew believed that there could only be one regional zoning ordinance and that it would have to be tied to a well-crafted land use plan.[29]

The other tool that planners had in coercing the region to develop these clearly articulated corridors, Bartholomew explained, was its transportation plan. For Bartholomew, the skeleton of the new metropolitan city was its transportation system, even more so than it had been for the walking and streetcar cities. Where it placed its highways, mass transit, rail system, and, in 1948, its airports, dictated what form the region would take and where everything would be situated.

Bartholomew has been mocked because of his scheme for 35 airports, hedging his bets that local personal air travel might become a reality. But the key component of his transportation plan was his interstate highway plan. A major planner in the debate on the national highway system during the New Deal, Bartholomew had been thinking about the proper placement of the highways for years. Building upon his original radial design, which he developed in the teens, Bartholomew laid out the region's highways like fingers on a hand. Emanating from the central city, the interstates would direct the region's growth inside clearly defined corridors. While Bartholomew provided for existing circumferential beltways (essentially Lindbergh), these were secondary in his plan. They were meant to ease downtown congestion by diverting interurban traffic around the metropolitan core. Unlike later HBA metropolitan plans (and even Bartholomew's later metropolitan Washington, D.C. plan) which called for circumferential freeways, the 1948 plan did not provide for an I-270/I-255 equivalent. This is important because most contemporary urban planners argue that such circumferential beltways do not divert inter-urban traffic as much as pull metropolitan population out towards them producing the scattershot pattern that Bartholomew spoke against.[30]

Another interesting point of Bartholomew's proposal is that he placed much more emphasis on the Illinois side of the Mississippi

than most regional plans have since. His Tentative Plan of Major Thoroughfares provided for expressways to both Belleville and Alton (via a north-south distributor just east of Horseshoe Lake) in addition to what became I-64 and I-70/I-55. One could easily argue that if these had indeed come to be, the region would have developed in a more balanced bi-state fashion—a direction that Bartholomew clearly favored.[31]

Apart from his highway plan, the aspect of the 1948 plan that had the most long-term impact on the region was Bartholomew's scheme for improving the region's water and sewer systems. St. Louisans could pretend that municipal borders fenced off housing and economic activities into little self-contained fiefdoms, but that was impossible with water and sewage. Gravity and currents held sway here. If some areas had sewers and pollution controls and others did not, everyone was affected. Moreover, the lack of coordination could not be glossed over by simply arguing that it was a matter of local preference or control. It was a matter of health, plain and simple. Sewage seeping into the drinking water, St. Louisans knew all-too-well from the cholera epidemic that had occurred a hundred years earlier, could be deadly. It was not too surprising then that one of first tangible results of the guide plan was the formation of the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) in the late 1950s which was created to coordinate and unify the region's sewer systems into one centralized system which became a model for metropolitan regions across the country.

The last major planning element of the guide plan, Bartholomew's regional housing proposal, was the most controversial—both then and now. In his 1947 comprehensive plan for the City of St. Louis, Bartholomew had outlined his strategy for addressing the mounting problem of deteriorated housing in the city. Expanding on ideas that he had been developing since the thirties, Bartholomew called for the city to demolish huge sections of what he called "obsolete" housing—a strategy which planners and urban policy makers have been hotly debating ever since.

For Bartholomew, this aspect of his housing plan was perhaps the least important. What was much more important to him was preserving the city's good housing stock and tackling St. Louis' housing problems in a regional manner. As Bartholomew told all St. Louisans, "The problem of slum areas cannot be solved merely by clearing a localized slum section in one city and forcing the residents to move into another slum in an adjoining community, or into unincorporated areas, nor can the problems be solved by the construction of cheap temporary houses which in a few years will become new slums." Maybe most of the deteriorated housing was in either St. Louis or East St. Louis, but it was the problem of the whole region and, according to Bartholomew, it had to be dealt with regionally. What this meant for him was that there would have to be a coordinated housing program that would establish uniform housing guidelines across the region to prevent new slums (something that developers would not like) and that the blighted areas would have to be rezoned to prevent them from slipping back to being blighted.[32]

While he did not fully flesh out the ramifications of this last aspect of his strategy, the implications were clear. If some poor people were going to be displaced by urban rehabilitation, then they would have to be relocated someplace else. Though Bartholomew did not say it, a consolidated approach to regional housing problems would require that all areas do their fair share in providing adequate housing for all St. Louisans—a concept that is still being battled over throughout the region.

The key component of the guide plan for Bartholomew was not the planning elements; it was how they were to be implemented. What he wanted and what he had been pushing for twenty years was a metropolitan planning agency that would have the power to coordinate planning activity across the region as well as the means to undertake projects that required pooling the resources of the entire region.

This agency Bartholomew was proposing was not something totally of his own creation. What had been guiding his thinking since the mid-twenties was the formation of a planning agency similar to the New York Port Authority. Formed in 1921, the Port Authority coordinated transportation infrastructure in the New York-New Jersey Port District. While Bartholomew's proposed bi-state agency would also plan and develop transportation facilities, it would go beyond the New York Port Authority in that it would assume direct control of all planning and implementation of projects metropolitan in scope. Not only would it oversee the airport, the river docks, and regional mass transit like the Port Authority, Bartholomew's bi-state agency would also oversee land use/zoning, highway placement, economic development, housing codes, water/sewage treatment, and park systems for the entire region. As Bartholomew told St. Louisans, this new agency would "give better coordination of and direction to growth, and to foster if not to provide certain types of improvements which are peculiarly metropolitan in character."[33]

Bartholomew knew what he was proposing would not be easy. Because the real St. Louis crossed state boundaries, it would have to be legislated through an "interstate compact" and approved by the federal government, "which has no inconsiderable interest at stake here." On the other hand, Bartholomew pointed out, these "interstate compacts have been adopted in several other metropolitan areas bisected by state boundary lines." What Bartholomew knew St. Louisans really needed to be convinced of was that the City of St. Louis was not making some power play or that this new government would not be all powerful, obliterating the role and identity of local municipalities as it had tried to do in 1926. "The scope and function of any new metropolitan agency," Bartholomew asserted, "must be limited to the more dominant needs." Just like the national government and its relationship to the states, this new agency would not supplant local control, but try to coordinate and support the actions of local municipalities. It would "exercise full administrative authority," Bartholomew went on to say, "only when such authority is lacking or is not otherwise adequately provided."[34]

Having laid out the parameters of his proposed new agency, Bartholomew's next task was to outline what its main functions were to be. According to him, this new agency would have three main powers. Its primary function would be to prepare and maintain an area-wide plan that would have all the elements of a traditional city comprehensive plan such as land use, transportation, water/sewage, park/recreation facilities, and housing. Again, trying to reassure his readers, Bartholomew maintained that the "making of such plans will not interfere with local plan commissions but should serve to stimulate their endeavors and give much better orientation to their work."[35]

The second role of this new regional agency would be "to assist local governmental agencies in improving and extending *facilities and services of metropolitan significance*." [italics his] According to Bartholomew, the purpose of the new agency here was to be a facilitator. It would enable the municipalities to do those things they could not do by themselves. The example Bartholomew gave was sewerage and drainage. The task of removing sewage did not end at a municipality's borders. Sewage removal was something that "overlap[ped] local municipal boundaries which a metropolitan agency could assist in planning and organizing."[36]

The third role of Bartholomew's proposed agency was the most controversial. This function not only involved planning and coordinating, but it also involved the actual construction, control, and ownership of certain types of facilities that "were of a special metropolitan character." Not only did he want this agency to build and operate traditional forms of public infrastructure like bridges and tunnels, he also wanted it to construct and run facilities that had, up until that point, been locally and privately owned such as suburban commuter lines and airports.[37]

For a lifetime Republican and a proponent of private enterprise, Bartholomew was calling upon his fellow St. Louisans to give up a tremendous amount of private control and ownership to this new agency. But in his mind, it had to be done. "Large scale operations in any field of human endeavor whether in business, in war, or in government require centralized planning and direction," Bartholomew said. According to him, St. Louis had no choice. "The alternative is chaos and waste, if not failure and defeat." To Bartholomew, there were two paths open to St. Louisans. Either St. Louis could realize its "manifest destiny" for greatness by working as one region, or it could continue to become more and more fragmented and slip into the ranks of second tier among the new emerging cities.[38]

UNFULFILLED PROMISE

While some St. Louisans today like to mock themselves by joking about the region's lack of planning prowess, what is amazing from the viewpoint of a generation removed is not how much of what Bartholomew proposed did not come to pass, but how much did. Literally every community in metropolitan St. Louis is planned to some degree and practices zoning. Metro St. Louis operates most mass transit throughout the region. The major interstates roughly follow Bartholomew's suggested placements. The East-West Gateway Coordinating Council controls much of the region's transportation spending. The Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) was created in 1959 to coordinate the region's sewer system and has been a model for the rest of the country. In recent years, the region has expanded the zoo-museum district to be regional in scope and to include several cultural organizations like the Missouri Historical Society, as well as developing a regional system of open space and trails through an organization called Great Rivers Greenway. Even Bartholomew's airport plan has largely come to be. The region has two major airports (even though one is not needed) and actually has more than 50 airports if the region's heliports are included.[39] But the main legacy of the plan is that the metropolitan planning agency that Bartholomew had called for came to be. Authorized by Congress in 1950, the compact between Illinois and Missouri gave the Bi-State Redevelopment Authority broad planning and implementation powers over a wide spectrum of regional facilities and activities.[40] In short, by the end of the 1950s, it appeared that St. Louis was following MPA's dictate of 1954 (the year after Bartholomew had left St. Louis to promote regionalism in Washington, D.C.) that St. Louis "must heed the injunction of the late Daniel Burnham when he told the people of Chicago, 'Make no little plans.'" [41]

But even big plans do not always "go according to plan." In many ways, the St. Louis region became even more disjointed, more fragmented, and more sprawling after 1960 than it was before. Efforts at achieving some type of federated government in St. Louis failed in 1962 and 1987.[42] The construction of circumferential beltways (I-250/I-255) made population dispersal even more scattered. Competing use of tax incentives produced even greater disparities between communities in terms of resources. By the late 1980s, municipal mayors and county officials were openly feuding.

So what happened? It quickly became apparent that the super agency that Illinois and Missouri had created and Congress had authorized was not as super as it was first imagined. Congress had limited the powers of the agency as it applied to federal interests and stipulated that any extension of power had to be approved by Congress. But the biggest problem that the agency faced was the limitation on its ability to sell bonds to finance projects. As a result, it was never able to accomplish all of the things it was meant to and spent most of its early years begging for more power from both the state legislatures and from Congress.[43] After failing to push through the new airport in the 1970s, Bi-State became the primary operating agency for mass transit in the 1980s. Though it achieved a major success in the 1990s with the creation of the first leg of the "Metrolink" light rail system, Bi-State was officially renamed "Metro," and had its mission limited to just mass transit. Even here, the scope of Bartholomew's vision has been diminished. Losing an ugly court case involving cost overruns with the most recent leg of the Metrolink system and failing at the polls to find additional funding support for the agency, Metro has reduced its service by a third during 2008.[44]

While some St. Louisans today like to mock themselves by joking about the region's lack of planning prowess, what is amazing from the viewpoint of a generation removed is not how much of what Bartholomew proposed did not come to pass, but how much did.

Realizing that Bi-State was not going to save the region, St. Louis regionalists tried to come up with yet another agency in the mid-1960s. In 1965, jumping on new federal legislation, the St. Louis region created the first a formal confederation of municipal governments (COG), the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, in the nation. Basically a council of governments,

Fifty years ahead of his time, Bartholomew envisioned an urban rail system like Metrolink that would connect different regions together. (Photo: Lindenwood University)

East-West Gateway represents St. Louis City, plus St. Louis, St. Charles, Franklin, and Jefferson counties in Missouri, as well as St. Clair, Madison, and Monroe counties in Illinois. Although the federal government has given COGs like East-West Gateway a tremendous amount of power over federal monies, especially transportation funds, East-West Gateway has lacked from the very beginning the necessary power to sell bonds or the authority to force implementation of its plans. Moreover, because it is a council of governments, with its board dominated by elected politicians, it has lacked the political will to call for sweeping changes or new powers.[45]

As a result of these limited regional initiatives—61 years after Harland Bartholomew sketched out what a regional plan might look like and might do—the region is still waiting for its first real comprehensive plan for the region or an agency that has the power to realize a regional strategy. So, while other regions have adopted Bartholomew's vision for a coordinated approach to regional issues, St. Louis continues to find itself flailing away at piecemeal solutions to regional problems. Consequently, the "real" St. Louis falls farther and farther behind more successful regions. Able to pool their resources more effectively through meaningful planning, regions like Minneapolis, Denver, Seattle, and Portland have not only been able to expand economically and in terms of their population, but also have made themselves more livable in the process. Although St. Louisans have resisted regional planning in the name of community control, maybe it is time to heed Bartholomew's warning that if we do not take control of the region as a region "the alternative is chaos and waste, if not failure and defeat."

NOTES

1 See E. Terrence Jones, *Fragmented By Design: Why St. Louis Has So Many Governments* (St. Louis: Palmerston and Reed Publishing Company, 2000).

2 Ibid., 1-10. Also see James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri,* 2nd edition (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1990), 316-325.

3 For a discussion of the 1907 plan, see Mark Abbott, "A Document Changed America: The 1907 *A City Plan for St. Louis*" in *St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis,* Mark Tranel, ed., (St. Louis: The Missouri Historical Society Press, 2007).

4 Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For other perspectives on Bartholomew and his career, see Eldridge Lovelace, *Harland Bartholomew: His Contributions to American Urban Planning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Office of Printing Services, Printing Division, 1992) and Norman J. Johnson, "Harland Bartholomew: Precedent for the Profession" in *The American Planner* , 2nd ed., Donald A. Krueckeberg, ed., (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1994).

5 Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 32-36.

6 The City Plan Commission: St. Louis, MO (Harland Bartholomew: Engineer), *Problems of St. Louis: Being a Description, from the City Planning Standpoint, of Past and Present Tendencies of Growth with General Suggestions for Impending Issues and Necessary Future Improvements* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing, 1917), p. xix.

7 Ibid., xviii.

8 For a discussion of the impact of the automobile on the American city in the twenties and accelerating suburbanization, see Carl Abbott, *Urban America in the Modern Age: 1920 to the Present* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1987), 36-45; Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society,* 5th edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), 217-224; and Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City,* 2nd edition (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 62-74. Urban Geographers have felt for some time that irrespective of culture or period, people will not spend more than 45 minutes commuting to their employment. Therefore, a "walking city" would have a radius of 2.5 miles (25 blocks) or the distance that most people can walk in 45 minutes. A "Horse-drawn Streetcar City" would have a radius around 5 miles or 50 blocks. An "Electric Streetcar City" would be about 7.5 miles because that would be the distance the streetcar would go in 45 minutes. The Loop is approximately 7.5 miles (or 75 blocks) from downtown which took roughly 45 minutes. Hence the name. The streetcar would leave downtown, travel 45 minutes, the driver would take a short break, and then "loop" back.

Just like the jump between the horse-drawn and electric streetcars (which took place between 1890 and 1900) was about a fifty percent increase, the increase that the automobile brought was about another fifty percent. So if the early automotive city had a radius of about 10 miles or 100 blocks which in St. Louis would be in low 5 digit land (or where we got out of the rain), that put you in western Ladue (Richmond Heights is probably a little short). What I was thinking about was that the Brentwood exit is #31 on I-64 or 9 miles from the Arch. If you would just say Ladue or Webster Groves, you would be safe.

9 Teaford, *City and Suburb,* 102-103.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 103-104.

12 Ibid., 106.

13 Ibid., 110-111.

14 Ibid., 120.

15 Ibid., 139-140.

16 Ibid., 144.

17 Ibid., 167.

18 Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1971), 213-224.

19 Ibid., 308-310.

20 See City Plan Commission: St. Louis, MO (Harland Bartholomew Engineer), *Comprehensive Plan: St. Louis, Missouri* (1947).

21 Gordon takes a particularly scathing look at Bartholomew in *Mapping Decline* in terms of his ideas on blight, 124-125, and zoning, 118. For a more favorable treatment, see Abbott, "The 1947 *Comprehensive City Plan* and Harland Bartholomew's St. Louis" in *St. Louis Plans.*

22 Quoted in Scott, *American City Planning,* 444.

23 Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Guide Plan Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan Area: An Over-All Analysis of the Major Metropolitan Development Problems with Some Tentative Proposals for their Solution. Prepared for the Metropolitan Plan Association, Inc., 915 Olive Street, St. Louis, MO* (St. Louis: Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1948), 3.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 City of St. Louis and St. Louis County, *Journal and Debates of the Board of Freeholders: Years 1925-1926* (St. Louis: Board of Freeholders, 1926), 43-45.

28 Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Guide Plan,* 9.

29 Ibid., 12-19.

30 Ibid., 23-26.

31 Ibid., Plate 7, 25.

32 Ibid., 44.

33 Ibid., 48.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 East-West Gateway Coordinating Council records show that there are at present 15 public and private airports in Greater St. Louis (e-mail transmission July 15, 2007). Google Maps indicate 36 heliports in the approximate area of metropolitan St. Louis.

40 Scott, *American City Planning*, 446-447.

41 Metropolitan Plan Association Inc., *Guide Book 1954: Metropolitan St. Louis Area Development* (St. Louis: Metropolitan Plan Association, 1954), 3.

42 See Jones, *Fragmented by Design,* 59-95.

43 Scott, *American City Planning*, 447. Interestingly, Bartholomew contended towards the end of his life that Bi-State was still the answer and had the power to actively plan the region if it so desired. See Mary Seematter, "An Interview with Harland Bartholomew," July 14, 1983 (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1983).

44 "In wake of Prop M's defeat, Metro increases fares," *St. Louis Beacon,* November 22, 2008 (http://www.stlbeacon.org/development/metro_fares_will_increase_in_2009).

45 Primm, *Lion of the Valley,* 509-510.