

July 17, 1977

editorials

Planners vindicated by 1932 survey

The 1932 planning survey of Tucson unearthed recently at the Harvard School of Design library stands as a vindication of the city's professional planners and those unseated political visionaries who were unfairly labeled "no-growth advocates."

They are neither ideologues nor socialist revolutionaries, any more than was Ernest P. Goodrich, author of the 1932 survey — done free for taxpayers — and co-founder of the American Institute of Planning.

It's just that nobody took Goodrich very seriously in 1932 and too many took his professional descendants too seriously in 1976, ascribing to them all kinds of regressive motives in order to silence them.

So, Tucson is where it was when Goodrich left town, except that its size, population — and problems — are 10 times greater.

Look at what Goodrich recommended: A Santa Cruz river park; filling in interior vacancies before expanding into the suburbs; expanding urban development only as the city is financially available to take it on; developing a city-county master plan for growth; moving the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks to skirt the downtown area; hillside zoning ordinances; directing growth through street improvement; planning far ahead for water supply and sewer system; reusing purified effluent; comprehensive planning for public bus service; preservation of historic buildings and building codes.

These are the things of which

Tucson's Comprehensive Plan was made two years ago, the things that made comprehensive planners "enemies" of small business and led to a divisive recall election battle.

The Comprehensive Plan is stalled. Goodrich's report was stalled in the 1930s, too. Although revered in the city planning office, the report went down to defeat when converted into a master plan in the early 1940s.

Goodrich had recommended basing the plan on various scientific projections of future growth. But there didn't seem to be any hurry. Tucson's population was relatively stable at less than 30,000 then. No scientific projection would have foreseen World War II and Tucson's concurrent prominence as an Air Corps training base.

No one would have predicted the population boom that followed the war, bringing with it the go-for-broke developers and opportunists who set the city's elders giddy with burgeoning profits and visions of national prominence.

And none save farsighted professionals like Goodrich would foresee that the boom had to be slowed down sometime to prevent bust. But Goodrich wasn't here.

So, we've had to do it the painful way, realizing only gradually now that Goodrich's recommendations, as well as those of today's planners, are not illusive goals.

They are necessities to urban security.