

NOVA SCOTIA'S 1912 TOWN PLANNING ACT

An analysis of its origins & proponents

JAMES HANEY

51 Micmac Drive
Dartmouth, NS b2x 2h4
james.haney@dal.ca
902.407.5449

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Course instructor: Dr. Patricia Manuel
Technical advisor: Dr. Jill Grant
Dalhousie University, School of Planning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia led Canada in adopting town planning legislation in April and May 1912, respectively. The academic literature on urban history in Canada, however, fails to appreciate fully the development of town planning in Atlantic Canada, relegating the 1912 statutes to mere footnotes in a larger national story. The Nova Scotia Town Planning Act represented one of the first steps in the legitimization of planning in Canada, yet few historians have ventured to examine its origins or implications to a nascent national profession.

This research seeks to provide a more complete understanding of the development of Nova Scotia's first planning statute. The objective is to examine the origins and proponents of the 1912 Town Planning Act in the province. In order to fulfill this objective, I attempt to answer the following two questions:

- Who was advocating the drafting and adoption of the 1912 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia?
- What factors -- local, provincial, national, international -- were motivating proponents of the legislation?

A systematic analysis of Halifax newspapers between 1905 and 1912 provides the principal source of information for this report, supplemented by archival collections from the Nova Scotia legislative assembly and individuals involved in local civic reform organizations. Data collected from these sources, supplemented by an academic literature review, reveals a vocal movement for civic improvement, rooted in Victorian reform values, matured in Halifax between 1905 and 1912. In the seven years leading up to the adoption of the Town Planning Act, Halifax reformers became increasingly interested in the benefits of planning. Specific local issues motivated a growing concern with the physical development of the city, spurring the demand for the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive city plan.

Local concerns regarding civic beautification, housing conditions, haphazard development, civic efficiency, and public welfare motivated members of the Civic Improvement League to lobby for an expert-driven comprehensive city plan. The importation of visiting speakers, and

frequent public calls for an expert-driven planning process, suggest that local reformers placed considerable faith in the abilities of experts over local knowledge.

Local lobbying efforts aimed at Halifax's municipal government indirectly resulted in the adoption of the 1912 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia. At no point did local reformers argue for the adoption of provincial legislation to enable city planning schemes. The Civic Improvement League directed its lobbying efforts, without exception, at civic officials and council. That the province adopted legislation, without any direct or apparent lobbying effort, I would argue the 1912 Town Planning Act was an indirect effect of the Improvement League's lobbying effort toward Halifax city council.

Background

On May 3, 1912, the Honourable James Drummond McGregor, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, gave royal assent to the province's first planning legislation. *The Town Planning Act, 1912*, was one of Canada's first statutes granting municipalities basic powers to prepare and implement town planning schemes for lands in the course of development or likely to be developed.¹ Although the legislation gave municipalities only limited planning authority, it demonstrated a growing recognition of planning as a means to avoid inefficiencies and social problems associated with urban development.

This interest was not limited to Nova Scotia. New Brunswick passed similar legislation a month before its Maritime neighbour, and Alberta followed suit in 1913.² Through the first two decades of the twentieth-century, governments and civic reform organizations across Canada reacted to the negative effects of urbanization and industrialization by embracing emerging American and British planning ideas. The City Beautiful movement, and its assumption that both social and economic benefits would result from the building of grand avenues graced with well-cited public buildings, found an eager audience among early twentieth-century reformers displeased with the ugliness of Canadian cities.³ Well-publicized British experiments in suburban development also caught the attention of Canadian reformers. The Garden Cities of Letchworth and Hampstead offered concerned progressives a welcome alternative to unsanitary and overcrowded tenement housing.⁴ Drawing upon these ideals, eager reformers across Canada increasingly put their faith in planning as a means of solving the ills of the modern city.

After nearly a century, however, it remains unclear why two Maritime Provinces chose to adopt planning legislation before any other Canadian jurisdiction. With a few notable

¹ *An Act Respecting Town Planning*. George V. Chap. 6 Assembly of Nova Scotia, May 3, 1912.

² Simpson, Michael. 1985. *Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement: Britain, Canada and the United States, 1900-1940*. London: Mansell. p. 75.

³ Van Nus, W. 1975. "The Fate of City Beautiful Thought in Canada, 1893-1930." *Historical Papers/Communications historiques*, vol. 10, no. 1. p. 193.

⁴ Simpson, pp. 73-74.

exceptions, most academic literature on Canada's urban reform movement has overlooked the east-coast story. In the academic works that recognize the 1912 *Town Planning Act*, it is generally little more than a footnote. This paper seeks to rectify the oversight and provide a more complete understanding of the development of Nova Scotia's first planning statute.

Research objective & questions

The intent of this research project is to examine what factors contributed to the development of early planning legislation in Nova Scotia, and to determine who was advocating its adoption. Given the lack of scholarly research on this aspect of Nova Scotia's early municipal history, the objective of this project is to determine whom – be it civic groups, governments, or individuals – was behind the effort to adopt the province's first planning statute. A second objective of this research project is to examine what social, political, or economic factors contributed to the provincial effort to adopt town planning legislation.

Recognizing that little is known about the origins of Nova Scotia's earliest town planning legislation, and that a proper examination of the document's proponents and the motivation for its adoption would benefit the planning profession's understanding of early developments in both Nova Scotia and in Canada more broadly, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Who was advocating the drafting and adoption of the 1912 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia?
- What factors -- local, provincial, national, international -- were motivating proponents of the legislation?

Approach & methods

To answer the research questions, I have undertaken a qualitative, exploratory research approach. To determine who was advocating for the 1912 legislation, and the context

motivating its adoption, I have identified and examined primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

Through the examination of historical records held by the Nova Scotia Public Archives and the Halifax Regional Municipality's archives, I have utilized a systematic analysis of significant documents to answer the research questions identified above. A qualitative analysis of period newspapers, public and personal records, and correspondence related to the subject is fundamental to determining who acted to draft and pass the 1912 act, and what motivated their actions.

The research for this project included an initial literature review, followed by a detailed examination of primary archival sources. The methods utilized follow commonly accepted historical research and analysis methods, including the careful selection of reliable source material, critical analysis, source comparison, and interpretation of the evidence to provide a justifiable narrative.⁵

To provide context for subsequent archival research, a thorough literature review was initially undertaken. Topics of interest examined include local histories; early planning history in both Canada and Britain; late 19th and early 20th planning movements; biographies of Thomas Adams; and municipal and social reform movements of the turn-of-the-century. Library guides, online search engines, and journal databases enabled the location of these sources. Subsequently, citations and bibliographical references identified other sources relevant to the research. Additionally, an analysis of the Nova Scotia 1912 act and the British 1909 Town Planning Act for similarities was undertaken. This literature review informed and focused to subsequent archival research and data analysis.

As previously identified, the academic study on this subject is limited. Considerable primary research using archival records has been necessary to examine the issue thoroughly. The principal source examined and analysed are local newspaper sources from 1905 to 1912. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management hold several early local newspapers at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. These include *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Echo*, *The*

⁵ See Howell, Martha & Walter Prevenier. 2001. *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Halifax Herald, and *The Evening Mail*. An examination of these newspapers for articles, editorials, and notices that pertain to the research questions revealed considerable primary source data. I noted and copied all relevant information located in the search for subsequent analysis, with specific attention paid to items concerning planning legislation, civic improvement, visiting international planning experts, or local organizations advocating town planning.

Other archival sources examined include collections of civic organizations, their organizers, and local proponents of planning. Records identified and examine include those of Robert McConnell Hattie, Reginald V. Harris, and Agnes Dennis, and group fonds of the Local Council of Women of Halifax. I have organized all the collected data in chronological order by newspaper or archival source, and coded the information based on relevance to specific themes identified above. Archival research was undertaken using computerized finding aids, archival catalogues, and the help of archivists to locate potential sources.

Data collected through the literature review and archival research has been analysed to determine who was involved in advocating for the 1912 legislation, and what was motivating the planning movement in Nova Scotia. A systematic analysis of the relevant documentary sources for content, intent, and authorship provides the basis for the interpretation that follows. Given the seven-year period examined, there is a considerable amount of primary source material upon which to draw conclusions. Findings and conclusions follow a narrative formula, informed by the academic literature review and analysis of relevant legislation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To answer my research questions, an understanding of the current academic discourse is necessary. The project began with a review of academic literature concerning the following topics: early Canadian planning history, the civic reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the City Beautiful and Garden City movements, the history of the British *Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act* of 1909, and the local historical context.

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of professional planning in Canada in response to dramatic urbanization, aging infrastructure and concerns over poverty and the health of urban populations. Despite over a century of professional planning history, however, the literature regarding early planning in Canada remains sparse. In her examination of Canadian planning history, Wolfe describes the evolution of the profession from its nascence out of the late 19th and early 20th century reform movement, through to the new urbanism agenda of the 1990s. Wolfe argues that social concerns over sanitation, health, city beautification and municipal reform marked the progressive era between 1890 and 1914.⁶

As Canadian planning developed in large part out of social and civic reform movements of the turn of the century, an examination of the academic discourse related to these movements is necessary. Rutherford has detailed the relationship social, moral, and civic reform had with early planning in Canada.⁷ Fingard's work on Victorian Halifax has demonstrated an active social reform movement existed in Halifax prior to the turn of the century.⁸ Largely motivated by moral concerns, a mixture of religious organizations and concerned citizen groups worked to improve social conditions in the growing city. Campaigns for temperance, sanitation, and education had matured in Halifax by the progressive era.

Following the passage of Britain's Town Planning Act in 1909 as a means of bringing scientific management to the ills of modern industrial cities,⁹ Canadian provinces began introducing legislation based to varying degrees on the British statute, granting municipalities new powers to control urban development. In Canada, the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia led the way in adopting town planning legislation 1912, followed

⁶ Wolfe, Jeanne. 1994. "Our common Past: An Interpretation of Canadian Planning History" *Plan Canada Special 75th Anniversary Issue*, p. 12-34 in Grant, Jill (ed). 2008. *A Reader in Canadian Planning: Linking Theory and Practice*. Toronto: Thompson Nelson Ltd. pp. 27-28.

⁷ Rutherford, Paul. 1984. "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform Movement in Canada, 1880-1920." In G.A. Stelter and A.F.J. Artibise (eds.), *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban and Social History*. Pp. 435-455. Ottawa: Carleton Library Series.

⁸ Fingard, Judith. 1989. *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*. Potters Lake, NS: Pottersfield Press.

⁹ *The Housing, Town Planning and c. Act. 1909*. In Culpin, Ewart G. (ed) 1910. "Introduction", *The Practical Application of Town Planning Powers – A Report of the National Town Planning Conference – Papers and Speeches*. London: England, P.S. King & Son.

by Alberta the following year.¹⁰ Nova Scotia's statute was replaced a mere three years later by legislation in part drafted by Thomas Adams.¹¹

Little academic research has been devoted to examining these early statutes. Only recently with Vissers' and Grant's work has the role of local actors in the drafting of the 1915 legislation become clear. Prior to this work, the literature has suggested that Adams drafted the statute almost single-handedly.¹²

While some heralded Nova Scotia's 1915 legislation as "the most advanced and complete of any statute dealing with this question," its precursor was less well regarded.¹³ This, coupled with its quick replacement, may in part explain the lack of attention paid to it in the histories of planning in Canada. The 1912 Town Planning Act receives brief acknowledgment in the academic literature without further analysis.¹⁴ Some historians have failed to recognize it at all.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, there is little academic analysis of the factors contributing to the development of the early planning legislation at a local level, nor of who the proponents and drafters of the statute were.

The reform movement in Halifax has been studied to some extent.¹⁶ Roper has described the local campaign to reorganize civic governance for increased efficiency under a Board of Control system, while Nicholson explored the activities of the Civic Improvement League from 1905 to 1949. Despite their careful analysis of the period, both failed to note the 1912

¹⁰ Simpson, p. 85.

¹¹ Vissers, Leifka. 2009. "Origins of the Planning Movement in Nova Scotia." Masters project, Planning, Dalhousie University, Halifax. Vissers, Leifka, and Jill Grant. 2010. "Planning Experts and Local Reformers: The 1915 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia." Conference Proceedings, 14th International Planning History Society Conference, July 2010.

¹² Simpson, p. 85.

¹³ Adams, Thomas. 1915. "Housing and Town Planning in Canada." *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 6, no. 1. p. 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; Government of Nova Scotia Staff. 1970. "History of Nova Scotia Planning Acts Prior to 1969", accessed on Government of Nova Scotia website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/muns/plan/pdf/historynsplanningactsprior1969.pdf> on August 25, 2010.

¹⁵ Roper, Henry. 1985. "The Halifax Board of Control: The Failure of Municipal Reform." *Acadiensis* 14(2), 46-65. And Nicholson, Andrew. 2000. *Dreaming "the Perfect City": The Halifax Civic Improvement League, 1905-1949*. Master's thesis, Atlantic Canadian Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax.

¹⁶ Roper; Nicholson; and Fingard, Judith, Janet Guildford, David Sutherland. 1999. *Halifax: The First 250 Years*. Halifax: Fomac Publishing.

Town Planning Act. Ultimately, the emergence of the town planning movement in Halifax has been largely unexamined prior to the 1915 legislation.

Given the obvious similarities between Nova Scotia's 1912 Town Planning Act and Britain's 1909 Housing, Town Planning Act, some consideration of the latter is necessary. Sutcliffe has argued that the British statute is as poorly studied as the Nova Scotia legislation, suggesting that "there has been little detailed historical investigation of the preparation and passing of the 1909 Act."¹⁷ He further argues that a strong housing reform movement propted the legislation and that despite criticism that it amounted to ineffective planning legislation, the 1909 Act was a reasonable effort given the recentness of town planning as a practice.¹⁸ In his examination of the British Act, Herbert-Young argues that the principal purpose of the legislation was to establish centralized control over statutory town planning, rather than permitting local control over town development.¹⁹ It may be little wonder that Nova Scotia's first planning legislation proved inadequate, when the law from which it was derived proved unsuitable in its own context.

Fingard et al.'s social history of Halifax provides a broad local historical context for the period.²⁰ Albeit brief, the description of a nascent municipal reform movement, and the active participation of women's organizations in pushing for reform, provides a balanced introduction to the local context. William March's *Red Line: The Chronicle-Herald and the Mail-Star 1875-1954* provides a detailed examination of the dynamic relationships between local newspapers and the changing context in which the media acted in Halifax.²¹ Given the importance of newspaper coverage as a primary source for this project, March's description of the complex nature of urban reform movements connected to newspapers provides valuable context to the examination of media reporting.

¹⁷ Sutcliffe, Anthony. 1988. "Britain's First Town Planning Act: A Review of the 1909 Achievement." *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 59, no. 3, p. 289.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁹ Herbert-Young, Nicholas. 1998. "Central government and statutory planning under the Town Planning Act 1909." *Planning Perspectives*, 13, p. 351.

²⁰ Fingard et al.

²¹ March, William. 1986. *Red Line: The Chronicle-Herald and The Mail-Star 1875-1954*. Halifax: Chebucto Agencies Ltd.

The objective of this research project is twofold: first, to determine who was advocating for the drafting and adoption of the 1912 Town Planning Act, and second, to examine the factors motivating the proponents of the legislation.

The 1912 Town Planning Act in the news

An analysis of the *Journal and Proceedings of Nova Scotia Assembly*, supplemented by newspaper reports in both the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* and the *Halifax Herald*, clearly identify the legislative process by which the act became law. On March 7, 1912, the Honourable George Faulkner introduced an Act Respecting Town Planning, and it was given first reading. Five days later, the bill was read a second time and referred to the Committee on Railways and Municipalities.²² On March 29, 1912, the “Hon. Mr. MacGregor, from the Committee on Railways and Municipalities, reported from that committee that they had considered a Bill, entitled An Act respecting town planning; and had directed him to report the same favourably, with certain amendments.”²³ On April 10, 1912, the provincial assembly gave third reading to, and passed, the Act Respecting Town Planning.²⁴

Little press coverage is devoted to the introduction and passage of the bill. One article in the *Morning Chronicle* on March 14, 1912 outlines the provisions of the proposed act but provides no evidence as to who was responsible for its drafting.²⁵ The *Halifax Herald*’s only mention of the bill’s passage is found in the regular reporting of all matters before the provincial assembly after a delay of approximately a month, and then the dates given are misleading.²⁶

²² *Journals and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia*. 1912. Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Halifax. Microfilm reel #9177. pp. 40, 54.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 124.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 160.

²⁵ *Halifax Morning Chronicle*. March 14, 1912, p. 7. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #5579.

²⁶ The notes of the Nova Scotia assembly suggest that first reading of the bill occurred on April 10, 1912, with second reading on April 12. Due to the poor quality of the microfilm copy, it was not possible to locate mention of third reading and passage of the act in the *Herald*’s coverage. *Halifax Herald*. April 12, 1912, p. 5; April 18, 1912, p. 11. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6791.

The lack of press coverage might be attributable to the unfolding of other events. Beginning in late February 1912, the *Daily Echo* and the *Morning Chronicle* begins devoting considerable coverage to a scheme proposed by Alderman Clarke to expropriate and clear nine downtown blocks referred to as the “slum district.”²⁷ The coverage in these papers of the slum clearance debate takes clear precedence over the bill before the provincial legislature. While the bill apparently aroused little public or media interest, media coverage ends entirely in the wake of the sinking of the *Titanic*. On April 15, 1912, a mere five days after the Nova Scotia assembly passed the Town Planning Act, the *Titanic* sank after striking an iceberg in the North Atlantic.²⁸ In the following weeks, the local papers were almost singularly concerned with the drama of the rescue, first-hand accounts of survivors, and subsequent investigations. Little room remained in the local press for a bill already unnoticed in the daily newspapers.

In spite of the scant press coverage surrounding the introduction and passage of Nova Scotia’s Town Planning Act in March and April of 1912, the local dailies did not shy from topics related to urban reform or town planning. A considerable amount of data gathered from the four principal newspapers suggests a well-organized and vociferous local lobby for urban renewal, city beautification, and comprehensive city planning developed and exerted influence in Halifax between 1905 and 1912.

Considerable evidence exists in the newspaper records regarding the central role of the Civic Improvement League in furthering civic reform in Halifax. Articles, editorials, and notices in the *Halifax Herald*, *Evening Mail*, *Daily Echo*, and *Morning Chronicle* detail the activities of the Civic Improvement League from its formation in 1905.

Civic Improvement League

In early November 1905, some twenty Halifax citizens met under the auspices of the Board of Trade to discuss ways of improving the city. The group, consisting primarily of

²⁷ Beginning with editorials and news articles on February 29, 1912, both papers run coverage of the public and council debates surrounding Alderman Clarke’s scheme on a near-daily basis. *Morning Chronicle*, February 29, 1912, p. 9

²⁸ *Halifax Herald*, April 16, 1912, p. 1. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6791.

businessmen, agreed to form a committee for the general purpose of civic improvement, with “...the aim of the committee to be by every means in its power to assist in beautifying the City of Halifax.”²⁹ At the initial meeting of what would become the Civic Improvement League, committee members identified a number of issues in need of attention. Among the more notable concerns were the need for general tree planting and fence painting, the untidiness of Barrington Street after a Saturday night, vandalism by “boys who seem to delight in destruction,” dangerous cornices, and ash barrels left on the streets.³⁰ The assembled citizens agreed to work toward the beautification of Halifax through public campaigns and cooperation with civic institutions such as the police and school supervisors.

The priorities set at this initial meeting of the Civic Improvement League demonstrate the tone for the organization’s activities early years. The League’s members concerned themselves with a variety of campaigns aimed at beautifying the city, including an effort to install flowerboxes organized in cooperation with the Local Council of Women of Halifax.³¹ Many early projects of the Civic Improvement League focused on improving the aesthetic quality of the city, such as removing unattractive billboards and dilapidated fences. Taken as a whole, the initial work of the League involved relatively superficial beautification and cleanliness programs.

It would not take long for members of the Civic Improvement League to set their sights on loftier goals. Housing conditions in Halifax were a persistent issue among the city’s social reformers. Previously established organizations such as the Local Council of Women and the Citizen’s Moral Reform Association had proposed solutions long before the establishment of the Improvement League.³² In March 1908, following a trip to England, League member and principal of the Technical College Frederic H. Sexton, was proposing development schemes inspired by Garden City ideals. Sexton lectured on “The Picturesque Suburb” to a large and enthusiastic crowd proposing the development of model rental houses using strict building regulations under a co-operative ownership scheme.³³ “His object was to show how elsewhere beauty is being secured and tasteful, pleasant houses and flats are being erected

²⁹ *Evening Mail*, November 9, 1905, p. 5. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7081.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Nicholson, p. 28.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³³ *Evening Mail*, March 4, 1908, p. 6. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7094.

and rented for sums that on contrast with rentals in Halifax are extraordinarily small.”³⁴

Sexton’s lecture provided one of the first clear indications that planning thought beyond mere city beautification was entering the local dialogue.

“Halifax Uplift”

While the early activities of the Civic Improvement League suggest a general interest in city beautiful ideas, and Sexton’s 1908 lecture demonstrates a developing local awareness of new planning thought, 1910 saw a sudden surge in interest in town planning.

In July 1910, a local lawyer and civic reformer began writing “Halifax Uplift,” a regular column in *The Halifax Herald* and *Evening Mail*. Reginald Harris, writing under the penname Wilfred Y. De Wake, wrote on civic affairs in Halifax, covering the issues from civic government reform to tenement housing. City planning became an increasingly frequent topic of Harris’ columns.³⁵ Covering topic ranging from Letchworth Garden City, to model tenements in New York, to the haphazard nature of unplanned development, Harris’ columns provided a regular source of information to Haligonians about planning ideas from around the globe. Harris regularly used the column to call for the development of a comprehensive plan for Halifax in order to ameliorate housing conditions, prevent infrastructure mistakes, and generally make Halifax “the most beautiful city in Canada.”³⁶

A member of the Civic Improvement League, Harris used the column to publicize the activities of the League, garner support for the organization, and to lobby the city council to act on the Improvement League’s various city planning schemes.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Examples include columns in *The Evening Mail*, September 15, 1911, p. 9., September 20, 1911, p. 9, October 26, 1911, p. 9. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7113.

³⁶ *Evening Mail*, Oct. 26, 1911, p. 9. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7113.

Visiting lecturers

The fall of 1910 would prove to be an active season for the Improvement League, and proponents of city planning in general. In September, Harris and the Civic Improvement League cooperated to publicize a visiting lecture by John Nolan, a landscape architect from Massachusetts. Invited to speak on planning and beautifying the city, Nolan argued planning is essential to “increased health and convenience of the city, in promoting the happiness, education and recreation of the people, and also in the distinct addition to the business wealth.”³⁷ The comprehensive benefits suggested by Nolan in his speech to the Civic Improvement League prompted considerable excitement locally.

The audience was appreciative of Nolan’s eager endorsement of planning, but it was another visitor to Halifax the following month that invigorated the local reform movement. In October 1910, Henry Vivian, a British Member of Parliament, visited Halifax as his last stop on a speaking tour of Canada organized by Governor General Lord Earl Grey. Under the auspices of the Canadian Club, Vivian presented on the “splendid plan of Garden City,” and the legislative developments necessary to make them possible.³⁸ Beyond his glowing recommendation for the garden suburb, Vivian went on to suggest that Halifax’s slums were far worse than those found in Britain, and that such conditions would

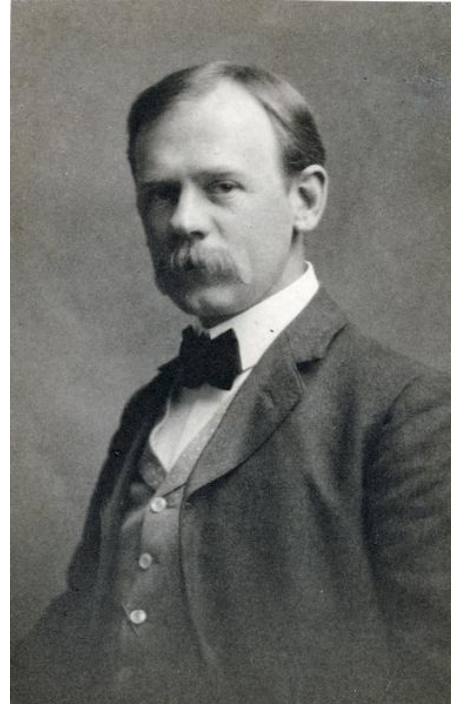


Figure 1. John Nolan, American landscape architect. n.d. Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI-12506



Figure 2. Henry Vivian, MP, ca. 1910. Library of Congress, LC-B2-2638-10

³⁷ *Evening Mail*, September 20, 1910, p. 8. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7112.

³⁸ *Evening Mail*, October 28, 1910, p. 8. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7113.

never be tolerated there.³⁹ Aside from the advantage town planning would bring, Vivian his lecture by suggesting Halifax adopt a code of by-laws and regulations providing minimum standards of health, and provide adequate enforcement.⁴⁰

Incensed, Halifax's reformers took up Vivian's challenge, and immediately acted to bring about change in the city. In just over a month, the Civic Improvement League approached city council to appoint a commission to investigate the development of a comprehensive plan for Halifax.⁴¹ While only exploratory in nature, the Improvement League hoped to gain a seat on the commission.

In connection with their civic lobbying efforts, the Improvement League published illustrations by a local architect and member of the organization, Andrew R. Cobb, of possible improvement projects for the city. Articles accompanying the illustrations suggested the improvements might "be made part of a comprehensive city plan."⁴² Suggested improvements included a grand ferry terminal on the Halifax waterfront, and the development of the grand parade on George Street.



Figure 1. Illustration by architect Andrew Cobb of possible ferry landing improvement. *Evening Mail*, November 26, 1910. PANS Microfilm reel #7114.

³⁹ *Evening Mail*, October 28, 1910, p. 9. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7113.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Evening Mail*, December 6, 1910, p. 6. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7114.

⁴² *Evening Mail*, November 26, 1910, p. 3. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7114.



Figure 2. Illustration of possible improvement to George Street and the Grand Parade. *Evening Mail*, December 10, 1910. p. 5. PANS Reel # 7114

Civic Uplift Week

Ultimately, Halifax's city council did not act on the recommendation of the Civic Improvement League to form an investigative commission. The setback did little to dampen local enthusiasm for civic uplift and reform. Local reform-minded organizations including the Civic Improvement League, the Local Council of Women, the Board of Trade worked to organize a week-long conference on civic uplift. With lectures such as "Conservation of youth," "Women's work for the city," "Hovels vs. Homes," and "The City Beautiful," the conference aimed to bring together a wide range of reformers. John L. Sewall, a principal organizer of Boston's uplift campaign, spoke each day, and ended the weeklong conference calling upon the citizens of Halifax to organize and work collectively to revive the city.⁴³

⁴³ *Evening Mail*, March 6, 1911, p. 11. Nova Scotia Public Archives, Microfilm reel #7116.

Throughout Sewall's lectures, the importance of planning and beautification emerged as a central theme. Not surprisingly, the concluding event ended with a motion by Professor Mackay of the Civic Improvement League calling for the procurement of a comprehensive city plan "as a first step toward the beautifying of the city."⁴⁴ While organized around a broad theme of urban reform and revival, the Civic Uplift Week's legacy was effectively to reaffirm local interest in the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive city plan.

Campaign for a comprehensive city plan for Halifax

In the fall of 1911, the Civic Improvement League undertook a second, more concerted effort to lobby Halifax city council to prepare a comprehensive city plan. Perhaps learning from the unsuccessful lobbying effort of the previous year, the League's members were well prepared with daily, illustrated newspaper articles, public lectures, and a sound business plan. For two weeks leading up to the public announcement of the League's proposition, a series of articles titled "City Planning" ran in *The Daily Echo* elaborating on the myriad benefits a comprehensive city plan would bring to Halifax. The series suggested planning would prevent costly mistakes of haphazard development, generate civic pride, improve public health, provide economic benefit, and generally beautify the city.⁴⁵

Interestingly, this renewed lobbying effort coincided with a resolution by the Union of Canadian Municipalities at its annual meeting in Ottawa. The resolution read:

That in view of the rapidly increasing growth of our cities, and the grave inconvenience resulting from haphazard division of real estate, the various Provincial Governments and urban municipalities be most earnestly urged to pass such legislation, and to make such arrangements, as will result in the immediate making, adoption and prosecution of a city plan for each growing community, governing the lines of expansion and developments.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Evening Mail*, March 11, 1911, p. 14. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7116.

⁴⁵ *Daily Echo*, November 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 1911. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6542.

⁴⁶ *Daily Echo*, November 14, 1911, p. 3. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6542.

The inclusion of this resolution in the “City Planning” column suggests the timing of the Civic Improvement League’s renewed lobbying is no mere coincidence.

On November 14, 1911, the Improvement League held a meeting at the Board of Trade. At the meeting, R. M. Hattie read a paper on comprehensive city planning, arguing that Halifax would benefit from improvements to the railway station and ferry landing, development of the waterfront, and the remodelling of the upper streets between Brunswick and Grafton Streets. He concluded that a comprehensive plan was necessary to carry out the variety of improvements Halifax required. Following Hattie’s presentation, the Civic Improvement League passed the following resolution:

Resolved that the Civic Improvement League ask the City Council to take immediate action for the promotion of a standing Civic Board to be called the Board of Improvements and to be appointed by the City Council for the study of the needs of Halifax from a comprehensive city planning standpoint with a view to recommending such improvement and other changes in the planning and beautification of the city as may be considered advisable.⁴⁷

This resolution marked the official public lobbying effort aimed at the city council.

In the days following the League’s motion, the *Daily Echo* published Hattie’s paper titled “Planning for the Future.” In the six-part series, Hattie argued that comprehensive planning provided the opportunity to examine the relation between major civic developments, and identified potential projects that would benefit from a comprehensive city plan. Much like the previous series in the *Echo*, the projects Hattie identified included a new railway station, the Halifax waterfront, and a new landing for the Dartmouth ferry.⁴⁸ The fourth instalment offered an even loftier suggestion. In the article, Hattie argued for the complete redevelopment of the upper street district bounded by Sackville, Brunswick, Jacob and Argyle streets. “This is, as everyone knows, the most disgraceful part of Halifax, and many are the longings that it might be transformed. Standing where Halifax should have some of her very best buildings, are the very worst; and Halifax is ASHAMED,” (emphasis in

⁴⁷ *Daily Echo*, November 15, 1911, p. 2. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6542.

⁴⁸ *Daily Echo*, November 20, 21, 23, 1911. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6542.

original).⁴⁹ Identifying the area as a slum of little physical or moral worth, Hattie argued for its complete redevelopment to better accommodate traffic, maximize land values, improve the social character of the area, and beautify the approach to the Citadel.⁵⁰

Hattie's recommended improvements were followed shortly by illustrations of showing similar projects, again drawn by Andrew Cobb. *The Daily Echo* and *Morning Chronicle* both published articles proposing substantial public developments, including the extension of Morris Street toward the new Dalhousie campus, a park at Fort Needham, a reprinting of the proposed ferry terminal published by *The Evening Mail* in 1910, the approach to the clock tower, and a bridge across the North-West Arm (see figures 5-8, following pages).⁵¹ In addition to the proposed improvement projects, the *Echo* and *Chronicle* printed a map showing Hattie's proposed redevelopment of the upper streets.⁵²

It was not merely the Civic Improvement League advocating for a comprehensive city plan. *The Daily Echo* began running its own stories and editorials arguing the benefits of planning. An article in December 1911 detailed the manner in which planning would benefit children by providing adequate playground space, arguing "it would be achieved quicker and better if we were to take a comprehensive view of the city's needs and put down on the plan in the best place for each, all the features that we think...should be incorporated."⁵³

⁴⁹ *Daily Echo*, November 24, 1911, p. 3. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6543

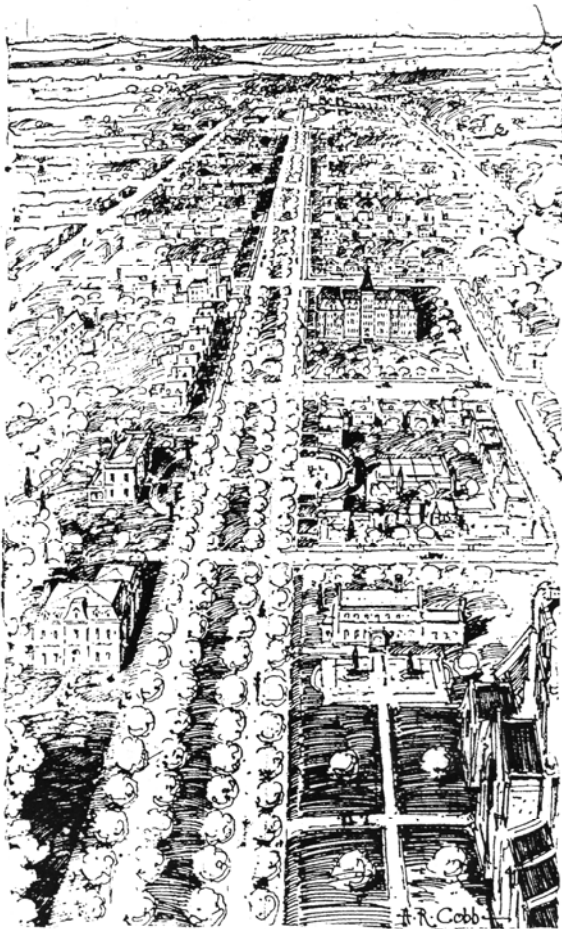
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Daily Echo*, November 25, 30, December 7, 11, 13, 1911. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6543.

⁵² *Daily Echo*, December 2, 1911, p. 1. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6543.

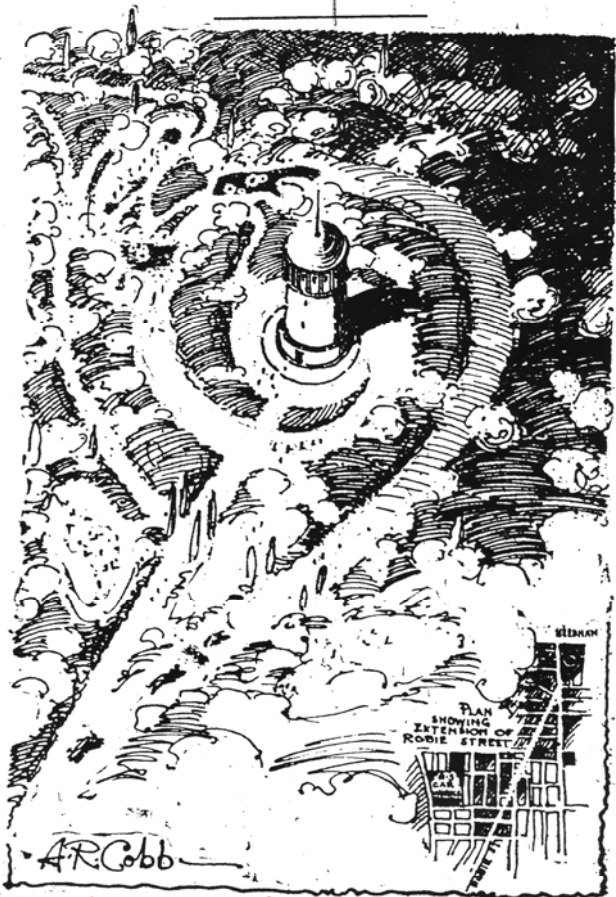
⁵³ *Daily Echo*, December 14, 1911, pp. 1-2. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6543.

HOW THE EXTENSION OF MORRIS ST. COULD BE MADE GREAT FEATURE



With New Dalhousie Campus at End, Improvement Would Result in Street Vista of Exceptional Beauty---The Scheme in Detail

NORTH END IN NEED OF PARK: THIS SCHEME SOLVES THE PROBLEM

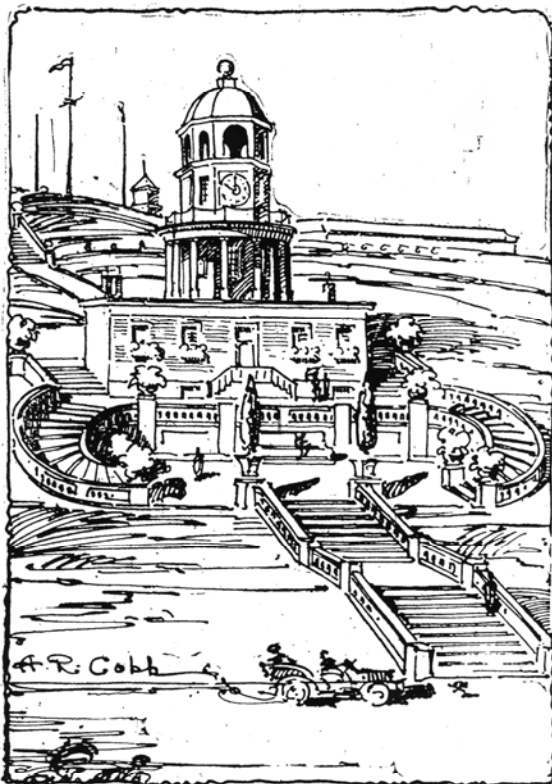


Plan of suggested Park at Fort Needham with Aesthetic Water Tower and extension on Robie Street.

How Fort Needham Could be Made Both a Blessing to North End Residents and a Distinct Credit to the City

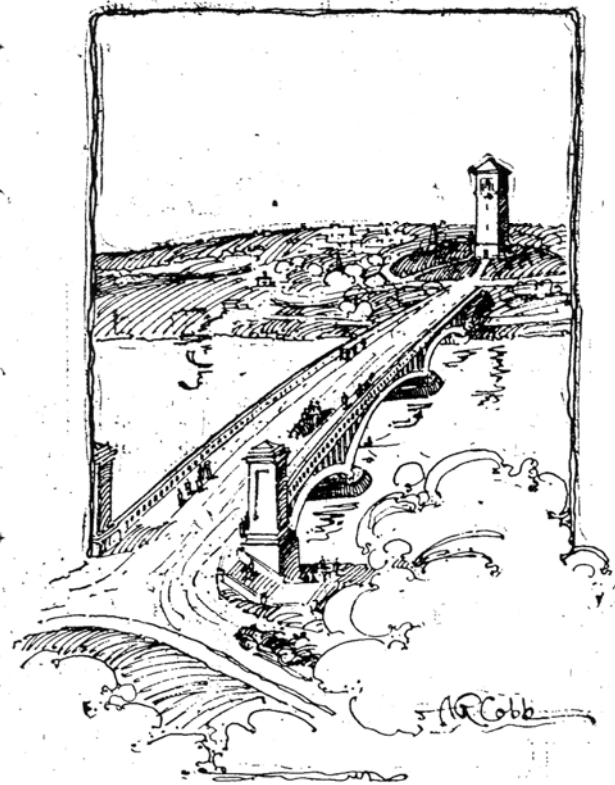
Figure 5 & 6. Illustrations by Andrew Cobb of proposed improvement projects. *Daily Echo*, November 1911. PANS Microfilm reel #6543.

HOW CLOCK TOWER MIGHT BE TREATED



An Improvement to the Cost of Which the Dominion Government Might Reasonably Be Expected to Contribute--Need for Board Of Improvements Again Demonstrated

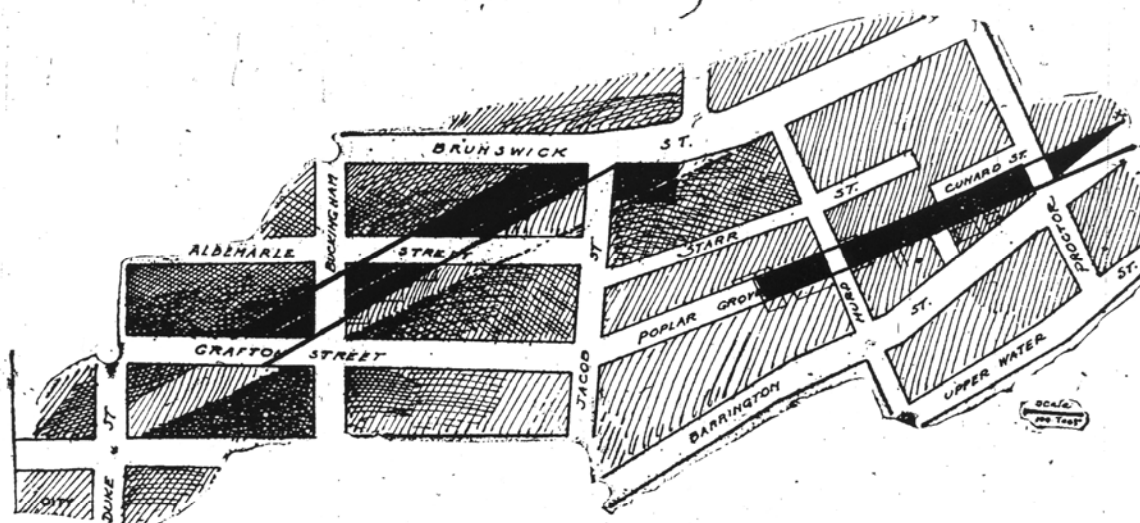
SUGGESTED BRIDGE ACROSS THE ARM



Not a Very Pressing Need But It is High Time That We Began to Think About It---More Work for Improvement Board

Figures 7 & 8. Illustrations of the clock tower and possible bridge over the Arm.

HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR MISTAKES SHOW NECESSITY FOR COMPREHENSIVE CITY PLAN



**Three Improvements Made Necessary Because of the Lack of Fore-
sight Exercised in the Planning of the City---Costly Blunders
Which Might Have Been Avoided, Point to Need for Action Now**

Figure 9. Map of the area proposed for redevelopment by R. H. Hattie. *Daily Echo*, December 2, 1911, p. 1. PANS reel #6543.

Thomas Mawson

As the Civic Improvement League engaged in its concerted lobbying effort with Halifax's city council, another international planning expert visited the city. Thomas Mawson, the British landscape architect and planner, was invited to speak under the auspices of the Improvement League. Mawson lectured on the numerous benefits of city planning and the opportunities Halifax enjoyed for beautiful and profitable development.⁵⁴ While the presence of an international planning expert is worthy of note in and of itself, the particularly compelling point of interest is who was in the audience. Among the Halifax residents in attendance at Mawson's lecture was George Faulkner, the Member of Nova Scotia's

⁵⁴ *Daily Echo*, November 29, 1911, p. 3. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #6543.

legislative assembly for Halifax County.⁵⁵ Only four months later, Faulkner would introduce the Town Planning Act to the provincial assembly.

CONCLUSION

The historical evidence gathered through archival research reveals the considerable influence played by the Civic Improvement League leading up to the introduction of the Town Planning Act. The progression of events, leading to the introduction and adoption of the 1912 Act, suggest the following four conclusions:

- Between 1905 and 1912, the Civic Improvement League and its members developed an increasing interest in city planning as a means to improve conditions in Halifax.
- Concerns regarding city beautification, housing conditions, haphazard development, efficiency and public welfare motivated member of the Improvement League to lobby for an expert-driven comprehensive city plan.
- Both American and British planning experts contributed to local planning discourse among civic advocates, resulting in a curious mix of city beautiful and garden city ideas.
- Local lobbying efforts aimed at Halifax's municipal government indirectly resulted in the adoption of the 1912 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia.

It should be noted that despite the lack of evidence in newspaper accounts of the period that directly link the Civic Improvement League to the 1912 statute, a document in R.M. Hattie's papers, written in 1944, suggest that the League was singly responsible for its introduction to the provincial assembly.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Hattie, R.M. "Planning Submission." Robert M. Hattie Papers, Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Halifax. MG1 Vol. 2899, No. 11.

Faulkner's relationship to the local proponents of city planning is surprisingly difficult to establish. He left no records behind, at least to my knowledge. The newspaper reports offer little evidence of a relationship between the politician and local civic reformers. One interesting point to note is Faulkner's connection to the Halifax Board of Trade. An article on federal shipping policy from March 4, 1908 names G.E. Faulkner, M.P.P. as president of the Board.⁵⁷ Given the close relationship between the Board of Trade and the Civic Improvement League, it may be that Faulkner was closely associated with all the principal members of the Civic Improvement League. Moreover, his connection to Thomas Mawson's lecture in November 1911 is particularly compelling. Given the similar time frame between the introduction of Nova Scotia's first planning statute, Mawson's lecture, his likely knowledge of the 1909 British Act, an important connection may have been made in November 1911.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research project, coupled with Leifka Visser's work toward her Master of Planning independent project, reveal a complex story with local, national, and international actors participating in the evolution of planning thought in Nova Scotia. There remain gaps in the chronology, however, that warrant further research. The two years immediately following the passage of the 1912 Town Planning Act may provide some evidence as to why the Act ultimately failed. Further analysis of newspaper coverage between 1912 and 1915 may shed some light on this mystery.

Beyond the activities of the Civic Improvement League, other groups and individuals were actively working toward objectives related to the introduction of the Town Planning Act. While no direct evidence linking these activities to the bill have been located as of yet, they beg further investigation given the relevance to the research questions. The role of the Local Council of Women of Halifax in furthering the civic reform agenda, and the cooperative

⁵⁷ *Daily Echo*, March 4, 1908, p. 1. Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Microfilm reel #7116.

relationship between the Council of Women and the Civic Improvement League may provide greater insight into this significant period in Nova Scotia's urban development.

Among the many interesting issues identified during the collection of the archival data, the most notable is a scheme proposed by Alderman Clarke to expropriate a significant area of central Halifax for improvement. The slum clearance proposal garnered considerable public attention in the daily newspapers. Given the timing of the scheme mere weeks prior to the introduction of the 1912 Town Planning Act, and the scheme's similarity to one proposed by R.M. Hattie in 1910, further investigation seems warranted. As with the press coverage of the 1912 Act, the clearance scheme is overshadowed by the *Titanic* disaster, and a closer look beyond the project's original time-frame is necessary to follow this line of inquiry.

Finally, the relationship between Nova Scotia's planning act and the New Brunswick legislation requires some analysis. Both statutes are near carbon copies of Britain's 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act. Considering the similarities in the actual document, and the time frame for adoption, there may be connections between the neighbouring province's experience that would benefit our knowledge of the era.

Ultimately, to understand properly this important period in the Canadian planning profession's development, considerably more research and analysis is warranted.

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APPENDIX A

Timeline showing select events, activities, serials related to Civic Improvement League, civic beautification, town planning, urban renewal, and 1912 Town Planning Act.

May 3, 1905	Civic Improvement League moved to appoint a committee to seek the development of an expert plan for Halifax (Hattie papers, MG1 Vol. 2899 #11)
March 1908	F.H. Sexton lectures on need for town planning, Civic Improvement League sponsored lecture (Nicholson, p. 37)
July 1910	<i>Halifax Herald</i> begins printing R.V. Harris' "Urban Uplift" near daily column on urban affairs, boosterism, beautification, and planning (PANS, reels # 6780, 6781)
September 1910	John Nolen, landscape architect and planning advocate, speaks to Civic Improvement League on beautification (<i>Evening Mail</i> , as quoted in Nicholson, p. 37)
October 1910	Henry Vivian, British planner & MP lectures at Halifax Canadian Club, suggests Halifax slums worse than those found in London (<i>Evening Mail</i> , as quoted in Nicholson, pp. 38-39)
December 1910	The Civic Improvement League approaches Halifax City Council to request the establishment of a commission to investigate possibilities to prepare a comprehensive city plan. (<i>Evening Mail</i> , December 6, 1910)
January 1911	R.M. Hattie speaks to the need for comprehensive city planning at Civic Improvement League event (<i>Evening Mail</i> , January 18, 1911)
March 5-11, 1911	Civic Uplift Week – week-long series of events related to civic improvement, including lectures on City Beautiful and City Planning (<i>Evening Mail</i> , Feb 28 – March 13, 1911)
November 4, 1911	<i>Daily Echo</i> begins running 8-part series entitled "City Planning" (<i>Daily Echo</i> , Nov. 4-14, 1911. PANS, reel #6542)
November 14, 1911	R.M. Hattie reads paper on "City Planning" at Civic Improvement League lecture, Civic Improvement League passes motion to ask City Council to immediately establish a Board of Improvement with a view to establishing a comprehensive city plan (<i>Daily Echo</i> , Nov. 15, 1911. PANS, reel #6542)

- November 20, 1911 “Planning for the Future,” a six-part series of “paper recently read before” CIL is printed in *Daily Echo* (PANS, reel #6542)
- November 25, 1911 First of series of articles on city beautification and comprehensive planning, with A.R. Cobb’s illustrations, is printed in both *Daily Echo* and *Morning Chronicle*. Series runs until mid-December, 1911 (PANS, reels # 6543, 5577)
- November 29, 1911 Thomas Mawson lectures on “City Planning,” arranged by Civic Improvement League. George Faulkner is present, and seconded a vote of thanks following the lecture (*Daily Echo*, Nov. 29, 1912, p. 3. PANS, reel #6543)
- February 16, 1912 F.H. Sexton lectures on Garden City movement for Civic Improvement League (*Morning Chronicle*, Feb. 16, 1912, p. 7. PANS, reel #5579)
- February 29, 1912 Ald. Clarke’s improvement scheme for the slum district begins to get press coverage (*Morning Chronicle*, Feb. 29, 1912, p. 9. PANS, reel #5579)
- March 2, 1912 *Daily Echo* and *Morning Chronicle* run articles on Garden City movement, with illustrations of garden city suburb & house plans by A.R. Cobb (*Daily Echo*, March 1, 1912, pp. 1-2. PANS, reel #6544)
- March 7, 1912 Act respecting town planning introduced to Nova Scotia Assembly by George Faulkner; given first reading (*Journal & Proceedings of NS Assembly*, PANS, reel #9177)
- March 12, 1912 Act given second reading; referred to Committee on Railways and Municipalities
- March 29, 1912 Act, with amendments, delivered to Clerk by Committee on R & M with favourable report; committed to Committee of Whole Assembly
- April 10, 1912 Act given third reading, passed
- April 15, 1912 Titanic sinks; April 16 headline reads “MONSTER WHITE STAR LINER TITANIC FOUNDERS AND OF 3,000 ABOARD ONLY 675 ACCOUNTED FOR,” (*Halifax Herald*, April 16, 1912, p. 1. PANS, reel #6791)
- May 3, 1912 Act respecting town planning given royal assent by Lieutenant Governor James Drummond McGregor

