Figure 1.1 Study area
In 1970 Columbus, Ohio, was like many another American city. There were remnants of old industrial areas adjacent to a mostly commercial downtown, deteriorating neighborhoods housing blacks or whites (but rarely both), middle and upper income (largely white) suburbs, suburban shopping malls and office-industrial parks, and freeways to take one to or through town. Such a scene could not have been envisioned a century earlier. The 1870 city was a center of agricultural commerce and state government, a small backwater compared to her urban counterparts, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

How did the city of 1870 become the city of 1970? Was the growth an undirected process and the resulting form a reflection of thousands of individuals' incremental decisions? Or had the city been consciously shaped and planned with a specific goal in mind? If the latter, what was the goal and by what authority was it pursued?

In one sense, the "planning" of Columbus, Ohio's, growth is the subject of this entire work. To set the stage for that extended discussion, this chapter describes the city at both the end and the beginning of the process and considers the tools at the city's disposal.1

The Postindustrial City

Approaching Columbus, Ohio, from the north on Interstate 71 in 1970, one encountered construction of a suburban beltway that would surround the city and several suburbs. When completed, the
outer belt I-270 would form a rough circle with a sixty-mile circumference. Looking at a map of the metropolitan area, one might be reminded of a rifle sight, with I-270 being the circle and Interstates 70 and 71 forming the cross hairs. Instead of intersecting in the center of the city, however, I-70 and I-71 merged to create a second, smaller beltway. This inner belt enclosed an area, more rectangular than round and two miles at its widest, that was the original walking city. At the center, where High Street (U.S. 23) met Broad Street (U.S. 40), sat the state capitol.

Like many other cities, Columbus had been founded on a river. At the northwest corner of downtown, the Olentangy River (flowing from the north) joined the larger Scioto (flowing from the northwest). Continuing south through the city the two thus formed a slightly cockeyed Y. Three miles east of the city’s center a smaller river, Alum Creek, flowed through the area from north to south, and six miles farther east almost to the outer belt was a third watercourse, Big Walnut Creek.

By 1970 downtown Columbus was almost devoid of residences. The major retail establishments lined High Street while the major office buildings bordered Broad. Other downtown streets had their share of both retail and office commercial structures. A block west of the state capitol, a Greek Revival-style building with a domeless rotunda, stood the city’s lone skyscraper. Rising fifty-four stories, the Leveque-Lincoln Tower looked like a scaled down Empire State Building. A complementary group of light-colored buildings housing local, state, and federal government offices stretched along the east bank of the Scioto, and the state penitentiary, a crenelated fortification, sat just east of the Scioto-Olentangy confluence. Downtown Columbus had one other notable feature. A mile north of the statehouse on High Street stood Union Station. Chicago architect Daniel Hudson Burnham had designed the station in the 1890s, but its once impressive arcade of shops lining both sides of the High Street viaduct over the railroad tracks was now largely vacant and few travelers passed through its grand arch.

Businesses and industries newly located in outlying areas competed with those in or near downtown. Remnants of some nineteenth-century factories that had been at the edge of the old walking city continued to operate alongside the inner belt. Others
lay vacant, and still others had been wiped out by the freeway's construction. New factories and office-warehouse industrial parks were springing up along the outer belt. Regional shopping malls near Interstates 70 and 71 on the west, north, and east sides drew customers from the city, the suburbs, and rural areas well beyond the outer belt.

Although development appeared to have spread out like tentacles from the city's center, it was not evenly distributed. The north leg was the longest and I-270 farthest from the city center on that side. Two suburbs—tiny residential Riverlea and once-colonial Worthington—nestled just inside the outer belt's north rim. Located one-third of the way from downtown to Worthington was Ohio State University, home to fifty thousand students. The east leg was not quite as long but also contained two suburbs: grand "old" Bexley on the east bank of Alum Creek and prototypical 1950s Whitehall on the west bank of Big Walnut. The west leg was shorter still, less dense, and contained no separately incorporated suburbs. The State of Ohio owned a large parcel housing two public facilities on a hill about three miles from the city center on the west side. The parcel was comparable in size and distance to the north side's university but the occupants were much different; they were resident patients of the Columbus State Institute and the Central Ohio Psychiatric Hospital. The city's top-heavy development was accentuated by the northeast and northwest legs. Though it had developed sporadically and later than the north side, the northeast was almost as long. Its lone residential suburb, Minerva Park, was several miles from downtown. The northwest side, between the Olentangy and Scioto rivers, was entirely suburban—in character if not by legal incorporation. The municipalities of Marble Cliff, Grandview Heights, and Upper Arlington spread west and north from the rivers' confluence, but the City of Columbus had reached out around them and thus the new homes being built north of Upper Arlington were in the city proper.

Driving south out of town, whether on Interstate 71 or High Street, especially on a summer day, one quickly realized why the south side was much less developed. A variety of unpleasant smells assaulted the nose. Studies and reports completed at different times attributed the odors to various sources: the city's landfill, the sewage treatment plant, or the Mead Paper Company (located
outside the city of Chillicothe, an hour south of town). The outer belt was only six miles from the city center on the south side—closer than at any other point—and there were no separate suburbs in that end of town. Still the south side had one notable feature. An area known as German Village was just south of downtown. Originally settled by German immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, it had fallen on hard times by the mid-twentieth, when some residents of the area realized something unique was at risk. By 1970 many of the homes had been renovated or restored and neat brick singles and doubles fronted on neat brick streets. German restaurants and taverns, some in business for a century and others German only in menu and decor, served a growing neighborhood and tourist clientele and sponsored an annual Oktoberfest in the local park named for the German poet Schiller.

The south side notwithstanding, the overall impression of the Columbus metropolitan area in 1970 was one of growth and economic development. As the national economy began its transformation from one based on manufacturing and heavy industry to one based on commerce and service industries, Columbus could capitalize on the change. Though there were some factories, manufacturing had never been the city's economic mainstay. Columbus was a center of government and, owing to the university and those facilities attracted by it, a center of research as well. It was also home to several national finance and insurance companies, and in 1970 the Borden Company began moving its national headquarters from New York City to Columbus. Others soon followed suit. Rather than sharing the hardships and economic dislocations of its rustbelt neighbors, Columbus was a green oasis of economic development—a postindustrial city.

The social geography of Columbus was like that of most American cities of the time in that residential areas were separated by class and race. There were differences, though, reflecting Columbus's later growth and lesser reliance on industry.

Although the slums of Columbus were not as great—qualitatively or quantitatively—as those of its contemporaries, the city had its poor. They congregated just beyond downtown on the north and east sides in older neighborhoods where once-fine Victorian homes had been subdivided into a multitude of rooming houses
and apartments. As was the case elsewhere, some low income people had been displaced by freeway construction or urban renewal projects. They then moved into adjacent areas, increasing the concentration of poverty. Those displaced by the private renovations of German Village had moved into areas immediately east or south of the village, confirming in the minds of middle and upper income people in other parts of town that the south side was not a desirable place to live. Low income people lived on the near west side, too, but not in the chopped up former homes of the wealthy. The near west side was locally known as "the bottoms." Low-lying land on the west bank of the Scioto from which the "Hilltop" (where the state institute and psychiatric hospital were located) rose, the bottoms had occasionally flooded and its old row houses and other dwellings had not aged well.

Generally speaking, the farther one went from the city center, the higher was the income of the residents. This was especially true of the west, north, and northeast sides, where middle and upper income people lived in new homes in outlying areas. Though Grandview Heights was more modest than its neighbors, it had few if any really poor people, and the suburban northwest was entirely middle or upper income in residence. The east side's residential patterns were a little unusual, however. The area between downtown and Alum Creek was largely poor and largely black. Alum Creek then served to separate the poor, black near east side from the staid stone mansions of upper income Bexley as effectively as a moat protected a castle. The area between Bexley and Whitehall was less wealthy than Bexley but still middle or upper middle in income. Whitehall was a curious mix. There were very modest neighborhoods and apartments that had been built only to 1950s FHA minimum standards and exclusive areas near Columbus Country Club and Big Walnut Creek. The south side flipped the usual pattern since those "gentrifying" German Village generally had higher incomes than those who lived farther south.

As early as the 1920s the city's black population had been concentrated on the near east side. As was the case elsewhere, though, prejudicial actions both private and public had greatly restricted residential choice for the black population as it increased over the years. Alum Creek and Bexley had effectively stopped expansion due east. The east side black concentration
consequently expanded straight north (to the near northeast side), then north and east into largely undeveloped outlying areas. An area of slightly less minority concentration extended south and east of the near east side and by 1970 there were also blacks in the bottoms. Highly visible because of their geographical concentration, blacks were 18.5 percent of the city's population (only 12.5 percent of the population of Franklin County) and they were the only ethnic or racial group whose presence was readily apparent.

There were few remnants of ethnic groups or ethnic neighborhoods because Columbus had not experienced the extensive late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foreign immigration of many other cities. The city had fewer and smaller industries to attract immigrants, and its inland location, as neither a major river nor lake port, made Columbus a less likely destination than Cleveland or Cincinnati. German Village was evidence, of course, of a mid-nineteenth-century immigration, and German singing and sport societies still maintained an active membership. Evidence of a smaller nineteenth-century Irish immigration remained in the name of St. Patrick's Catholic Church but the church's congregation no longer lived in the surrounding near northeast side neighborhood. An even smaller concentration of Italians had long since disappeared from the near north side, where they had lived cheek-by-jowl with the Irish. A second small concentration of Italians, who had lived near and once worked the stone quarries across the Scioto River from the northwest suburbs, existed mostly in the memories of a few older residents of the unincorporated village of San Margarita. Jews lived in two parts of the metropolitan area, although not in large numbers. Those involved in business, or descended from the city's small nineteenth-century Jewish population, tended to live in Bexley, and the city's Orthodox and Conservative congregations met in or near that suburb. A Reform congregation, some of whose members had an affiliation with Ohio State University, met on the north side and was preparing to build in suburban Worthington.

Thus in 1970 Columbus exhibited many of the same demographic patterns as other cities, though in less extreme form. Disallowing the areas already noted, the overwhelming impression of the city was that it was largely white, native born, and middle income. Demographically the city thus better reflected the
new, postindustrial economic growth and development than would an old manufacturing center.

Having reached out to surround its suburbs rather than being ringed in by them, Columbus was by 1970 the largest city in area in the state. The encircling outer belt's diameter was about sixteen miles and much of the land within it was developed. Of Franklin County's 833,249 residents, 539,677 lived in the city proper. Since growth would not be checked by either natural features of the landscape or resistant suburbs, Columbus could continue to expand and to capitalize on the changing national economic trends.

**The Preindustrial City**

Such an auspicious present would have been almost inconceivable a century earlier. Columbus was poor farmtown stepchild Cinderella compared to her thriving industrial sisters Cleveland and Cincinnati. And there seemed little likelihood of change.

The city of the 1870s was roughly cruciform in shape, with the north and east arms longer than the south and west. The state capitol and its grounds dominated downtown, where row houses and mansions were as prevalent as commercial buildings. Just under half (31,274) of Franklin County's 65,019 residents lived in Columbus. A few of the city's wealthiest lived in palatial homes on East Broad Street, but the urban area ended at Alum Creek, where the original state fairgrounds were located.

The north side was more extensively developed. Just north of downtown fine Victorian homes lined the streets around Goodale Park and on Neil Avenue, which led to the university. The university itself, a large part of the former Neil farm, had only one building, which served as both classrooms and dormitory. A few streets had been laid out north of the campus, but within another mile the area abruptly changed from residential to rural.

Schiller Park marked the southern edge of the twenty-year-old German neighborhood. It was very nearly the southern end point of the city as well. On the west side, streets and homes occupied less than a mile of the low-lying land west of the Scioto River and below the Scioto-Olentangy confluence. Farm plots large and small filled the remaining land between the west side neighborhoods
and the Central Ohio Insane Asylum and the Idiotic Asylum, as the two state institutions were then called.

Though nothing remotely resembling a suburb existed yet, there were two small population concentrations north of the city. A dozen or so houses and shops comprised the unincorporated village of Clintonville two or three miles north of the university. Four or so miles beyond Clintonville was Worthington, a bit of New England set in the Midwest, with its village green, churches, and academy. Its founders had laid out the town on a large tract, allotting to each a one-acre town lot for his house on a street in the village and an eighty- to one-hundred-acre farm lot outside the village limits. Though some of the farm lots had changed hands or been subdivided, the little town retained its basic New England colonial form. All Franklin County's other villages, incorporated or not, were very small and none was within the area that would be encircled by Interstate 270 a hundred years hence.

The little city's economy reflected its geography. Its infant industrial district was split in two. Some factories had located on the east bank of the Olentangy north of the confluence and on the east bank of the Scioto south of it. A second industrial concentration existed around the various rail lines that met at the union depot, which adjoined the U.S. Army barracks at the northeast edge of the city. But the factories were fairly small and primarily served a central Ohio market, for in 1870 industrial development was just beginning here while it was in full flower in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and elsewhere. Rather than being based on industrial commerce, then, the Columbus economy was based on agricultural commerce. Flat or very gently rolling farmland surrounded the city, and the area's minor rivers along with the National Road had for years provided an easy means for farmers to transport their products. The potential for state government or university-based research to become an economic contributor was not yet apparent.

Befitting its small size and early stage of urbanization, the city's population was much less stratified than it would become. The wealthiest lived in the East Broad Street mansions or the large Victorian homes on the north side, but there were modest single-family homes, doubles, and row houses on side streets in both areas as well. The city's most destitute resided in the county poorhouse. The population was more than 91 percent white, and the propor-
tion of foreign born (18 percent in 1870) was steadily dropping, as was the percentage of "free colored."\textsuperscript{6}

Thus in 1870 Columbus was, and would probably remain, a would-be metropolis. It was not likely that its industrial development would catch up with that of its larger competitors and there was little to attract growth. The city was a temporary home to state legislators when the legislature was in session, and only legislators and farmers had much reason to come to town and join the city's 31,000 permanent residents.

**Planning for the Future**

By 1900, though, the winds of change were stirring. The population had more than quadrupled to 125,560. Farm-to-city as well as foreign immigration expanded cities throughout the United States at the same time it aided and was aided by the increasing pace of industrialization. Columbus, Ohio, might not be New York or Chicago but it, too, was growing rapidly and city fathers thought it time to put a guiding hand to the process. By 1908 the city had a formal plan.

The story of the *Plan of the City of Columbus* of 1908 is typical of its era. The business community saw a need and promoted the idea; the resulting document showed how Columbus could become a "City Beautiful." What happened in Columbus is much like what happened in Chicago, but also in such smaller cities as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Seattle, Denver, and Dallas.\textsuperscript{7}

Like many others, the *Plan of the City of Columbus* of 1908 had its origins in a parks commission report. By 1900 the Board of Trade, composed of the city's business leaders, recognized that the city's public works, particularly the water and sewer systems, were inadequate and that the state's capital city needed a larger and better park system. At the urging of the Board of Trade and the mayor (himself a former Board of Trade president), City Council in 1904 approved the appointment of a Parks Commission, whose eighteen members would represent different sections of the city. Council provided no funds for the commission's operation, however. With funds provided by the Board of Trade, the Parks Commission solicited advice on the city's park and improvement needs from
three nonresident independent consultants. Based on their study, the commission prepared a report for council, requesting that the city appropriate up to "$5,000, by which to employ proper experts to come to Columbus to prepare specific plans." Encouraged by the Board of Trade, civic organizations, and the newspapers, council authorized the expenditure in 1906. The city commissioned the same three consultants who had previously served the Parks Commission and added two more. These five individuals, who would report to the council and the city's Board of Public Service, were formally designated the "Columbus Plan Commission." They included Austin W. Lord, a New York architect, as chair; Charles N. Lowrie, a New York landscape architect; Albert Kelsey, a Philadelphia architect; H. A. MacNeil, a New York sculptor; and Charles Mulford Robinson, Rochester's famous civic adviser, as secretary.

The commission's Plan of 1908 was a three-part report, with sections devoted to the city in general, the city's parks, and a proposed civic center. Part I, "The General Survey," described the city's layout and topography and noted that Columbus served a triple urban function. As the state capital it was a center of government, but it also was a center for commerce and industry as well as a center for education. The survey commented on what was good in the city—particularly Union Station and its arcade—and offered suggestions for improvement and future growth. The commission recommended that utility wires be put underground, that the placement of buildings and signs in the public right-of-way be restricted, and that public toilets and baths be provided. Careful attention should also be paid to the site and size of schools as the city grew. As general guidelines the report recommended that primary schools be within walking distance of their students and not be too large. Schools needed adequate play space and should ideally adjoin parks, while saloons should be prohibited from opening near them. Noting the relationship between a city and its surroundings, the report suggested conscious, formal interaction between Columbus and its infant suburbs so that the smaller communities not be allowed "to disfigure the outskirts of the city." It also recommended that Ohio State be explicitly integrated into the city's design and functioning since the university was a major presence. The university's large tract of land bordering the Olen-
tangy River provided the city a "breathing space" and the opportunity to create a "noble" landscape. At the same time, growing enrollments and public attendance at sporting events presented a challenge the city could not afford to ignore. The plan's suggestions for schools, suburbs, and the university were fairly general, however, for the commission recognized that actions affecting those areas lay outside municipal government authority. Hence, cooperation—particularly with the school board and the university administration—was urged.¹⁰

The plan's middle (and largest) section was titled "Parks, Parkways and Recreation Grounds." Although this section was well illustrated with photographs and drawings of park plans, the commission here saw mostly potential, for the city's parks were few, inadequate, and underfunded relative to comparable cities'. The principal parks—Schiller, Goodale, and Franklin (which had replaced the original state fairgrounds on the east side)—were ornamental and provided little for the city's working people. The report noted that parks could provide an economic benefit: property taxes, like property values, tended to rise for parcels adjacent to a park and parks could attract a better quality labor force. The report then recommended a complete park system composed of four elements. First were playgrounds. These should be within a half-mile's walking distance of all the city's children and could use schoolyards, if appropriately equipped. Next should be neighborhood parks, like Schiller, Goodale, and Franklin; but the city needed more of them and to add some recreational facilities for the working classes. Third were large parks, one in each leg of the city's Maltese-cross configuration to serve the population of the corresponding north, east, south, and west sides. Finally, the report suggested outlying nature reserves well beyond the urban area. The report proposed that boulevards and parkways connect the various elements of the system, and said the city should effectively use its rivers and view the proposed and existing parks as an integrated system.¹¹

City plans of this era almost invariably called for a civic center of some type and the Columbus Plan of 1908 was no exception. Indeed, such an element was viewed as more important here than in many other cities because Columbus was the seat of state government and the capitol was an ideal focus for such a center.
Addressing the "heart of the city," the report proposed a Capitol Park Mall between the Scioto River and the statehouse. City Hall and other buildings serving local, state, and national government purposes should form a Civic Court around the mall, along with an art gallery or music hall. The governor's mansion, beyond the capitol at the east end of the mall, would complete the picture. Like the parks section, the "Civic Center" was lavishly illustrated to show what could be accomplished, and photographs and references to European cities provided additional inspiration.

The Plan of the City of Columbus of 1908 dealt only with the city's physical elements. There was no mention of housing needs, employment base, or the city's population structure, but that was characteristic of city plans (and city planning) in that era. Nor did it address water and sewer systems, for much-needed public works improvements were already underway by the time the Columbus Plan Commission began its work. Like its contemporaries the Plan was comprehensive only in that it considered the whole (albeit physical) city rather than just parks or a civic center.

Underlying the plan was the premise that growth would continue in much the same manner and in the same directions as it had already occurred. The city should thus take the initiative and buy the necessary land for parks, parkways, and civic center before economic growth and development pushed up the cost. Although the Plan's ostensible focus was aesthetic, which the illustrations accentuated, its text repeatedly emphasized the benefits to be enjoyed if the city should adopt and implement its suggestions. Sprinkled throughout were phrases like "beauty and dignity," "importance and destiny." Planning would provide for "convenience and commercial economy." Well-planned railroads and ancillary facilities, as well as other public improvements, would foster economic growth and prosperity. In parks citizens could be refreshed by the "song of birds" and the "scent of flowers" and have the opportunity to "build up again the physical strength so freely expended, day by day in factory and shop." A plan would encourage the philanthropic impulse of individuals to make gifts of land to the city for street widening, parks, or schools, and civic beauty would be a positive influence on all citizens. A well-planned Columbus would have to play second fiddle to no other city and could achieve what its status as state capital implied.
Columbus and Home Rule

The Plan Commission had given the city a vision of what it could become, a goal to be pursued. And though the business community had provided the original impetus for planning the city's future, city government would have to take the action. The city's ability to do that, however, was limited, for Ohio had no provisions for municipal home rule. Like other cities, Columbus was subordinate in all matters to state government, which established the rules by which cities of different sizes could operate.

The twentieth century's first decade, which saw the preparation of many city plans, also saw the push for municipal reforms that would give cities the authority and flexibility to implement those plans effectively. At the national, state, and local levels progressives fought for a multitude of political, social, and economic reforms. And the same urban conditions that made apparent the need for those reforms and for cities to plan for their futures also spurred the push for municipal home rule. Cities had to be freed from their state legislatures so they could best solve their individual problems. In 1900 only four states provided for municipal home rule; Ohio was not among them. By 1912, however, Ohio and others had joined the group.

Ohio's cities were at the forefront in the fight for municipal reforms. Cleveland and Toledo had reform mayors in Tom Johnson and Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones. In Columbus, Congregationalist pastor and nationally known exponent of the social gospel Washington Gladden was elected to City Council in 1900. An independent reform candidate, Gladden was known to support municipal ownership of public utilities and the adoption of city charters, so the signs were auspicious.

Early in the 1901-02 session the state legislature began efforts to adopt a municipal code. The legislature examined several plans, some with home rule provisions, and discussed them at length. In Columbus, where the legislature was meeting, Gladden pleaded from his pulpit and elsewhere that legislators "give the people of the cities the rights and privileges that belong to them as citizens." Citing the principle of local self-government as the basis of democracy, he charged the legislature to "make it legally possible for the cities to govern themselves." The Republican majority was not
ready to go that far, however, and although the municipal code they adopted provided some improvement over the existing situation, it did not provide home rule.\(^{17}\)

A decade later things had changed. The Ohio Constitution required that a constitutional convention meet every twenty years to consider amendments to that document, and the years leading up to the 1910 call for a convention had been ones of growing progressive and reform strength. Voters elected delegates to the convention in November 1910. Although local municipal contests often overshadowed delegate selection, progressive and reform candidates did well generally. It was estimated that only one-quarter of the delegates—mostly from rural areas—were conservatives. The convention that assembled January 9, 1912, was thus split between conservatives and progressives rather than along party lines.\(^{18}\)

Several prominent reformers played a major role. Cleveland's Tom Johnson, concerned about bosses and machine politics as well as other municipal ills, had laid the blame for their existence on the state constitution. Without home rule it effectively hog-tied those cities that attempted to solve their own problems. Washington Gladden and the reformist mayors addressed a conference of the state's mayors and other municipal officials that met to draft a home rule amendment to be submitted to the constitutional convention. The convention then passed the submitted amendment by a strong vote.\(^{19}\)

Home rule was only one of many issues the convention examined. Delegates also considered the merits of proposals for initiative and referendum, the licensing of saloons, institution of the direct primary, and granting the vote to women.\(^{20}\) Altogether the convention prepared forty-two amendments to submit to the voters for approval. Each would require only a simple majority for passage, and if passed would take effect January 1, 1913. Progressive and reform forces supporting the amendments, most of whom were Democrats or Roosevelt Republicans, were well organized, and the state's big city newspapers also supported most of the major issues. The voters of Ohio responded and approved thirty-four amendments—including the one for home rule.\(^{21}\)

It was now up to the cities to exercise their newly granted power. Columbus lost no time, beginning discussions on a city charter in
February 1913. Ohio State University President William Oxley Thompson presided over the Municipal Charter League, which was created to draft a charter, and Washington Gladden served on its executive committee. Fifteen months later voters in Columbus approved a city charter containing many municipal government reforms. The charter provided for a seven-member City Council, with members elected at large, to be the city's legislature. The mayor, also elected at large, headed the executive branch of municipal government. The charter did not provide for a planning commission, but council had the authority to establish one if it felt the need. Other cities were less eager to govern themselves. By 1916 only twenty-six Ohio cities had submitted home rule charters to their voters, and only ten of those charters had passed. Still, though the provisions were not fully utilized, Ohio's cities had more favorable home rule provisions than any other state's except California's. Moreover, a 1923 Ohio Supreme Court decision ruled that the home rule power of local self-government was self-executing: a municipality could act on its own behalf regardless of whether it adopted a charter. It need not ask the state legislature's permission. With its home rule provision, then, Ohio's 1912 constitutional amendments gave cities the impetus, opportunity, and authority to attack many of their long-standing problems.

Annexation

Ohio's cities were not entirely free of the state's influence, however. Through its provisions regarding annexation, the Ohio Municipal Code governed how cities could physically expand. The code clearly spelled out the procedures and requirements. The county commission of the appropriate county had to approve all annexation petitions, and only contiguous territory, adjacent to the existing municipal corporation limit, could be annexed. Either landholders in the area to be annexed or the city it was to join could petition the county. If the former, a majority of resident adult freeholders had to submit the petition; absentee owners and tenants had no voice in the matter. After hearing arguments (if any were offered) supporting or opposing the petition, the county commissioners either approved or denied it. If the petition were
approved, the city council of the municipality to be joined then voted to accept or reject the territory in question. But approval of the territory's landowners was not required if the annexing city initiated the petition. The city defined the territory under consideration for annexation, then petitioned the county commissioners, who approved or denied the petition after hearing any relevant arguments. If county officials approved the petition, city council still had to vote to accept or reject the territory.

The major limitation on a city's imperialistic ambitions—other than some owners' arguments before the county commission—occurred if the city sought to annex land within another incorporated municipality. If approved by the county, such an annexation required city council acceptance by both the annexing city and the city to be annexed. In the 1920s, Columbus successfully annexed the incorporated Village of Linden Heights. Located on the northeast side, Linden's council voted to join its much larger neighbor. Columbus made similar overtures to the suburbs of Bexley, Grandview Heights, Marble Cliff, and Upper Arlington at the same time. Citizens in those communities preferred to maintain their independence, however, and their councils voted against joining Columbus. Most annexations to Columbus, thus, were of unincorporated territory.

Residents owning land in an area could also vote to de-annex (or detach) their property from a city and petition the county commission for approval. In 1903, landowners on the east side of Marble Cliff, then just two years old, detached their land from the village. A portion of the detachment soon became the core of Grandview Heights and the rest annexed to Columbus in the 1920s. Similarly, owners of two large parcels on Bexley's western edge detached themselves from that suburb and annexed to Columbus in 1910.

Generally, though, once joined to a city, territory remained there. Once City Council accepted an annexation, residents of the annexed territory received all the "rights and privileges" of citizenship. This was their primary motivation for seeking annexation, for it meant they would receive city services—especially water and sewer lines. On rare occasions someone owning a parcel within a larger tract being considered for annexation did not want municipal services or the corresponding taxes. This most often happened if the owner did not intend to develop his land or if he
lived on a lot so large that a well and septic tank adequately served his water and sewer needs. Seeing no benefit to being part of the city, such an individual could request exclusion from the annexation. Absent a compelling reason to do otherwise, the county commissioners generally agreed, which produced some annexations of very irregular shape. Even decades later there remained little islands of unincorporated land surrounded by a sea of city. Most landowners, though, preferred the benefits of municipal citizenship.

Provisions in Ohio's Municipal Code governing annexation thus served to facilitate land development while encouraging urban expansion. It became common practice for a land speculator or developer to buy one or more parcels of unimproved land just beyond the city limits where land costs were lower than for vacant land in town. He would then plat streets and building lots, file the subdivision plat with the county, and petition for annexation to the city. Once part of the city the lots could receive the water and sewer service desired by future homeowners, and the city would also be responsible for maintenance of the streets, which the developer dedicated as public rights-of-way when annexing to the city. While now able to sell "improved" building lots, the developer had not borne the cost of the improvements. For its part, the city expanded in area and tax base.29

Facing the Future

By 1915 Columbus was prepared. The city had a plan, and the city had the power to take whatever steps it deemed necessary to implement it as the city grew. Admittedly, that 1908 plan did not provide guidance for all aspects of the city's future but the fact that the plan existed indicated that some of the city's leading citizens were looking ahead. The 1914 City Charter was further testimony to that fact.

It seems reasonable to assume, then, that Columbus would continue to be forward looking and progressive in its approach to planning and growth. As the profession of city planning developed during the ensuing decades, plans became truly comprehensive in nature. They took into consideration a city's political, social, and
economic characteristics and needs as well as its physical structure. City planners and reformist lawyers developed and promoted the concept of zoning—public controls on the use of land—as a device to implement those city plans, prevent the errors and problems of the past, and provide for a better future.

The municipal officials of Columbus could creatively and effectively manage and direct the city's own development as it grew from a city of 235,051 people covering 23.9 square miles in 1920 to a city of 539,677 covering 134.6 square miles in a larger metropolitan area by 1970. Alternatively, the public sector could abdicate its role and leave the city's future in the hands of hundreds of private individuals as they purchased and developed land for whatever purpose suited their needs at the time. What happened during several decades of residential development and the application of land use controls would indicate who actually shaped the modern American metropolis in Ohio's middle.