Interview with G. Holmes Perkins
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In the course of the development of the capital program there was very close contact with the Mayor's office through the three members of the mayor's cabinet who were members of the planning commission. But also we heard, as members of the Commission, the presentations of proposals from each one of the departments. I went to the National Housing Agency in Washington and was there for three years and worked as one of the regional programmers of housing and also towards the last year or year and a half worked on the development of pamphlets to help cities prepare for the post-war slump, which never occurred. Then, in 1945 I went back to Harvard as Chairman of the Department of Regional Planning in the Graduate School of Design.

After I had been there about five years as head of the department, I came to Philadelphia as Dean of the School of Fine Arts, which was then an undergraduate program. The recruiting of our new dean at that time was undertaken by a committee which had been appointed by Stassen, then President of the University, and it consisted of the then head of the firm of M. Mead and White, Smith, Shepley of Boston, head of the firm of Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott, and Ralph Walker, who was President of the American Institute of Architects and Gilmore Clark, who was President of the American Society of Landscape Architects. We had a meeting in New York with about four or five candidates and a dinner there. The dinner ended up in a rather heated battle between Ralph Walker and myself because of Walker's criticism of Gropius and my defense of Gropius. And after that meeting some time elapsed but then I was asked to come by Stassen and I talked with him in New York and I was not particularly interested in coming down because Pennsylvania was then exclusively an architectural school and did not contain a landscape department, which had been abandoned in the '30's because of the Depression, and it had no planning program at all. One of the conditions that I set was the start of a planning department and ultimately a landscape department as a part of the program. Stassen agreed to this and as a result I came.

We started the program in the Dept. of Land and City Planning. It was called the first, with the intention of dividing it into landscape architecture and city planning ultimately and we asked Bob Mitchell to come back as Chairman of that department. He had formerly been with the Phila. City Planning Commission as the Executive Director for a number of years and then had gone to Columbia as research professor and I asked him to come back from there to head the new department. And he did.
We then began recruitment of a rather interesting group of teachers. One of the first was Bill Wheaton, who later became Dean at Berkeley—the School of Environmental Design. We also recruited Martin Myerson to join the staff. He had been working with Bob Mitchell in the planning commission prior to that time and then he went on later to become head of the group called Action and did some teaching here, went from here to become head of the Joint Center of Research on Planning of Harvard and MIT and from there he went to Berkeley and from there to the University of New York at Buffalo to become President of that and from the Presidency of Buffalo he came here. He was for a time the acting President of Berkeley. It was during the time of the student revolts there and he had been Dean of the School of Environmental Design. He was Acting Chancellor about a year or so before he went to Buffalo.

I first became interested in the work in Philadelphia on two counts. First of all, George Howe in 1943 or '44 tried to persuade me to come and be a member of the staff and I must say after having consulted with him and with a number of Philadelphians the prospects at that time of the Planning Commission being effective didn't seem very good.

After that, before I went back to Harvard I had been working on new legislation for the federal government particularly in terms of urban renewal, urban redevelopment. In Philadelphia, Hopkinson, Abe Freedman, Dorothy Montgomery, Justice Williams, Hans Blumenfeld and so on were preparing legislation for the state and they asked me to come and give advice from a federal point of view. I did so and worked with them for several weeks, preparing legislation. One interesting little highlight on that was that we got the thing all written and late one afternoon Hans Blumenfeld and I were looking at this thing and it had one clause in it which we were worried about politically. And that was a clause which forbade discrimination for race, color, nationality, and all the rest. We were tired out late at night and finally we said we would never get that thing through the Pennsylvania legislature with that clause in it so we said, "Let's take it out". The next morning Hans Blumenfeld and I met face to face and both of us, looking somewhat embarrassed, said simultaneously, "We can't live with our consciences if we don't put that clause back in again". So we put it back. To this day I have a suspicion that the legislators did not read it very carefully and they passed it.

Abe Freedman was the Chairman of this small working committee which put this thing through and passed it on to Hopkinson who passed it on to the Governor, who passed it on to the legislature.
From a technical point of view, however, the people who had the greatest input were Dorothy Montgomery and Hans Blemenfeld in addition to the special contribution of Justice Williams.

In connection with his clause—of course today it doesn't seem like a very radical thing to put in such a clause, but you must remember that during the war the National law regarding housing—required that all housing built for war workers should be programmed specifically for Black and White and for Public and Private. In other words all of the projects had to be segregated projects and this was the law of the land in 1945.

You asked when I began to serve on the Planning Commission, but before I speak on that I ought to say how I got there. More or less through accident. Having worked with this committee when I came to Penn as Dean I became involved in some of the citizen activities and particularly with housing and with city planning because of my interest and my previous experience both at Washington and at Harvard. As a result very early, Dorothy Montgomery pursuaded me to become a member of the board at the Housing Association and very shortly thereafter Sam Smith talked me into becoming President of the Housing Association, which led to the business of my appointment to an advisory commission on zoning under Joe Clark which was to revise the 1933 zoning ordinance in its entirely and I became Chairman of that. We worked on that for the better part of 2 years and just at the point we were getting it finished, Dilworth became Mayor and the report had to be made to the Planning Commission, by which time I was now appointed by Dilworth to the Planning Commission and so it turned out we were reviewing our own work. The new zoning ordinance was really a badly compromised affair though a vast improvement over the old but it wasn't as much of an improvement as it should have been. Greenfield, who was appointed at the same time I was, was elected Chairman and I was elected Vice Chairman. When he retired about a year later as Chairman I became Chairman of the Planning Commission. That was 1958 and I was there for ten years, until 1968.
(WMP: Why did Greenfield retire, do you remember?)

I'm really not sure why he retired. I think that he felt under some pressure. He felt he had the distinction of being Chairman--it was very much what he wanted to be. He wanted to have some public acknowledgement of his interest in the city and I think this is why he went it. He was by all odds the most knowledgeable person about the physical parts of the city--I've never seen a man know so much about the real estate and know every parcel that came up for question--but I think he constantly felt under a certain pressure of a conflict of interest in many circumstances. Let me give you an example of a few of the things--he was always very bearish about the building of additional office space in the city because he was afraid it would empty the existing space--which of course it would do. And he did not think that the city was in a position to be able to absorb much more of this and obviously since he was probably the most important landlord in the city this was going to affect an awful lot of his buildings. I think he felt certain pressures in two very specific instances--one was the beginning of the discussion of Penn Center and the other was the production of the Municipal Services Building. And the Municipal Services Building today is too small because Greenfield didn't want to build a bigger one.

Though I am sure that you can't read into the other person's mind, I think he was beginning to feel a bit uncomfortable. He had accomplished much of what he wanted to do and he was getting interested in Society Hill--the Old Philadelphia Corporation, and by that time the market was --

(WMP: How do you explain his interest in the Old Philadelphia area?)

I don't know--once you had made the decision to move the market, you have a vacuum in the area. You have to do something and I think it obviously had the makings of an enormously successful redevelopment project and he was interested in participating in this.

(WMP: I imagine that Ed Bacon was promoting it too--)

Oh without any question. As a matter of fact, that was one thing that we did when Greenfield was Chairman. Every two weeks we would meet in Greenfield's office to talk over the agenda of the next meeting. These occurred regularly in the beginning but towards the end I think Greenfield was getting a little tired of them and was beginning to lose interest.
It's hard to summarize what the principal planning problems were. I would have said that they revolved almost entirely around Philadelphia's antiquated public systems of almost everything -- water, sewers, streets, housing, waterfront. All of these things were badly run-down. The public services like water and sewer were very largely out of the hands of the planning commission. Technically they were part of the capital program, but fundamentally they were developed by Sam Baxter and his group and since they were pay-as-you-go projects there wasn't too much of a problem in terms of financing and fitting them into the Capital Budget.

They were the most costly things that we had, but the other problems of housing, waterfront development, the Food Distribution Center were exceedingly serious and these problems were compounded in terms of redevelopment by the sudden and very vigorous expansion of all the universities in the city. Temple was exploding, Drexel, the University of Pennsylvania were undergoing enormous physical expansion. Urban renewal became the focus of attention. Penn Center, although not public redevelopment was a major concern of the Commission. Society Hill was a great success. Yet the attempts at doing something with public housing, particularly in North Philadelphia, which were not so successful. The successful expansion of most of the universities came about in spite of the later resistance of the neighbors in some of these areas. There was not any serious resistance in the early stages. There was a general consensus that this was worth-while doing and local resistance was -- I won't say negligible, but it was not important. Today it would be probably so strong that you wouldn't have been able to accomplish what was done in those expansions.

In terms of the lack of success in North Philadelphia, where there was a lot of demolition and very little building -- a number of factors, it seems to me, prevented that from succeeding and I would place the principal blame not so much on the local powers or the planning commission or even on the mayor or others, but basically if one was going to build housing for the income group living there or for the replacement of that with safe and sanitary housing, you had to have a great deal more subsidy and a great deal more public help than was available. Secondly, even if there had been available sufficient money from Congress, I'm not sure that it would have succeeded, because it was already becoming apparent (this was a point stressed by the Housing Association) that it was not a good thing to have clearance by the square mile
and then replace it exclusively with public housing. The idea of a project which stigmatized its tenants as people who were receiving subsidy was considered socially damaging. Tremendous sentiment grew for keeping projects much smaller and for making them non-identifiable as public projects. These social objectives were rigorously supported by the Citizen's Council on City Planning and also the Housing Association. And furthermore they were particularly opposed to high-density high-rise projects which required elevators.

The kind and amount of subsidies that were available almost forced you -- because of the cost of the land -- into rather high densities in these areas which were being cleared. Therefore you were really caught on the horns of a dilemma. The problem really goes back to the fact that although the housing acts from 1934 down to 1949 were talking piously about providing housing for everybody, enough funds were never appropriated to produce housing which these people could afford.

The real problem in North Philadelphia was an economic one because the federal funds for subsidy at rents that the people living there could afford just wasn't available.

What was an alternative possible use of this cleared land once housing wasn't successful there? In the early stages in the '50's, people were quite convinced that you should separate the housing from industry. Today I think the feeling is that mixed uses would be preferable -- it would bring jobs closer to home and in many ways would be helpful. Also, something else happened technologically -- light industry became less and less objectionable as a neighbor. In other words, it wasn't producing noise, smells. The difficulty with light industry in such a neighborhood largely stems from the problems of servicing. Trucking and the need for parking for enormous numbers of employees (trucking in the narrow Philadelphia streets is a pretty difficult proposition) had a bad influence on residential neighborhoods.

If you could reach industrial sites as you do in the Callowhill area, for instance, without destroying a neighborhood by going through it, it would make sense and if you could get rather direct access or fairly close access to a major highway like I-95 you could get on it and off it without dragging everybody through a residential area, it would be excellent.
You ask whether the philosophy of Ed Bacon's was quite closely in tune with my own -- I would say that on most counts it is very close. Bacon's concern was the physical form of the city. Now, of course, to determine what the physical form ought to be you determine that form on the basis of social or economic needs. And these are the underlying forces which produce the form of the city. Bacon's emphasis was very clearly on making certain physical improvements on hand. This he did extraordinarily well. He was a good worker between the developers and the idealists and in general the results which were produced under his direction were infinitely superior to what would have happened without him and I think this even goes for Penn Center, which is not the greatest achievement in the world in terms of architectural design but it is better than it would have been without Bacon.

Society Hill, on the other hand, which shows the influence of Bacon more strongly, is perhaps one of the greatest successes in the world in terms of redevelopment -- in terms of the form of the open spaces, the walkways, the character of the houses, the scale, the general architectural quality that runs through the whole thing. Of course part of that was made possible because the planning staff produced prototypical plans of the area which were then examined and re-examined by a series of consultants and then finally offered for competitive bidding on the basis of architectural design resulting in Pei's three towers and the other developments around Society Hill. But the germ of the idea, in fact the whole growth of it, was really under Bacon's direction. He made the original studies -- they were refined by the work of Andrade, and then they went out for competitive bids on this thing and Pei was the only one of five competitors who improved on Andrade's scheme.

(WMP: What was Andrade's scheme?)

Andrade's scheme was merely a refinement of what Bacon and von Moltke had done previously, but Andrade's work was able to show that it was financially feasible and he was able to estimate the actual cost because his survey included examination of every building in the Society Hill area, an estimate as to its potential value and the cost of its rehabilitation. It was on the bases of that, that we were able to sell the plan to rehabilitate existing houses as well as to build new apartments on sites that had to be cleared because of the removal of the Food Distribution Center.
(WMP: Did Andrade operate under a contract with the City Planning Commission?)

Yes he did. His work was entirely done under contract to the City Planning commission. There had been a previous study before Andrade got into it which was divided into three parts in which there were architectural studies made by Kling, by Roy Larsen, and by Stonorov. These were the original schemes from which the City Planning staff took the better ideas -- put together a fresh view and it was on that base that Andrade built the next stage and Pei won the competition.

The competition drawings were reviewed by a large group of citizens -- businessmen and so on of the city -- but the final decision really was made by Ed Bacon and myself. We talked with Dilworth and a few others but there were no dissenting opinions. The winning design was clearly so superior. It was a curious competition. Basically, you had to prove two things. One was that you were financially able to swing it. And secondly he had to submit an architectural plan.

In spite of the fact that almost all of the bankers in Philadelphia were on the original review committee to decide on whether the developers were financially able, no one was willing to say that any of the five submittals were from firms which were not capable of doing it. In other words, for all intents and purposes they washed out this factor because nobody would say no to any firm. Therefore the only basis of judgment that you had was an architectural one and that's the reason why Pei won.

In terms of the establishment of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, I'm not fully acquainted as to how it happened, but during discussions at the Planning Commission the ideas appeared to be initiated by Greenfield and as a matter of fact, his interests kept moving farther and farther in that direction. IN his last months at the Commission he was more interested in working with OPDC than with the Planning Commission. This was one of the major reasons that he retired from the Commission. He brought Jack Robin to Philadelphia and it was he who really put OPDC on the map and made it a very effective instrument. But that was only one of a number of instruments. At the same time that either under the direction of Greenfield or Batten -- and it's a little hard to say who had the ideas first and who pushed the hardest -- but in addition to the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, within a year or so a number of other organizations were developed which were very important in the history of planning in Philadelphia.
The Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, the Port Authority, the West Philadelphia Corporation, which was to build the Science Center -- all of these grew up to tackle special problems as they arose. They were all ideas which were in the air and they were picked up by different people.

For instance, I think the impetus -- although you suggest here that Batten had a good deal to do with the Science Center -- I'm not really under that impression myself. Some of these ideas for the Science Center developed out of the problem that the University was having and we had set up internally within the University a planning organization, of which I became Chairman. Later on, when we found that the thing wasn't working because of the membership in it -- I insisted that the people who made the decisions had to be involved in the planning process and therefore the Provost and the President were made members of a five-man committee, which would examine the physical development of the University.

The Vice President for Management was John Moore. I convinced him that if he was going to have any contact with the community around and was going to improve the facilities of research on the campus, it ought to be done in collaboration with others. It was through him, and through Gaylord Harnwell (who became the first President of the West Philadelphia Corporation) that they brought together a dozen or so organizations in the West Philadelphia area to form this new corporation. This was developed for the specific purposes of preventing jobs from leaving Philadelphia, of bringing new jobs in by making available cheap financing, and to strengthen the research capability of the educational institution in West Philadelphia. The Port Authority, Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, and OPDC had similar objectives. A whole series of these agencies was developing. In many ways the creation of these new agencies was the most important contribution that was made at this time.

You were asking about the philosophy of Ed Bacon as compared to my own -- the only really serious difference of opinion that we had related to the degree of emphasis which should be given to contacts with local communities in the development of plans. I had proposed at one time an idea which was never accepted by Bacon and probably for very realistic reasons that you couldn't afford it budget-wise. The idea was to break down the Planning Commission staff so that we would have had ten sub-centers in various parts of the city where we could have immediate contacts with citizens and groups in those areas in the process of the development of plans. The way in which we handled it from the Planning Commission was to send a man
out from the Center to meet occasionally but in a formal way with some group -- a group which was really quite unprepared to discuss the issues and which really needed these day-to-day contacts. In other words we gave lip service to the idea of talking with the people which satisfied all the requirements of federal law but you didn't have an ongoing communication with the local people. I think the only way in which we could have done that effectively was to have had branch offices. You had to keep the central office, of course, but there should have been people who really lived with and became advocates of the local people. This we never accomplished.

When we came to the community renewal plan we began to be concerned with many more problems than the physical ones, including a concern with organization of social facilities. There the work did not succeed to the same degree as it did in the physical urban renewal instances, which in general were quite successful, with the exception of public housing. The expensive housing down in Society Hill was a glowing success. But the other housing was spotty at the very best. Some of the projects in Germantown and perhaps those in West Philadelphia were quite good but they were very small. And the lack of sufficient quantity was the thing that was so bad. We never succeeded in adequately reducing the amount of substandard housing.

Greenfield was a very vigorous Chairman and extraordinarily knowledgeable about the city. His principal impact I would say was in the selection of certain projects which he was tremendously interested in and which he pushed very hard. That is certainly true of his sponsorship of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation. In general, however, he maintained a very conservative position in terms of urban renewal which tended to slow down the ambitious ideas of Bacon. I would say that his role was trying to turn some of Bacon's dreams into something that was practical. This meant in general a tendency to water down the effectiveness of Ed's ideas.

(WMP: They got along together?)

I think reasonably well. Ed knows how to work with a lot of different people with different points of view and he was, for the sake of making progress, prepared to make what he considered to be reasonable compromises.
You were asking about Ed Bacon's relationship to Tate. Now I can't speak first-hand about that, but I can tell you that when Tate took over as mayor from Dilworth and before he got elected on his own -- during that period of about two years, I had gone to Tate and told him that I thought that it was necessary for the people who were in decision-making roles to be aware completely about what was going on in planning and that there should be planning input at the time of the meeting of his cabinet. There was no representation at that time from planning at all in the cabinet other than the membership of the city representatives on the Commission. I persuaded Tate to invite Bacon to all the cabinet meetings although he was not a member of the cabinet. Things went very well and Bacon did have an important impact on Tate's thinking during those early years.

Later on when Tate got elected on his own he threw out most of us from the Planning Commission and as a result these contacts began to break down and Bacon was not asked on a regular basis to the meetings, but during those two first years we had a very good working relationship with him.

(WMP: Would you tell a little more about Tate's behavior towards the Planning Commission?)

I would have said while I was there relationships were very cordial. Maybe he didn't think so, because he threw Solmsson, Philip Klein, and myself off the Planning Commission very shortly after he got elected. I don't know why. He put in Walker as Chairman for a very short period of time. I just don't know why things went the direction they did. The only weakness I thought in our relationship with Tate was that there was not the innovative driving force that was there with Dilworth. Dilworth was looking for fresh ideas and Bacon was producing fresh ideas and the Planning Commission had a lot of influence for that reason. In other words, in the capital programming Tate coasted on what had been put in six years before. He supported the capital programming as had been done before but new ideas did not seem to be coming through and being incorporated. That is the weakness that we're suffering from now.
The major issues that faced the Planning Commission at the beginning was the completion of the development of the Comprehensive Plan. That was the most important single effort which was finally completed in 1960. The importance of the Comprehensive Plan was that you could see the overall picture, against which you could then measure the ideas in the capital program and see where they would fit into the overall. In other words, if you made changes and you had new ideas developing and you had to cross something out — you knew what the plusses and minuses were.

What was most important of all during the development of the Comprehensive Plan was the simultaneously development of the annual capital program which put a price tag on the whole business. It was the first time that a price tag had ever been put on all projects so you could see the impact both in terms of borrowing for the capital improvements. At the same time you began to have an idea as to what this meant in terms of operating costs which began to force the operating departments to look at the implications of more parks, more playgrounds, etc. It was the first time that this was done in the whole country. It was a thorough-going Capital Budget that was developed -- technically the most effective work done on that was done by Bob Coughlin.

In terms of zoning, the first thing that happened when I came on the Planning Commission was the presentation to the Planning Commission of the zoning which was to replace the 1933 zoning ordinance. It had been developed by the Advisory Commission of which I was Chairman. This was passed by the Planning Commission and passed onto the mayor and City Council where it was passed without any major opposition. It was, however, a zoning ordinance which was not the most up-to-date technically. It had many many compromises in it and many things which survived from the past and which we felt should have been done away with but for which we could not get sufficient political support to make some of these changes. There were new definitions of each one of the categories and there were some additional categories added. Among these categories one was fairly important which was the institutional zoning that would allow you to have a planned district. Once the plan had been approved by City Council it could be altered by the Planning Commission without going back to City Council in areas of 5 acres or over. This applied largely to hospitals, universities, and other large institutions.
That was a great improvement and the University of Pennsylvania has been so zoned for some time now and it has worked exceedingly well. It forces the institutions at a very early stage to talk very closely with the Planning Commission staff -- providing an input both ways and the final results tend to be very much better. In fact, practically every new building forces a renegotiation of the plan because every building requires at least a minor change in the plan. This was one of the reasons why the University plan has taken its present form. Ed Bacon, as a matter of policy, insisted that the University maintain a low profile in the traditional blocks of the university -- from 33rd St. to about 36th. He recognized that ultimately the University would have to go up in the air but he felt should not go up in the air within these central blocks to be consistent architecturally with what was already there. In the area the new buildings should be kept low and that forced some modification of the University's plan and I think very much for the better. As a result the breakthrough of high buildings now comes to the West of 38th and to the North of Walnut.

Zoning ordinances and variances were handled by the staff making a report on every case to the full commission. They would give background facts of what was proposed and their recommendations as to whether we should support the proposal when it went to City Council. In general the staff advice was taken in most cases. The men in charge of producing the material, the facts, the data, and the opinions, was Paul Crowley and through him contacts were maintained with the Council. We never saw the members of Council ourselves at the Planning Commission but Crowley was the go-between and as far as I can make out he did an excellent job. We had relatively little conflict and as far as we can make out he did a very honest and direct job putting the opinions and the feelings of the Commission always first and supporting them to the hilt.

Redevelopment became something of a problem at the Commission because of a seeming conflict between the federal and the state redevelopment legislation. What happened was this. The rules say that a place has to be designated as subject to redevelopment by the Planning Commission. That's a fairly simple operation -- you use the general overall data of the census or perhaps some personal knowledge of areas and places to be designated as subject to renewal. All that means is that the area becomes eligible for federal funds, which in turn allows you to examine it in greater depth. These federal funds come to the redevelopment authority which would have to make a detailed plan which would then be submitted for a grant from the federal government to get on with the job of actual demolition of preparing the land and for selling it or leasing it. This obviously meant that you had to have a planning staff at the Redevelopment
Authority who was going to be doing the same job as the staff at the Planning Commission thinks it's doing. You had the makings of a head-on collision. Very early when I was Chairman we got an agreement with the Redevelopment Authority for their staff to be housed in our planning offices and to work under the supervision of our planning staff -- in other words under Bacon's thumb.

When we completed a plan it was obviously agreed upon by the staff though that did not necessarily mean that the Boards of the Redevelopment Authority and the Planning Commission members would automatically agree to the plan but by the use of a joint staff we eliminated one area of potential conflict. That procedure we agreed to very early in the game and it worked extremely well. I don't think that either the Commission or the Redevelopment Authority board really had any misgivings about this. When it came to selecting areas for redevelopment they came to our attention for a variety of reasons. The planning staff identified for potential redevelopment all of the blighted areas of Philadelphia. The state legislation is very broad as to what the designation of a blighted area is -- it could be just poor planning as well as deteriorated buildings or for any number of reasons. In addition to the need for expansion of the two largest universities (Temple and Penn) the major redevelopment areas were badly blighted housing. It was both logical and necessary to do something about housing. It was also equally essential from the point of view of the expansion of these universities to provide some help to allow these institutions to expand because without redevelopment powers of eminent domain it was impossible to assemble enough land in the free market. In fact about 1950 when trying to assemble land for the Rittenhouse Laboratories at the corner of 33rd and Walnut there was one hold-out in the row of houses which delayed the work for several years. You could never have expanded the University without the redevelopment powers.

(WMP: Do you suppose the university would have had to move out of the city if the Redevelopment Authority hadn't --)

No. I think the investment here was too heavy and the decision to stay in the city rather than go to Valley Forge was made before Redevelopment legislation was available. In other words they were prepared to face up to the hodge-podge hit-or-miss way of expanding. At that time, however, they were not aware that they were going to have such an enormous expansion as they had and they may have had to reexamine that decision if it hadn't been for redevelopment.
The Citizen's Council on City Planning was very very helpful. It managed by talking about things, by making rather well-considered studies of the capital program every year and publishing its report. It kept everybody very much on their toes. It forced the Planning Commission and particularly the staff to be aware of new ideas and new feelings about the direction in which planning should go or the emphasis that should be placed on one factor as against another. It was constant infusion of new ideas but more importantly the Council was one more force that pushed them forward. As a result the growing concern for neighborhood groups, for contact with the local people, with social issues, and so on was very much augmented by the pressure from Citizen's Council on City Planning. It's a little hard for me to distinguish between the kinds of pressures that came from it from those coming from the Housing Association. I think they were fundamentally the same.

I would have said that while Dorothy (Montgomery) was at the Housing Association that the fresher and more powerful views and the more clearly expressed ones tended to come from the Housing Association rather than the Citizen's Council. The Citizen's Council was vaguer, the staff leadership in it wasn't quite as competent, but its heart was clearly in the right place.

(WMP: Also, I think the business element that was in the Citizen's Council was not the top rung, such as GPM).

I would agree with you. They did not have that top echelon. And in the Housing Association of course it didn't either. But somehow the need for it was not great in the Housing Association because of its focus on housing. The Housing Association was the housing conscience of Philadelphia and I think it never tried to be anything else. It was very influential, however, because so many of the people who ultimately took part in the planning in Philadelphia were graduates of the thinking of the Housing Association. Bacon was one of them. And myself. Especially when Stonorov was in the Housing Association. His influence was great in the '47 show (Better Philadelphia Exhibition), and he was one of the consultants to the Planning Commission over and over again. You have the same people turning up with different hats and I would say that most of them got their start with the Housing Association.

It's clear that if you examine all of the projects and all of the programs of the Clark-Dilworth administration and the Planning Commission during those same periods that you have both successes and failures. To my mind, the ones that came off well were ones where you had a meeting of social objectives and economic objectives and that is perhaps
the reason for the enormous success of Society Hill. The idea of trying to bring back leadership people to the city by making a very good residential neighborhood had obviously an economic impact and the general planning objectives as stated by Dilworth and agreed to by the Planning Commission was fulfilled because the economic solution fitted in very well with it. To some degree the same thing happened with Penn, Drexell, Temple, and so on where you have the need to clear some land. Today it would more controversial. A number of people living there were moved which is an idea that is anathema to most people today. But in those days these decisions were evaluated as to whether there was a gain or a loss in relationship to the total community. And although recognizing that there were going to be hardships for a few individuals those hardships were in general subordinated to the welfare of the total community.

The sympathy for the families or small groups who are pressured to give up their houses is today exceedingly strong for people who have a hard time getting along or swinging enough weight to protect themselves. And as a result you find City Council, the Mayor, and others exceedingly hesitent to do anything which will cause any complaint from even rather small groups because these tend to mushroom. And as an example of that -- the defeat of the crosstown expressway on South St. was the result of a number of very sympathetic professional people to the impact that it was going to have on some storekeepers and a few residents along the route. They were able to organize and build-up a resistance so that finally the plan was thrown off. From a practical point of view of serving the whole community I think the crosstown expressway probably would have been a good thing. The idea was originally initiated with the support of Bob Mitchell, but since then he has said he thinks it is a good thing that it has been discarded. His opinion has changed and I think this reflects to some degree the change in relative weights that you give the benefits to the wider community as against the hardships that you impose on a few.

Today it is exceedingly difficult to get any project approved that hurts any reasonable number of people. As a result the bigger schemes which once would have been quite possible and would have been rather enthusiastically supported by the citizenry -- not only just the well-to-do -- but the citizens as a whole are very very difficult to get support for today. Even today you find they are still complaining very bitterly about Market East and the tunnel and they are saying, "Why don't you use that same money for clearing blighted housing?"
This sounds very plausible but Congress didn't vote the money that way. That money isn't available for anything else. You either build the tunnel with it or you don't get it. These are some of the points that tend to get lost today whereas during this earlier period where plans were thought of in much broader terms.

(WMP: Do you think another factor is that the top political leadership changed? You don't have a Clark and Dilworth.)

Without any question. That is a major part of the story but times and people's attitudes have changed -- and I'm talking liberals and conservatives both -- their attitudes toward the individual, toward the small group, have really changed.

(WMP: Along that line, a question that I would like to ask you -- is there still as much interest on the part of young people to come to the schools of city planning?)

Yes. There's just as many coming as ever. In fact there's more. Too many more. But a number of things have happened. The people that are coming in greater and greater numbers are more concerned with social and policy issues rather than physical city planning. In fact the number interested in physical city planning are a very small minority, while the reverse was the case 20 years ago. Now practically everybody in the university -- almost all the departments in the university are engaged in planning one way or the other -- economic planning, social planning, educational planning. All of these are planning activities and perfectly proper roles for lots of different people and city planning is being thought of in terms of policy and the development of social programs more than in terms of the final ultimate physical results. Yet when you change your policy toward either housing or towards the provision of health services, you ultimately end up with having to build some buildings, having to locate these services in some place but these physical end projects tend to take a back seat to the larger issues of policy.

I did stay on the Commission for the two years after Tate came up from being President of City Council to being Mayor. After he was elected on his own, I was asked to resign, but during that period of a little over two years we worked rather well together and as I think I said earlier, the only weakness was that there was none of the imaginative input of new programs which characterized the Dilworth era and there was a tendency to coast on the ideas which had been inaugurated in the Clark and Dilworth times. The Comprehensive Plan passed in 1960 and in the capital programs which immediately followed were neither curtailed nor cut-back nor cancelled by Tate. He did give
significant support to the programs that were in existence, but new ideas came from the mayor's office. I mentioned also that during those two years Bacon was invited to meet with the mayor's cabinet and therefore there was perhaps even a better input into his discussions than there had been before.

The Planning Commission, and particularly its staff, gave enormous attention to the expanding ghetto areas. But the series of proposals that were made to do something about this never got adequate support. It is true that there was some good housing built -- partly by private enterprise, partly public housing, around Temple and the development of shopping centers and so on. But for the most part there were neither the funds or really the support that was needed to get such programs through City Council. Federal funds were absolutely essential and they were just not available in sufficient amounts. I'm not familiar with the origins of Franklin Town. It is suffering right now from exactly these same problems we're talking about as to the question of how to finance new housing developments when you cannot produce new housing with private enterprise and meet the bottom half of the market. And as a result you are going to end up with Franklin Town as a relatively expensive development which will exclude, as Society Hill did, a very large proportion of the people in Philadelphia. In a sense it will be a good clean community with probably a lot of the necessary auxiliary services that go with it in the way of shopping and entertainment and will provide also places for some jobs yet it certainly does not, in any sense, come to grips with the basic problem of how you produce a mixed community economically or racially and I doubt if it will be anything more than just another gigantic private development which will be pleasant but very expensive housing.

Previously, I spoke of the role of Paul Crowley in the Planning Commission and his role in contacting the administration and particularly talking with the committees of council in respect to zoning but I do not know whether he also made contact with the Democratic City Committee. I do know, however, that in terms of zoning ordinances that if they had the support of the Planning Commission, with relatively few exceptions they were approved by the City Council. Whether these had previously gone through the Democratic City Committee or not I do not know.

In a similar way, Mayor Tate tended to go along with the proposals made by our staff but whether he cleared these with the City Committee or not I had no way of knowing. When it came to the development of the capital program, which was by the Charter the exclusive responsibility of the Planning Commission, we obviously talked with the Mayor's office because the three
members from the Mayor's cabinet were members of the Planning Commission and these discussions were held before the proposals were finally brought before the full Commission. In addition, the members of the Commission attended the hearings from each of the departments which were making requests and the input from the Commission was very substantial during this period. 

When it came to submitting the capital program and the capital budget to City Council a number of minor changes would normally be made, although the general policy established by the Commission was always accepted as the basic principle upon which the program and budget was to be developed. The minor changes that occurred tended to revolve around the timing of rather minor projects like small parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, health centers, and so on, which had to be located within one of the councilmanic districts and each one of the councilmen was anxious to have something that he could show his constituents and therefore sometimes the timing would be altered to pass the improvements around between the 13 or more councilmen who were in the majority. But fundamentally, the idea of the Charter and the control of the program by the Planning Commission was held intact by city councilmen and was not really fought in any serious way.

You ask about some of the major public projects. Perhaps the largest ones revolved around Society Hill and Market East and the general university development. In the case of the University of Pennsylvania I was in a position that I could not reasonably comment upon the plans relating to the University of Pennsylvania. In general the ideas which Bacon and his staff had produced for the University seemed to me to be relatively good and there was no reason for any conflict. In terms of Temple and Drexel, we ran into somewhat more controversial projects because they encountered in their expansion more serious problems with the ghetto communities around them and this always raised enormous difficulties accompanied by acrimonious discussion between the institutions and their neighbors.

In most cases the Planning Commission tried to achieve a fair and even balance between the needs and the ambitions of the institutions and the welfare of the local community around them. In the case of Temple, for instance, it had been proposed that large public and private housing projects be built there. These were only in part successful as I have pointed out before. Another one of the projects which may be a little bit more interesting is the building of the Municipal Services Building. The proposal came to us from the mayor's office, suggesting that the Municipal Services Building
should be built on Rayburn Plaza. Greenfield was then Chairman and I was Vice Chairman of the Commission. Apparently it received very warm support and obviously had the support of the city's representatives. It was apparently ready for complete approval and had the support of the staff. I personally objected to putting it on Rayburn Plaza. I had said that it was improper to use public parks for buildings -- that parks should be preserved. And everybody seemed to agree to that as a principle and Greenfield said, "If you take an acre away from here, we'll give you another acre out in Fairmount Park." And I said that's very nice but I don't think it's an even swap. I think you have to have an acre which is close to the same location and serves the same purposes as the acre that you're taking away. He said, "Where are you going to get such an acre as that?" I replied, "There's a building on the other side of City Hall which is preventing us from developing a park to the west of City Hall and it is pretty old and is going to come down soon, why don't you take that?" Interestingly enough they did not vote immediately to take Rayburn Plaza because they didn't want to appear to produce a public controversy in the press and so we talked to Dilworth about it and within a few days Dilworth authorized the purchase of the land which is now part of Dilworth plaza.

There were a number of projects which revolved around trying to maintain or to increase employment within the city. Of course the redevelopment of Penn Center and the commercial developments of the center including such things as Market East, which was to reinforce the shopping and the series of department stores along Market St., but in addition to that the industrial development evolved around not only places like Callowhill but the North Philadelphia airport and it was agreed that these industrially zoned areas, or areas that potentially could be zoned industrially should be made available to the Industrial Development Corporation for development by private enterprise with cheaper money made available through that device. One of the principal efforts of the Commission was to try to build a solid economic base for the city and as evidence you will remember the development of the Food Distribution Center, North Philadelphia Airport, Penn Center, and the Science Center in West Philadelphia. The Science Center was modeled partly on the work of Stanford in relationship to the university there, but also it was an attempt to provide a facility which would allow us to rival in some sense the route 128 development around Boston in connection with MIT and Harvard. We felt that the resources of Philadelphia in terms of its institutions and its research activity would warrant the development of a similar thing here and one which was more compact and which had closer contact with the universities than was possible in Cambridge although perhaps similar to Stanford. One of the major pressures was the need for more research space in the medical area. The sponsorship of research by the Federal government
was going ahead at such a pace that all the institutions around here were finding it difficult to find adequate space for carrying on research of this kind. Since then, of course, the federal government has cut back on its support of research and the need is not as great as it was in the late '50's and early '60's. The space will be needed, but it probably won't go ahead as fast as had been anticipated at that time.

In terms of the expansion of the universities, perhaps I ought to mention a few incidences of this. In the case of the University of Pennsylvania, the new expansion made it possible to transform the university from what was very largely a commuter university to one which has the vast majority of the students living on campus. This has made quite a difference in the character of the university, particularly in the undergraduate areas and the land made available through redevelopment has enabled in one instance the building of housing for 3500 undergraduates and in another case, for 1500 graduate students. This clearly would not have been possible without the use of redevelopment powers.

In the case of Temple, of course, the enormous expansion of the enrollment and again to a somewhat lesser degree the housing of more students on campus has made it one of the largest universities in the country.

Similarly, Drexel, formerly a small undergraduate engineering school, is now developing graduate work in a number of areas and is also bringing a lot of the students onto campus, which has improved the quality of the institution.

I think without the assistance of the Redevelopment Authority in making land available, all three of these institutions would have found it very difficult to have had the kind of growth, both in terms of quantity and quality as has occurred during these years.

Without the fundamental legislation which was developed in Pennsylvania in 1945 and later in the federal government in 1949, very few of these improvements could have taken place either as rapidly or at such a high standard as has occurred. For instance, Society Hill, University City, Temple, and the Food Distribution Center would not have been possible. Market East would not have gone ahead and the University of Pennsylvania extension would have been very much hit or miss.

The University could not have grown up to be a significantly strong national institution which it is now rapidly becoming. It would have been completely hemmed in with blighted areas and just plain would not have had enough space to have done the things which were necessary.

(end of interview)