

BURNHAM'S CHICAGO PLAN OF 1909

Name _____

When the Commercial Club of Chicago commissioned architect Daniel Burnham to produce a plan to guide the city's future economic and physical growth, they were tapping into one of the greatest urban planning talents of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were also putting Chicago at the forefront of a movement to redesign cities to better reflect the demands of the modern age. Already in the mid-1800s, medieval Paris's twisting streets and crooked buildings were being swept aside in favor of straight, neo-classical boulevards and grand, columned structures. Detroit, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Berlin, Rome, the capital of the Philippines, Manila, the capital of Australia, Canberra, and other major cities would all develop or revise plans at the turn of the century to reconstruct their urban fabric. Daniel Burnham would have his hand in many of these plans, but Chicago would loom large as one of the most ambitious plans ever adopted and, unlike so many others, largely put into reality.

Those Chicagoans who enjoy our relatively wide streets, lakefront parks, forest preserves, travel through Union Station, work in an industrial park, drive on Lower Wacker (or just enjoy the scenes from Batman movies) can all thank the 1909 plan for making such things possible.

Though much of the plan did become a reality, and helped transform Chicago from chaos to either order or less chaos (depending on how much of a cynic you are), not everything played out according to plan. How does Chicago today differ from the Chicago envisioned over 100 years ago? This webquest will help us find that out.

We will use Google maps, our class Google site, and various other websites to help us examine both what Burnham planned for Chicago and what is currently existing in the metropolitan region.

We will take a look in particular at:

Parks and Recreation Grounds

Industrial Zones

The Chicago River

Transportation Networks

The Lakefront

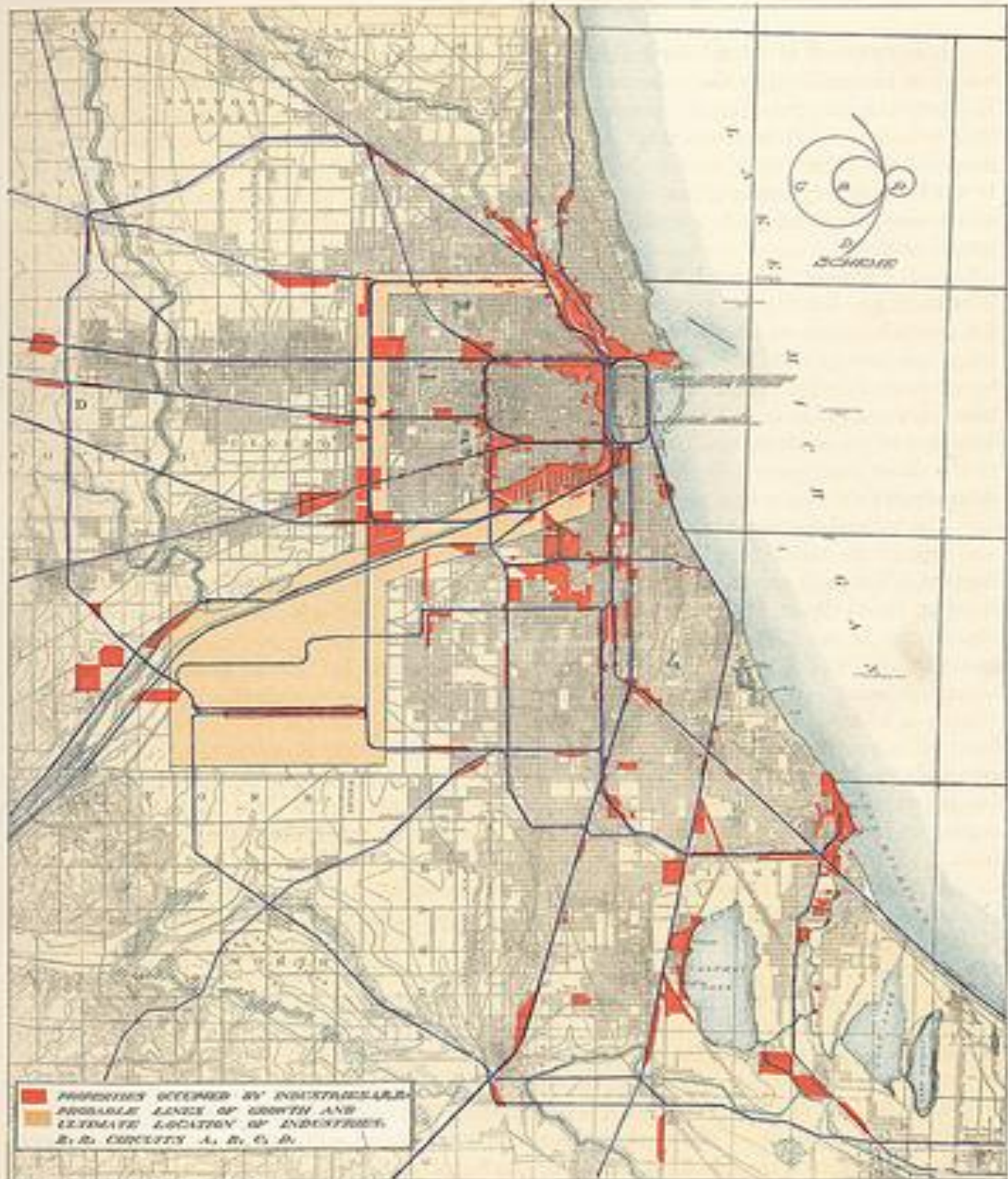
Part 1: Chicago's Parks, Forest Preserves, and Landscaped Boulevards.

Compare the following map from the Burnham Plan with a Google Satellite Map of Chicago and its surrounding region. What parks and recreation grounds were built (write their current names on the map) and what wasn't built ("X" those sections out on the map)?



Part 2: Chicago's Industrial Expansion

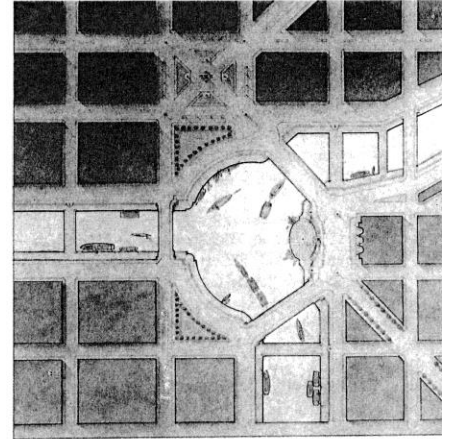
In the following map, Burnham predicted the growth of Chicago's industrial areas, especially away from the downtown area. Which of these areas are industrial today? Compare with a Google Satellite Map and "X" out any areas, or parts of areas that are not currently industrial. "X" out any red areas that are no longer industrial.



LXXIII. CHICAGO. DIAGRAM OF THE CITY AND SURROUNDING COUNTRY, SHOWING RAILROAD CIRCUITS, B, C, D, AND E, WHICH ARE, OR MAY BECOME, TANGENT TO THE INNER CIRCUIT (A).
The diagram also shows the existing industries, and the probable trend of growth away from the center of the city.

Part 3: The Confluence of the Chicago River

Burnham had a special plan for where the Chicago River's Main Branch divides into the North Branch and the South Branch. Using Google Maps, how closely does the current area reflect Burnham's original plan? Write down a short assessment below.



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CVI. CHICAGO. INTERSECTION OF THE THREE BRANCHES OF THE CHICAGO RIVER.

Plan suggested to facilitate traffic circulation by means of two additional bridges placed as proposed for the north-and-south boulevard at Michigan Avenue, on a level above the present street, and connected eventually with streets to be built on either side of the River.



Part 3, continued....

Burnham's original plan for the river area included broad pedestrian walkways and even small parks tucked into the buildings.

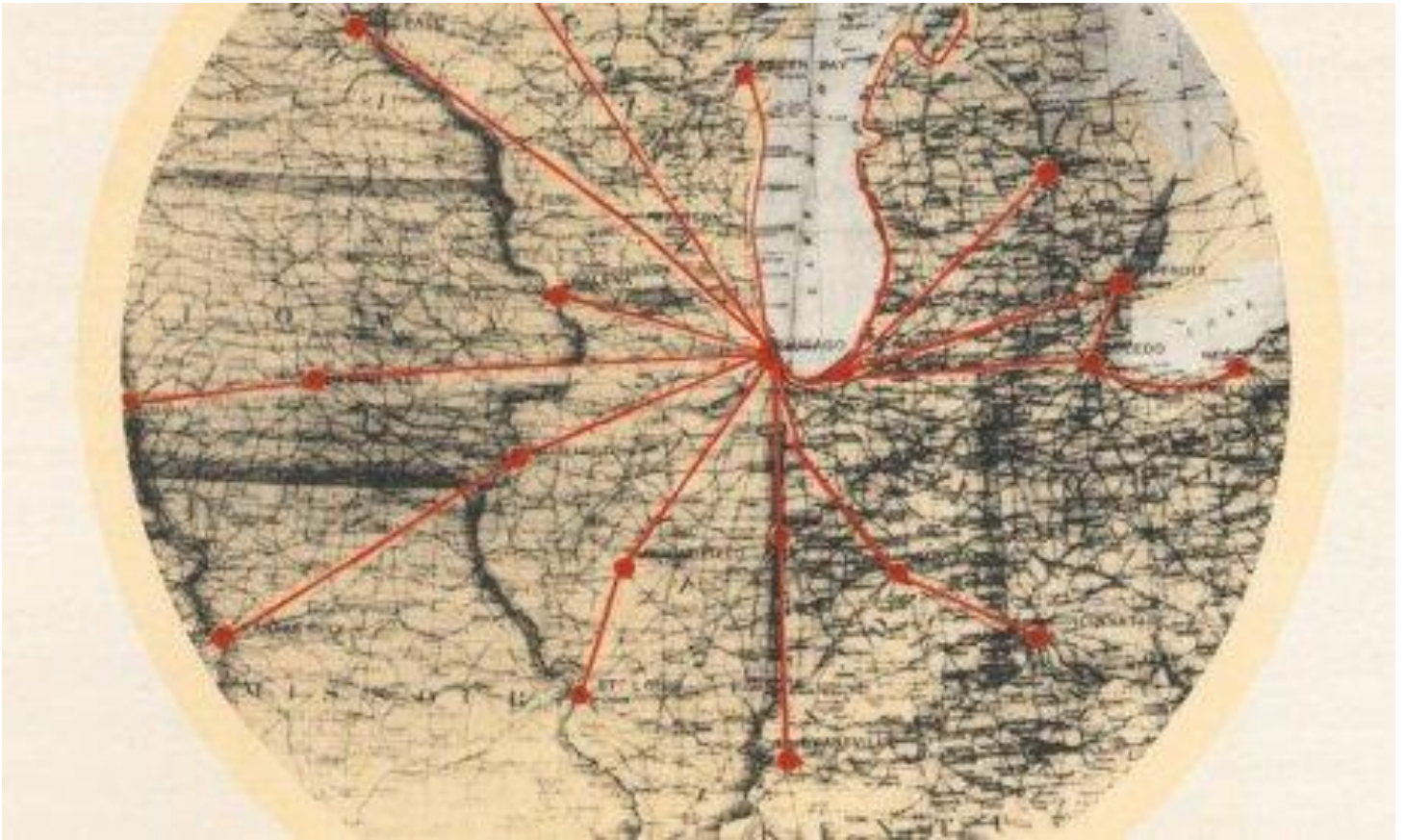
Over the past year, the city has completed a massive expansion of the riverwalk along the Chicago River. There are future plans to expand the riverwalk down the south branch of the river. Take a look at the plans presented and determine if these are an extension of Burnham's vision. What aspects do you think Burnham had planned – and what components are innovative?

[Plans for the South Branch Riverwalk](#)

Part 4: Chicago's Highways

Using Google Maps (non-satellite view might work best this time), draw the current interstate highway system on Burnham's proposed map of Chicago highways. Where do they match up, and where are they different?

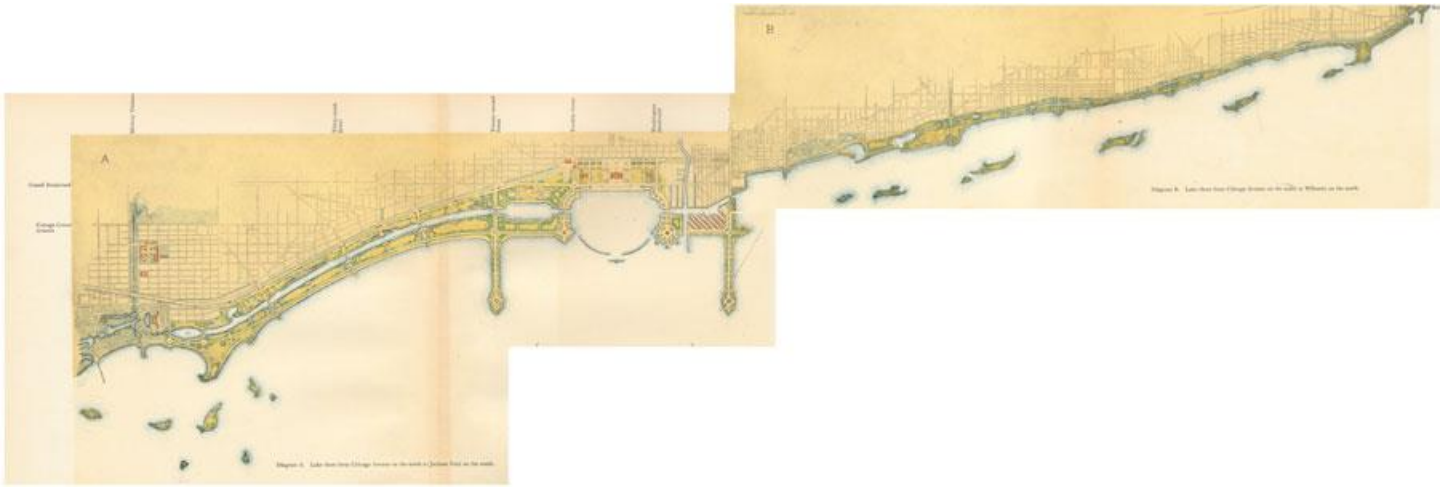




Part 5: The Chicago Lakefront

Chicago is widely regarded as having the best preserved waterfront of any major city in the world. Ironically, much of it is artificially created, a product of the implementation of the Burnham Plan. Compare the picture below to the lakefront today using Google Maps.





Which of Burnham's ideas were never implemented?