

AN HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF THE
1925 KESSLER PLAN FOR EL PASO

by

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FOREWORD

While serving in the armed forces at White Sands Missile Range, the writer of this paper had the opportunity of working for the City Planning Department of the City of El Paso, Texas. While in that employ he had opportunity to observe the results of a master plan prepared for El Paso in 1925. The author of the Plan was George Kessler, one of the early city planning consultants of this country.

The Kessler Plan for El Paso was adopted and published in 1925. The Plan was oriented around a projected time period of thirty years. In that period of time it was proposed that the population would reach 300,000 persons. In 1959, thirty-four years after adoption of the Plan, the official estimate for El Paso's population is 291,000. The population did not increase at the rate of progression proposed in the Plan. This rate of progression is not as important as is the fact that the physical plans within the Kessler Plan were oriented for a population of 300,000 persons at the end of thirty years. The unique feature which makes this Plan noteworthy for research is the closeness of the predicted population to the actual population at the present time. The fact that the theoretical time limit of the Plan (30 years) and the present time (34 years after the adoption of the Plan)



are so close is also noteworthy. These two factors create a unique situation in which the writer may empirically inventory and observe the effects, accomplishments, failures and inadequacies of the Plan. It is possible to observe the adequacies and the inadequacies of the planner in his preparation of the Plan as proven by the test of time. It is possible to observe the pitfalls of the Plan, which time has proven. It is possible to see if the provisions of the Plan were adequate for the period of time and number of persons which it was designed to serve. There is also an opportunity to compare the basic planning philosophy of the Kessler Plan with current plans and philosophies. Likewise the changes within the profession itself may be gauged.

It is the attempt of the writer to perform two functions with this paper:

1. To perform an analysis of the weak and strong points of the Plan, producing from the original hypothesis a series of conclusions indicating any basic errors made in the original planning process, its application, its philosophy, and its external protagonists.

2. To exhibit a historical review within the contents of the paper of the progress and accomplishments made on the individual proposals within the Plan during the intervening period between its adoption and the present time.

The first function of this paper should be useful to the student and planner as a guide to some of the pitfalls which may occur over the period of a Plan, and which might be avoided by careful preparation and consideration prior to the preparation of the Plan. This should likewise serve as a vehicle for noting the strong theoretical reasoning and approaches noted in the Plan which may have made it acceptable to the community, as it has been, and which would be useful in the preparation of other plans. The analysis also serves as a gauge of the changes of style within the planning profession.

The second function should provide, within the contents of this paper, a historical review and an analysis of the specific accomplishments of the Plan. This should be useful to the El Paso Planning Department and the people of El Paso in helping them to realize the specific effects of the Plan within their own community.

The Plan will be analyzed in a series of ten chapters. The first chapter will establish the background necessary for the study. The second chapter will be an analysis of the physical adequacy of the Plan as indicated by the correctness or incorrectness of the predictions of the Plan. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters will analyze the physical adequacy of the Plan in terms of the historical experience

of the community with its Plan. The third chapter covers the thoroughfare proposals of the Plan, the fourth chapter covers the public facilities proposals of the Plan, and the fifth chapter covers the remaining physical proposals of the Plan. The sixth chapter analyzes actions which were not included in the Plan but which the community was forced to take, thus indicating an inadequacy of the Plan. The seventh chapter will discuss the major external forces working on the Plan which were not anticipated at its writing and will analyze their effect on the Plan. The eighth chapter will discuss the community acceptance and non-acceptance of the Plan with an indication of the cost to the community of non-acceptance. The ninth chapter will discuss the philosophies of the Plan and their comparison to current planning philosophy as well as current plan content and orientation. The final chapter will summarize and present the conclusions of the research concerning the Plan. It will establish the hypotheses gained in the study and their proof or disproof through a series of conclusions arrived at from the analysis.

An important factor to be noted in the development of the hypotheses of this thesis is the changing role of master plans through the intervening years from the adoption of the Kessler Plan to the present. At the time of the Kessler Plan, planning, as such, was a product. The plan was developed, adopted, and used as a guide. The machinery to meet

changing conditions, in the form of a planning staff, was thus not allowed to develop, and planning policy could not be formulated. In essence, planning was a product, not a process, and the result was a planned city rather than a planning city. Today, planning is a continuing process, ever changing, ever developing. It might be construed that the Kessler Plan hindered planning, in that it delayed the development of a continuing planning program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER	
I. EL PASO AND ITS PLANNING DEVELOPMENT	1
El Paso, Its Location, Economy, and Historical Development	1
The Background of Planning Progress in El Paso	4
General Information on George Kessler . . .	8
The Present Organization of the El Paso Planning Program	11
II. THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE PLAN AS INDICATED BY THE EXTENT OF CORRECTNESS OF PLAN PREDICTIONS	14
Population	16
Patterns of City Growth	17
Summary and Conclusions	21
III. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE TRANSPORTATION FACILITY PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN	23
Inter-City Thoroughfares	24
U. S. Highway 80 East	24

CHAPTER	Page
U. S. Highway 80 West (Mesa Road)	24
U. S. Highway 80A West (Doniphan Drive)	25
U. S. Highway 54	25
U. S. Highway 62	26
Intra-City Thoroughfares	27
International Highway and Bridge	29
 IV. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL	
ADEQUACY OF COMMUNITY FACILITY PROPOSALS	
OF THE PLAN	40
Water Supply	40
Storm Drainage	46
Sanitary Sewers	50
Park Development	52
Civic Center	63
 V. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL	
ADEQUACY OF THE MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDA-	
TIONS COMPLETING THE PLAN PROPOSALS	70
The Central Business District	70
The Five Points District	74
The Symmetrical Development of the	
Community	80
Railroad Grade Crossings	82
Aviation Projects	94

CHAPTER	Page
Public Transportation	97
Regulated River Channel	99
Urban Renewal	100
Zoning	104
Summary and Conclusions	110
VI. THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE PLAN AS	
INDICATED BY ACTIONS TAKEN WHICH WERE	
NOT PART OF THE PLAN	112
Curb Cutting Regulations	113
The Wyoming-Hueco Street Route	114
East Rim Road	115
One-Way Streets	117
Parking	119
Summary and Conclusions	121
VII. THE EXTERNAL FORCES WORKING ON THE PLAN . . .	
The Depression of the Early Thirties . . .	124
The Return to a War Economy	126
Summary and Conclusions	133
VIII. THE EXTENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN AND THE	
COST OF NON-ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN	135
The Extent of Acceptance	136
The Cost of Non-Acceptance	136
The purchase of water rights	137

CHAPTER	Page
The Montana Street-Piedras Street	
intersection correction	137
Summary and Conclusions	139
IX. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PLAN COMPARED TO	
PRESENT DAY PLANNING PHILOSOPHY	141
Comparison of Specific Kessler Plan	
Concepts	142
Parking strips	142
Urban renewal	143
Joint school-park facilities	144
Abandonment of unnecessary streets	144
Platting standards	145
Street width standards	145
Regional planning	147
School service areas	148
Comparison of the Plan to Specific	
Contemporary Plans	148
The Dayton Plan	149
The Berkeley Plan	154
The Hopkins Plan	160
The Holland Plan	166
The Tacoma Plan	169
Summary and Conclusions	173

CHAPTER	Page
X. CONCLUSIONS	177
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	183
APPENDIX A. PRESENT EL PASO PLANNING ORGANIZATION .	187
APPENDIX B. DETAILED THOROUGHFARE PROPOSALS	190
APPENDIX C. DETAILED RAILROAD GRADE SEPARATION PROPOSALS	238

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
I. Location Plan, El Paso, Texas	2
II. Map of the Rio Grande Valley in El Paso County, Texas	19
III. Birds-Eye View of International Bridge Across the Rio Grande	31
IV. Study for Proposed International Bridge on South El Paso Street and Calle Del Ferrocaril	32
V. Suggestion for International Bridge Across the Rio Grande	33
VI. The Chamizal Zone	36
VII. Suggestion for Proposed Civic Center	64
VIII. City Plan, El Paso, Texas - Zoning	105
IX. City Plan, El Paso, Texas - Highways, Boulevards, Parks, and Playgrounds	242

AN HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF THE
1925 KESSLER PLAN FOR EL PASO

CHAPTER I

EL PASO AND ITS PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

EL PASO, ITS LOCATION, ECONOMY
AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

El Paso is a charter city in the State of Texas which operates under its own City Charter. It has a council form of government, having a mayor and four aldermen. El Paso is located at the westernmost tip of the State of Texas.¹ Named after its original Spanish title of El Paso Del Norte, meaning the pass of the north, it is located on the lowest snow-free pass of the continental divide between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Arctic Sea, a distance of 4700 miles.² It stands at the crossroads of several of the oldest highways established by white men on this continent. The El Paso Del

¹See Figure I entitled "Location Plan, El Paso, Texas."

²George Kessler, The City Plan of El Paso, Texas, A Report Prepared by the City Plan Commission with Mr. George Kessler Acting as Consultant, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1925), p. 9.

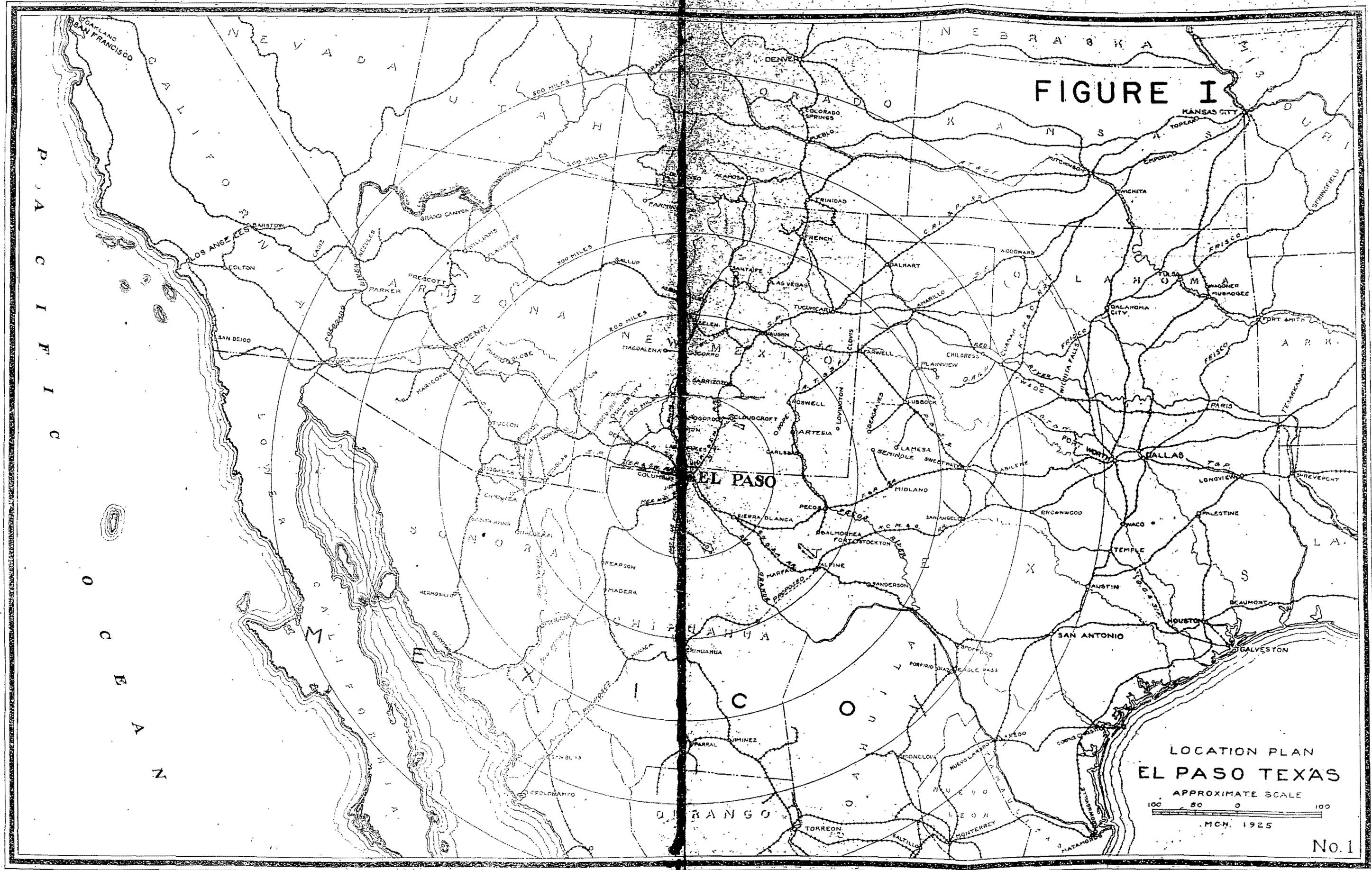


FIGURE I

EL PASO

LOCATION PLAN
EL PASO TEXAS

APPROXIMATE SCALE
100 50 0 100
MCH. 1925

Norte was originally discovered approximately 1536 by Cabeza de Vaca. The former town of Ysleta, which has now become a part of the Incorporated City of El Paso, was, prior to the annexation, the second oldest town in the United States. El Paso is located at the crossroads of two transcontinental rail lines. Several other rail lines have their terminus in the City. U. S. Interstate Highway 80 passes through El Paso, while U. S. Interstate Highways 62, 85, and 180 have their terminus within the City. U. S. Interstate Highway 54 passes through the City and joins the Pan American Highway (Mexican Highway #45) at its crossing of the Rio Grande River into Juarez, Mexico.

El Paso is approximately an overnight stop between Dallas, Texas, and Los Angeles, California, which are respectively 630 and 810 miles from El Paso. It is approximately 645 miles south of Denver, Colorado.³

El Paso's sister city to the south across the border is Juarez, Ch., Mexico. It is the largest city on the border and one of the larger cities in the Republic of Mexico. The close proximity of the two cities lends a cosmopolitan, bilingual atmosphere to the City of El Paso. The proximity

³ Rand McNally and Company (ed.), Road Atlas and Radio Guide, (Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally and Company, 1957), p. 87.

of the two also makes possible easy mutual trade.

The retail trade area of El Paso, exclusive of Mexico, has a radius of 150 miles, with over 700,000 population. An additional 200,000 persons living in Mexico, the majority of them in Juarez, complete the total trade area population.⁴

The City's economy is a diversified one including farming, ranching, transportation, wholesale distribution, export and import trade, government expenditures, metal refining, petroleum products manufacture, and clothing manufacture.

THE BACKGROUND OF PLANNING PROGRESS IN EL PASO

In 1907 Mr. George Kessler first visited El Paso upon the urgent invitation of a friend residing within the City. After looking into the City's developmental problems and during this visit, he made several addresses which aroused public interest in urban planning. Shortly afterward, a carefully drawn program of things necessary for El Paso to do by way of well ordered development was submitted to him for criticism. He patiently analyzed the program and made a

⁴El Paso Chamber of Commerce, El Paso, a Brief Review Published Annually By The El Paso Chamber of Commerce, (El Paso, Texas: Chamber of Commerce, 1958).

series of recommendations concerning the program presented. This formed the original background for the Plan prepared some eighteen years later. After his first visit Mr. Kessler kept in touch with El Paso by correspondence and visited it from time to time, bringing in fresh and inspiring ideas.⁵

It was not until 1919 that organized support of the planning program took place. At that time the City Planning Committee of the Chamber of Commerce was formed. It was at the recommendation of this committee in 1922 that Mr. Kessler was engaged by the City to act as consultant in the preparation of the Plan. Two years after Mr. Kessler's death, in 1925, the "City Plan for El Paso, Texas" was published and adopted by the Council of the City of El Paso.⁶

Mr. Walter E. Stockwell began working with the El Paso planning program in 1919 when he took the position of secretary of the City Planning Committee of the Chamber of Commerce. During the preparation of the Plan he acted as the local engineer, working with Mr. Kessler as consultant. After Mr. Kessler's death, Mr. Stockwell stayed in El Paso to finish the publication of the Plan and remained in the position of engineer-secretary of the newly formed planning commission. He remained in this position until his retire-

⁵ Kessler, op. cit., p. 6.

⁶ Ibid.

ment in September, 1953.⁷ It is probably because of his close association with Mr. Kessler and work in the preparation of the Plan that so many of its proposals have been followed and that so few deviating courses of action have been taken. Mr. Loudon Wingo, who had worked from 1952 with the Planning Department, succeeded Mr. Stockwell and was with the Department until the end of 1956. Mr. Phillips succeeded Mr. Wingo and was Director until the latter part of 1957. In March, 1958, Mr. Jonathan Cunningham became Director of Planning.⁸ The writer was associated with the Department of Planning from March, 1958, to February, 1959, on a part-time basis while serving a military obligation at White Sands Missile Range.

Notable accomplishments of the El Paso Planning Commission between the adoption of the Plan with creation of the Commission, and the retirement of Mr. Stockwell, included the construction of the Bataan Trainway, with its alleviation of downtown grade crossings; the completion of Paisano Drive; the initial planning for freeway development; and the

138.

⁷City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1953, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1953), p. 13.

⁸City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report, 1957, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1957), Chart II.

establishment of the Zoning Ordinance and creation of a Zoning Board of Adjustment as early as 1930.⁹

More recent accomplishments of the planning program include preparation of a basic map series for the entire El Paso area, a complete land use survey of the area completed in 1951, extensive studies for preparation of the zoning policy in the lower valley, a street name and number change program to coordinate names and numbers throughout the entire City, a major traffic and parking survey of the downtown area, the establishment of a subdivision coordinating council to review submitted plats, completion of a proposed capital improvements program, preparation of a comprehensive plan for the North East El Paso area, completion of an economic data survey, preparation of a comprehensive thoroughfare plan, and completion of a park and playground survey of the community.¹⁰

Many of these later accomplishments expand and further develop proposals made in the original Kessler Plan and enable a better analysis of the adequacy of the original Plan.

⁹ Annual Progress Report 1953, loc. cit.

¹⁰ City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1958, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1958).

GENERAL INFORMATION ON GEORGE KESSLER

Mr. George Kessler, the consultant responsible for the City Plan of El Paso, completed his higher education in forestry, botany, and civil engineering in the United States as well as abroad.¹¹ At the age of twenty he was employed as a landscape architect in Kansas City, Missouri. At thirty he was the landscape architect responsible for the Kansas City Park Department program. He was in full charge of this department for twenty-five years. During this time he built up a large clientele among other cities as a consultant in city planning and landscape work. He remained as consulting engineer for the Kansas City park and boulevard departments until his death.¹²

George Kessler was the landscape architect for the Saint Louis Exposition of 1904 and later restored this site to what is now Forest Park. Besides the El Paso Plan, at the time of his death he was also engaged in planning for a number of enterprises of the Long Bell Lumber Company, one of which was the planning of Longview, Washington, familiar to Pacific Northwest residents as a "planned community." Kansas City, Missouri; Saint Louis, Cincinnati; Indianapolis;

¹¹Kessler, loc. cit.

¹²Ibid.

Memphis; Syracuse; Denver; Dallas and Salt Lake City reflect impressions left by this man in his work as a consultant to them. Thirty other communities had projects of a less comprehensive nature prepared for them by Mr. Kessler.¹³

While the majority of his plans involved only the development of plans for parks, parkways, traffic ways and other points of cultural and monumental interest, it is noteworthy that prior to 1917 he had acted as consultant on the preparation of the entire city plan for the City of Dallas.¹⁴ The El Paso plan and Longview, Washington, plan likewise contained a more comprehensive plan of development than plans developed primarily for park departments. For many years Mr. Kessler worked as a consultant in city planning to the firm of Hare and Hare in Kansas City, and performed consulting services for most of the planning projects undertaken by the firm.¹⁵

The most eloquent statement that could be made concerning Mr. Kessler appears in the preface of the Kessler Plan. It is written as a sort of an epitaph to the man and his works. The author of these praiseworthy notes was H. D.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴American Institute of Architects Committee on Town Planning, City Planning Progress 1917, (Washington, D.C.: The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, 1917) p. 45.

¹⁵Kessler, loc. cit.

Slater, chairman of the El Paso City Planning Commission at the time of the Plan.

George E. Kessler's technical attainments need no word of praise. His fame is securely graven in the fabric of the cities he helped to build and to guide. But it was not given to all to know intimately the fine nobility of his manhood.

Great of heart, his nature throbbed with human sympathy, generous and sincere. His personality and influence were wholesome, his motives pure.

He was kindly, and possessed something more refined and innate than what we call courtesy, admirable as that be - he was chivalrous, and chivalry is a precious thing in a man. He was gentle, even tender. His thought of service reached out first of all to the little children, whom he loved, and to mothers, and to the helpless and needy, and to the tired worker, the bearer of burdens.

This deep feeling of responsibility to the innocents, the unprotected, the weary ones, "the uncompensated majority" as he used to call the folk with whose greater happiness he charged himself - affected all his "city planning" work. And what beauty the prosaic work of the world takes on when thus illumined! He spent his heart in it. He worked for the joy of it, through sleepless nights and in the bed of sickness. Rest was a stranger to him. And the world grew more beautiful under his hand.

His vision was so wide that it seemed he possessed a prophetic sense. In 33 years Kansas City has not found it necessary to depart from the principles of development and expansion he laid down a generation ago, or to revise his maps and plans except to extend them outward and elaborate them with the needs of increasing population and new civic demands. He was adaptable and ready as needs developed, to help at the critical point.

With something of the quick sensibility and delicacy of a poet, he brought to bear upon all his work an esthetic instinct that sensed the true in art from the false, and that could not bear to have beauty corrupted, either through ignorance of what beauty might be, or through putting the right thing in the wrong place.

Whether in landscape gardening or in the broader aspects of city building, his touch was that of the artist, and he believed that the fine arts ought to accompany us everywhere in life, to inspire and refresh - for no one is immune to their influence.

All this was combined, in Mr. Kessler's well rounded nature, with an intense and sure practicality. He was no visionary. He saw facts and worked with facts. He took things and men as he found them and enlisted men to make things better. He was firm but not opinionated. In his business relations, meeting big men in big matters, he was tactful and reasonable, persuasive rather than a driver. Even-tempered and quiet spoken, he gave the impression often of diffidence or indecisiveness, yet working beneath the unruffled surface was the power plant that got results and left no unfriendliness to rankle.

Mr. Kessler was that rare being, an artist who could teach business to business men, and leave them his grateful debtors.

Withal, he was the most modest of men. It was all but impossible to get him to talk about his work, to tell what he had done in and for his world.

It is something that El Paso has known him, however slightly. It is much that he knew El Paso and believed in this city of ours and its promise of greatness and strength and beauty. El Paso is the richer for having a share in the memory of his faithful life of great service to mankind.¹⁶

THE PRESENT ORGANIZATION OF THE EL PASO PLANNING PROGRAM

The Charter of the City of El Paso anticipates that the citizens of the community will carry on a program of development in the interest of all of the people of the City. The formal organization through which such a program

¹⁶Kessler, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

may be developed and made to work is established by charter provisions and state statutes.

Responsibility for leadership in developing such a program is placed with the City Council and the Plan Commission, which is composed of private representative citizens appointed by the Mayor and Council.¹⁷

A Board of Adjustment is appointed by the Mayor and Council to insure an equitable application of regulations enacted to guide the physical development of the City, such as the Zoning Ordinance. With the exception of the making of recommendations on architectural control to the City Council, all other actions of the Board have their recourse of appeal directly to the courts rather than to the Mayor and Council.¹⁸

The Planning Department exists as a fact-finding and technical agency to assist the Mayor, Council, Plan Commission, and other departments of City government, and citizens of the community in matters pertaining to the physical development of the City.¹⁹

A copy of the organizational chart of the planning

¹⁷Annual Progress Report 1957, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

function as well as the duties of each of the three planning groups is shown in Appendix A of this paper.

cc

1941

1942

1943

1944

1945

1946

1947

1948

1949

1950

CHAPTER II

THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE PLAN AS INDICATED BY THE EXTENT OF CORRECTNESS OF PLAN PREDICTIONS

To test the adequacy of the Plan, three tests will be taken:

1. Test of statements in the Plan with relation to general items such as economic base, population, etc., wherein specific predictions are made.

2. Test of the historical experience with the Plan to see if the physical plans for the development of the Community have met the needs of the population living within the community.

3. Test of the adequacy of the Plan as measured by the actions taken by the Planning Commission and legislative officials.

The test of statements in the Plan with relation to general items such as economic base, population, etc., set the framework for the portion of the Plan with the physical development of the community and municipal functions which serve it. These statements will be discussed in Chapter II.

The test of the historical experience with the Plan is to ascertain what has happened within the community in

the period from the publication of the Plan to the present time. This test will evaluate the development of the proposals made in the Plan as reviewed by the historical development of these projects and proposals to the present time. This historical development will be discussed in Chapters III, IV, and V. A summary of the conclusions of the three chapters will be included in Chapter V.

Actions taken by the Planning Commission which were not foreseen in the Plan form the basis for the third test of adequacy of the Plan. These actions taken by the Planning Commission and legislative officials which were not foreseen in the Kessler Plan indicate, to a certain extent, problems which occurred as a result of the normal growth of the community but which were not covered by the physical plans within the Kessler Plan. Either the Kessler Plan was inadequate for the predicted population and economic base, or outside influences changed the relationships of population and economic base to the extent that actions not foreseen in the Plan became necessary. Outside forces acting on the Plan are discussed in Chapter VII of this paper. The actions taken by the Planning Commission which were not foreseen as necessary are discussed in Chapter VI.

The presence of specific predictions in the Plan without specific relationship to Plan proposals is one of

the unusual features of the Plan. There appear to be only two specific sets of predictions so separated and stated in the Plan. They refer to actual population predictions and the physical distribution of that population in the form of City growth.

POPULATION

The Plan predicted, and used as a basis for all of the proposals within it, a population of 300,000 people aggregated over the following thirty-year period.¹ The Plan specifically stated that:

El Paso's population in 1900 was 1,500; by 1910 it had risen to 40,000, and by 1920 to 77,000, excluding the military post adjacent. Present estimate of 100,000 for this young metropolis and its immediate suburbs is conservative. It is safe to estimate that the population will reach 120,000 by 1930; 200,000 by 1940; 250,000 within twenty-five years from the date of this report. To put the estimate in another form, the population may confidently be expected to double in fifteen years and to treble in thirty years.²

The predicted population increases were based on Mr. Kessler's belief that El Paso, as a traffic center, with its progressive citizens, favorable climate and abundant natural resources, would have a natural growth in the pattern he indicated. By 1930 the official population of the City

¹ Kessler, op. cit., p. 8.

² Ibid.

was only 102,421 persons, slightly less than the 120,000 predicted.³ By 1940 the population had dropped to 96,810, a little less than one-half the population predicted by the Plan for that year.⁴

By 1950 the population was up to 130,485 persons.⁵ The official population estimate in 1959 was 291,000 persons.⁶ It appears that the population did not increase at a steady rate as proposed in the Plan, but rather that the population fluctuated up and down slightly until after 1950, when it rose sharply.

PATTERNS OF CITY GROWTH

This City of the future will be densely built up northward to the Baptist Sanitarium and beyond, and eastward to the Fort Bliss spur. West of the mountain the usable territory in Kern Place and Piedmont will be well occupied and there will be settlement all along the Mesa Road to the Country Club. Down the valley suburban residences will extend in solid lines along all roads as far as Ysleta. In the City the business district will have expanded northward and eastward and new neighborhood trading centers will have sprung up. Manufacturing will be important and factories and warehouses will occupy much of the territory between the railroads and the river.⁷

³U. S. Census, 1930.

⁴U. S. Census, 1940.

⁵U. S. Census, 1950.

⁶City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1959), p. 4.

⁷Kessler, op. cit., p. 17.

Thus the patterns for city growth were predicted. The City did build up densely northward to the Baptist Sanitarium.⁸ It did not, however, build eastward to the Fort Bliss spur due to the fact that this portion of the City was acquired for the expansion of Fort Bliss as discussed in the portion of this paper on external forces acting on the Plan. The shift in development from this area projected the population in a northerly direction from the Baptist Sanitarium for a distance of several miles, a much greater expansion than indicated by Mr. Kessler. The usable territory in Kern Place and Piedmont has developed as predicted. The settlement along Mesa Road has been far from solid but areas have developed along it toward the Country Club. In the Lower Rio Grande Valley⁹ development took place in a manner quite different from the prediction. Instead of lining the roads solidly to Ysleta as predicted, homes are built in numerous subdivisions filling in the areas between the roads. There are still stretches of open farm lands along U. S. Highway 80 East between Ascarate and Ysleta.

⁸The Baptist Sanitarium was located in the section just north and west of the municipal golf course shown on the map comprising Figure II. See also Figure IX following Appendix C for this location.

⁹The Lower Rio Grande Valley is the portion of El Paso County shown in Figure II between El Paso and Socorro.

FIGURE II

MAP OF THE

RIO GRANDE VALLEY

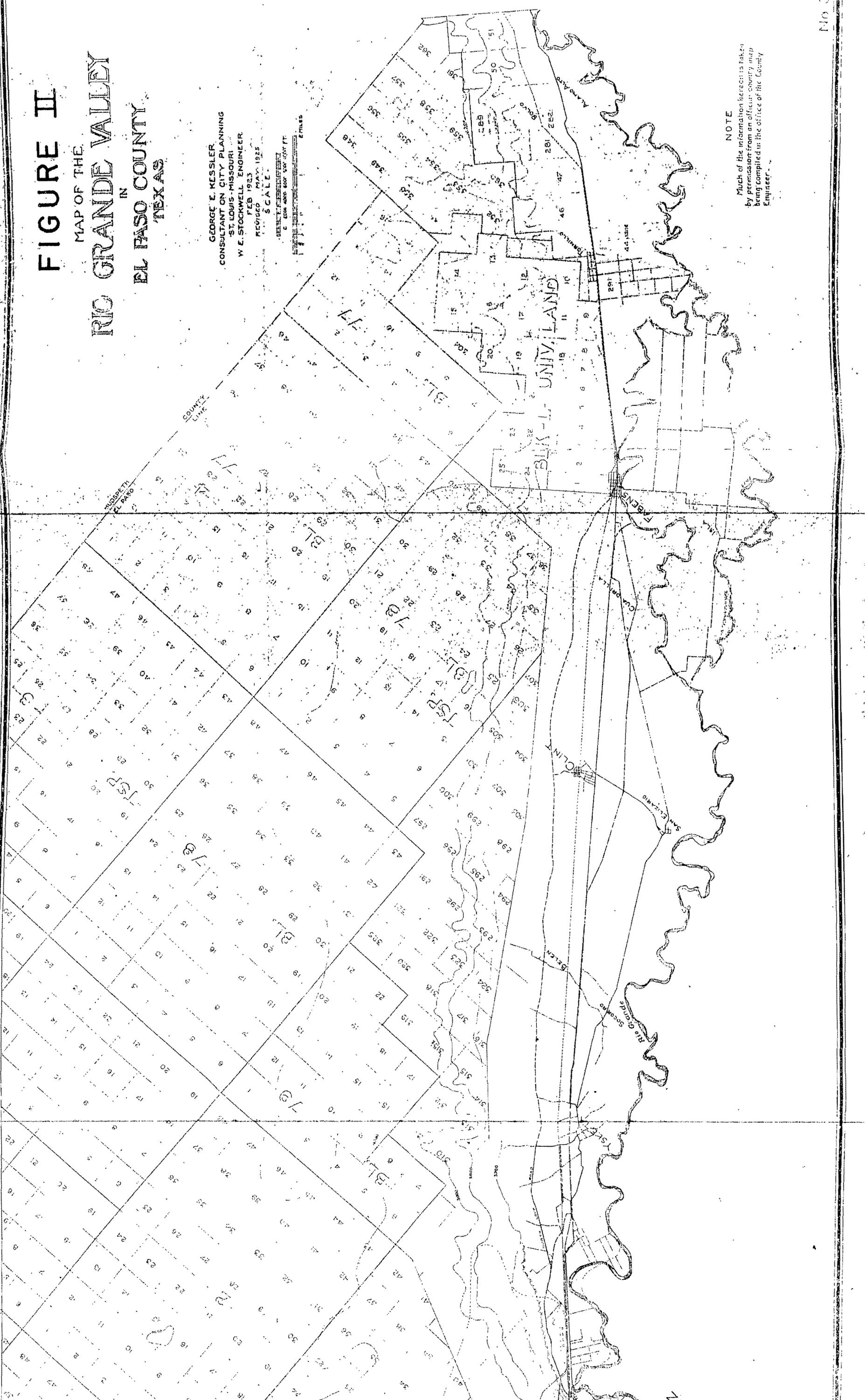
IN

EL PASO COUNTY,

TEXAS

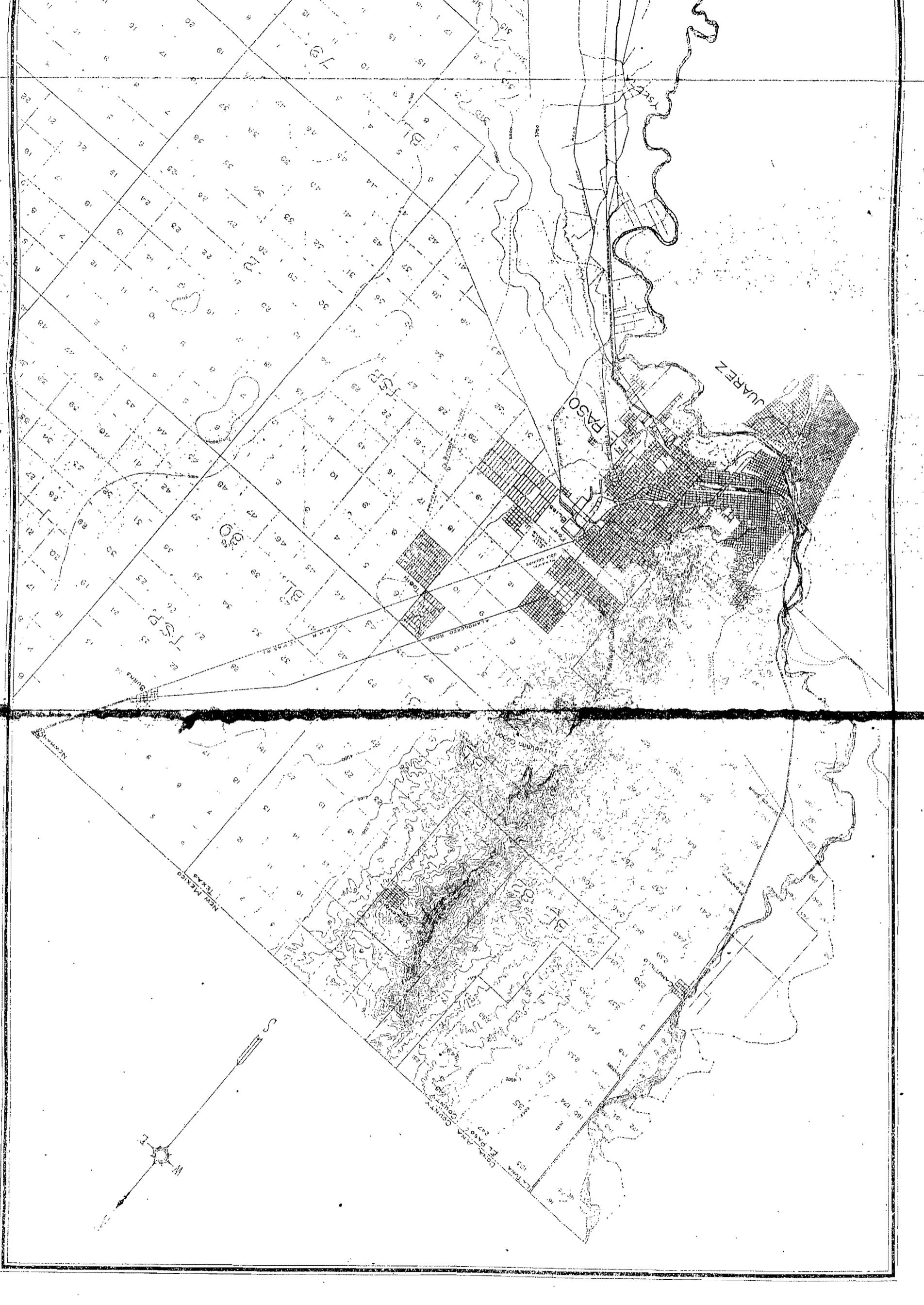
GEORGE E. KESSLER
CONSULTANT ON CITY PLANNING
ST. LOUIS - MISSOURI
W. E. STOCKWELL ENGINEER
FEB 1923
REVISED MAY 1925
SCALE.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
STATE OF TEXAS
1:25,000



NOTE

Much of the information hereon is taken by permission from an official county map being compiled in the office of the County Engineer.



The business district failed to develop in the northward and eastward direction predicted and proposed in the zoning pattern recommended by the Plan. The pattern of development of ribbon business streets has gone out of vogue. The big increase of population has been within the last nine years so new business to serve the new population has developed in small shopping centers as well as in some segments of outlying strip development. The downtown core has remained static. Until the 1950's the railroad grade crossings discouraged the north and eastward movement of the central business district. Only marginal and peripheral service type commercial establishments have developed in the area predicted for downtown expansion.

The prediction concerning the development of industries and warehouses in the area between the railroads and the river has not come to pass. The area between the railroads and the river has remained almost entirely in use for residential structures and small commercial establishments even though it has been zoned for industry since the passage of the first El Paso zoning ordinance. Probably the two most logical explanations for the lack of development of this area into warehouses and factories are as follows:

1. The Chamizal area dispute makes title to land in this area questionable. This problem is discussed in the

portion of Chapter III concerning the International Highway and bridge.

2. The industrial establishments requirements have changed in respect to desirable land. Industry now wants land with good traffic circulation, abundant parking areas, and one-story operations rather than the older loft-type buildings constructed from property line to property line on small lots.¹⁰ Thus this area of small blocks with mixed uses and poor traffic circulation is not desirable for industrial use under current industry building standards.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The population did not follow the pattern projected by the Plan. The greatest growth of the City appears to have occurred since the 1950 census. This is also the period in which the City experienced a growth in the physical boundaries containing it. Therefore the population predictions were reasonably close to the final projection approximately four years subsequent to the final projection date.

The pattern of City growth residentially followed closely the predictions of the Plan. The business and industrial districts did not, however, follow suit. The

¹⁰The lots were originally platted in 25-foot widths.

areas predicted for these latter activities were overly generous. The change in land use demands of these two probably account for part of the change of location for these activities. The Chamizal no doubt was also responsible for lack of industrial growth in the South El Paso area.

The test of statements in the Plan in relation to general items such as economic base, population, etc., indicates:

1. The Kessler Plan made very few specific predictions of this nature.
2. The predictions were generally incorrect, incomplete, and their orientation with other factors, such as time, were incorrectly phrased in the two specific predictions noted.
3. The lack of scientific reasoning in the fields of prediction or outside factors not anticipated in the Plan appear to be the causes for these deficiencies in the Plan.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE TRANSPORTATION FACILITY PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN

In order to explain more clearly the actions taken on the thoroughfare recommendations of the Kessler Plan, these recommendations and the resulting actions are divided into three major categories: (1) inter-city thoroughfares, (2) intra-city thoroughfares, and (3) international highway and bridge. Inter-city thoroughfares are discussed according to the individual routing. Intra-city thoroughfares are discussed according to thoroughfare name.

As the historical data concerning the inter-city thoroughfares and the intra-city thoroughfares is lengthy, in an appendix¹ these thoroughfares and their development through the years following adoption of the Kessler Plan will be discussed thoroughly. This chapter will contain a summary of the information contained within this appendix.

¹See Appendix B.

INTER-CITY THOROUGHFARES

U. S. Highway 80 East

The Kessler Plan recommended a number of street widenings plus construction of four additional parallel arterials to facilitate the flow of traffic into the Lower Rio Grande Valley as well as to points east of El Paso. All of the widenings proposed became necessary and were accomplished. Of the four additional thoroughfares, two have been constructed to date. The third additional thoroughfare is the site for an urban expressway programmed for construction in the immediate future. The fourth thoroughfare was proposed to be a riverside drive along the river bed. It is still under consideration in the street construction program of the City of El Paso.

U. S. Highway 80 West (Mesa Road)

This highway was under construction at the time of the Kessler Plan. Highway 80 West traversed at that time what is now known as U. S. Highway 80A West (Doniphan Drive). The Plan projected the symmetrical development of the community along the Mesa Road route of U. S. Highway 80 West. This development has forced the widening of this thoroughfare, indicating its wise location.

U. S. Highway 80A West (Doniphan Drive)

This route was the main highway for the Upper Rio Grande Valley.² The Kessler Plan proposed that this route be widened and that a new route be constructed along the railroad tracks to a point west of the train station to provide an alternate to the Main Street viaduct. The widening had taken place by 1943 and the alternate route was completed to connect this route with the newly constructed Paisano Drive.

U. S. Highway 54

The Plan had two proposals concerning this route. One proposed having it continue in its then present routing with a short detour of one block to the west of its route at the time of the Plan to take advantage of the Altura Boulevard grade separation. The other proposal was to take advantage of the El Paso Southwestern Railroad right-of-way for a limited access approach into the City. The construction of a grade separation on Dyer Street alleviated the need for the detour of the first proposal. The development of Fort Bliss made the abandonment of the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks impossible so this proposal could not be followed.

² See Figure II. The Upper Rio Grande Valley is the area between El Paso and La Tuna at the county line.

The growth of Fort Bliss and the resulting reorientation of population in the North East El Paso area has necessitated construction of additional thoroughfares to relieve U. S. Highway 54 from a heavy intra-city traffic volume.

U. S. Highway 62

The Kessler Plan indicated the need of a new highway to serve the Pecos Valley and Carlsbad Caverns. U. S. Highway 62 was subsequently constructed to serve this purpose. The Plan proposed that such a highway enter the City via the Hueco Tanks. The actual highway routing was slightly south of the one proposed in the Plan. As a result of subsequent location additional problems were created in the Five Points District by U. S. Highway 62 traffic. This prompted the Wyoming-Hueco Street proposal.³ This proposal was not accomplished and so the City has had to budget \$516,000 to make a partial solution to the traffic congestion problem in the Five Points District.⁴ These proposals and the added expense would not have been necessary had the original Plan proposal for the location of U. S. Highway 62 been followed.

³See Appendix B, page 213, for a more detailed explanation.

⁴Ibid.

INTRA-CITY THOROUGHFARES

The Kessler Plan made specific recommendations concerning a total of seventeen intra-city thoroughfares. The individual routes and the actions taken toward accomplishment of the Plan proposals are discussed at length in Appendix B.

Of the seventeen thoroughfare proposals, four proposals have been altered because of the growth of Fort Bliss. The areas which they would have served were included in the enlargement of the Fort. One of the thoroughfare proposals has become the route programmed for an urban expressway. Seven of the proposals have developed as projected in the Plan.

One thoroughfare proposal has had no development as an arterial at all. There has been no apparent loss of efficiency in traffic movement due to its lack of development. One thoroughfare proposed in the Plan is currently projected as a major north-south highway. Another proposal was not followed because the Planning Commission allowed a plat to block its projected course. The traffic which would have used this thoroughfare now uses a detour of two other streets to follow the course which it would have taken.

One thoroughfare proposal was blocked by the enlargement of a cemetery. This enlargement was foreseen in the Plan but action to obtain the necessary right-of-way

was not taken soon enough.

Two of the thoroughfare proposals have been partially fulfilled and are still proposed for future development.

The Circle Boulevard system proposed in the Plan was partially developed prior to the completion of the Plan. No further development of the system has occurred in the intervening years. There likewise has been no system of marking the boulevard routes.

The thoroughfare predictions and projections are remarkable in their accuracy. Though traffic thinking had not produced the freeway, it is noted that the limiting of access and proposals for grade separations were suggested in the Plan. The highway department proposed a projected thoroughfare route of the Plan as a route for the U. S. Highway 80 freeway. Most of the thoroughfares projected in the Plan have materialized and have handled the traffic adequately. The expansion of Fort Bliss caused some of the proposals of the Plan to be abandoned, as no residential areas would be served. The remaining thoroughfares have been programmed for construction in the near future, indicating their need as the population reaches the figure predicted and projected in the Plan.

INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE

The Kessler Plan proposed the construction of a new free bridge across the Rio Grande to be located in an area between the Stanton Street toll bridge and the Santa Fe Street toll bridge. Mr. Kessler prophesied that the traffic between El Paso and Juarez, which was then very important, would become more so with the development of northern Mexico and more cordial relations between the two countries. At the time of the Kessler Plan both bridges were one-way wooden structures with one-way automobile and street car traffic. Pedestrian traffic could travel both ways. The bridges were owned by the street railroad company operating the trolleys. Toll was then, as now, charged for all persons and vehicles using these facilities, with the exception of trolley passengers whose toll was absorbed in the fare.⁵ Mr. Kessler called toll bridges and toll roads anachronism in those days when every effort was being made to encourage friendly relations and free intercourse between these two cities separated only by a narrow channel of the Rio Grande. He prophesied that "the frequent discussion of a free bridge will before many years bear fruit in actual construction."⁶

⁵Kessler, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶Ibid., p. 21.

Two bridge locations were proposed in the Plan. One was located at the foot of South Oregon Street with diagonal roads connecting the bridge head with South El Paso Street and South Stanton Street. On the Juarez side diagonal roads connected it with Avenida Lerdo, Calle del Ferrocarril, and Avenida Juarez via Calle Acacias. This proposal retained the railroad crossing connecting Calle del Ferrocarril and South El Paso Street.⁷

The second proposal eliminated the railroad crossing and connected South El Paso Street with Calle del Ferrocarril, the latter being converted to a divided boulevard. Diagonal roads on the Juarez side connected the bridge with Avenida Juarez and Avenida Lerdo. Diagonal roads on the El Paso side connected the bridge with South Santa Fe Street, South Oregon Street, and South Stanton Street.⁸

The bridge designs indicated customs and immigration buildings on both sides of the bridge. Monuments were placed in the center of traffic circles connecting the diagonal streets at each bridgehead.⁹

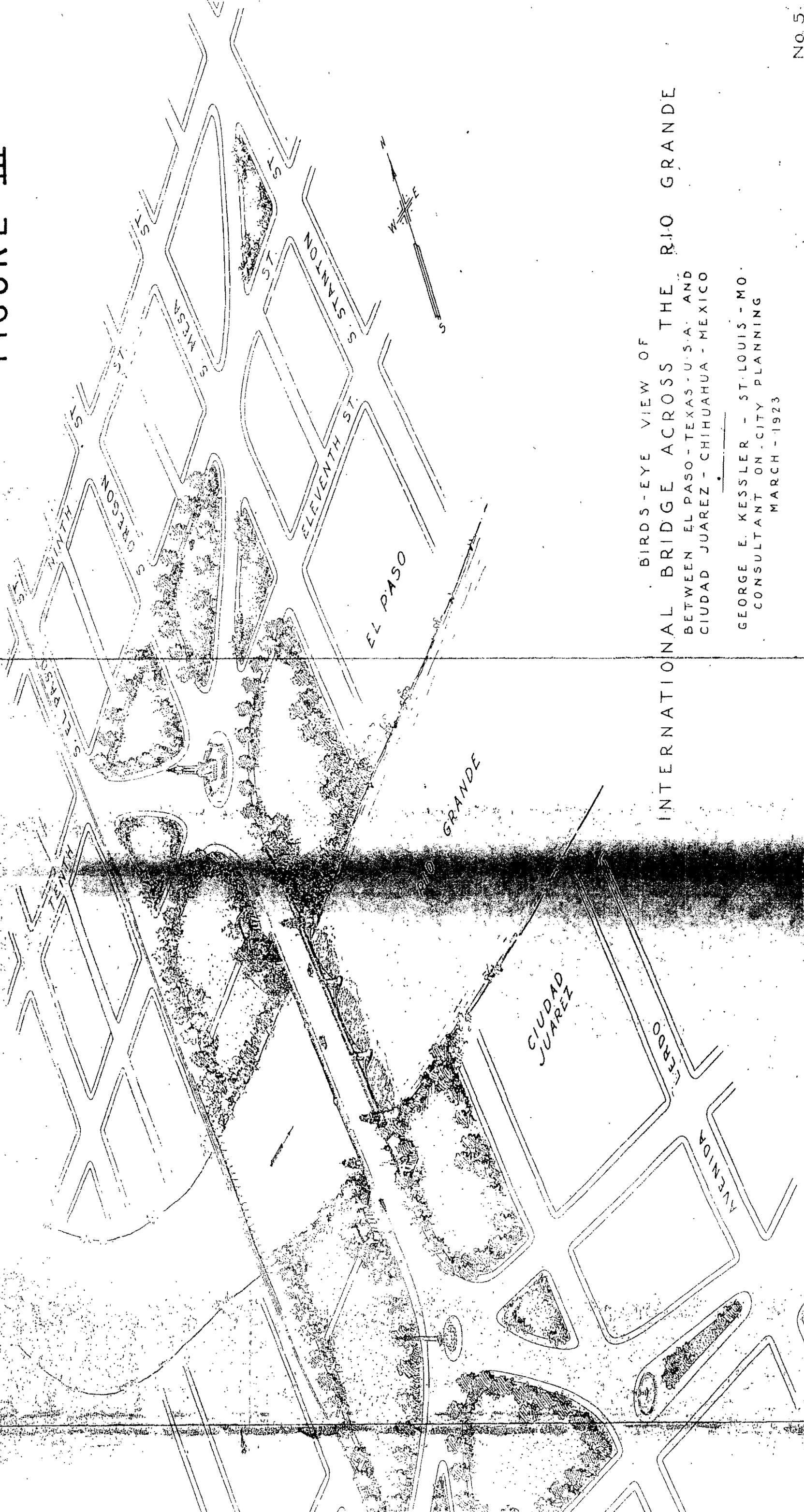
An International Drive connecting this bridgehead

⁷ See Figure III.

⁸ See Figure IV.

⁹ See Figure V.

FIGURE III



BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF
INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE
BETWEEN EL PASO - TEXAS - U.S.A. AND
CIUDAD JUAREZ - CHIHUAHUA - MEXICO

GEORGE E. KESSLER - ST. LOUIS - MO.
CONSULTANT ON CITY PLANNING
MARCH - 1923



AVENIDA

SUAREZ

AVENIDA

CALLE DEL FERROCARRIL

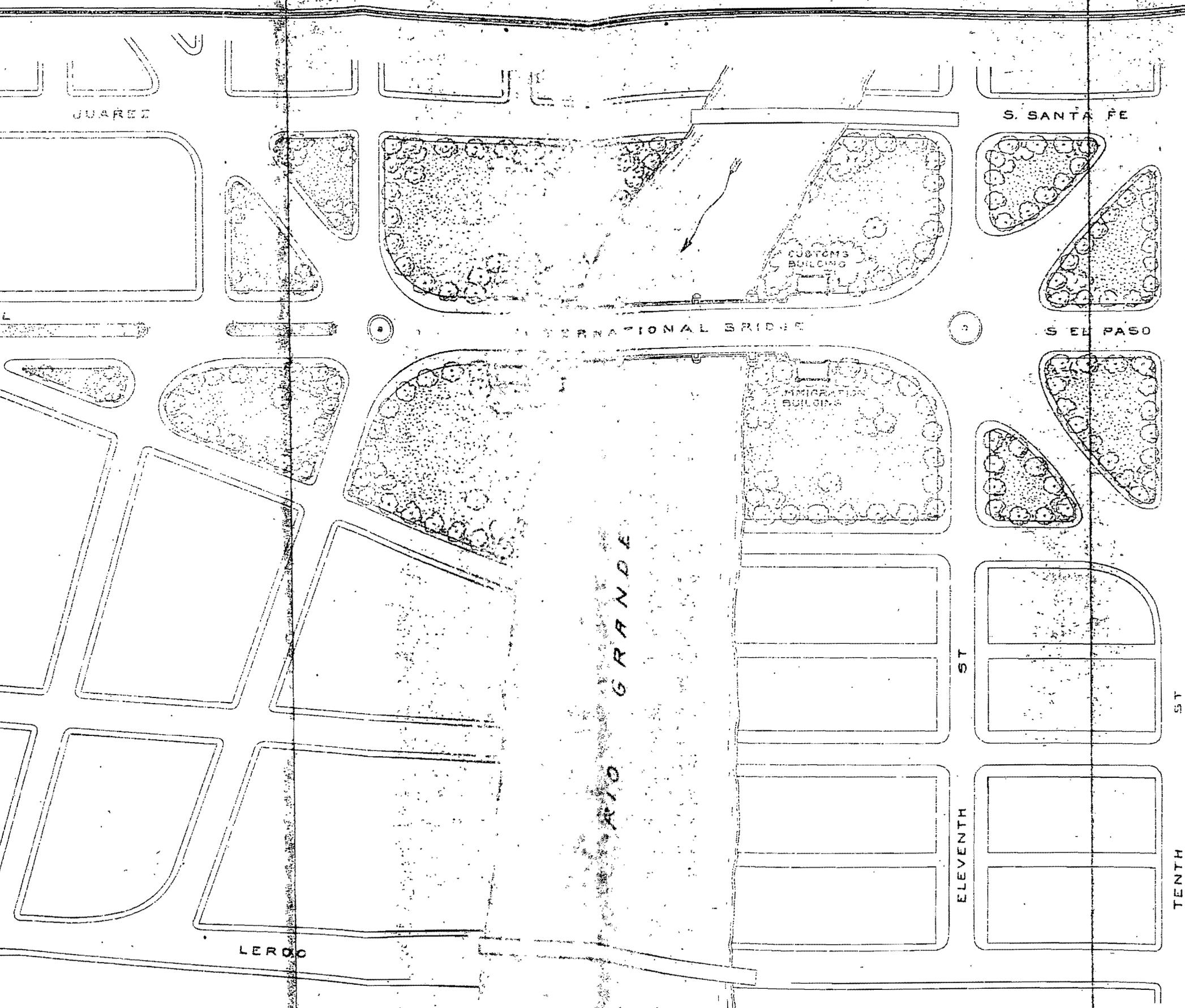


FIGURE IV

STUDY FOR
 PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE
 ON
 S. EL PASO ST. AND C. DEL FERROCARIL.
 EL PASO, TEX. AND JUAREZ, CHI.

PREPARED BY THE
 CITY PLAN COMMISSION
 EL PASO, TEXAS
 H.D. SLATER, CHAIRMAN
 W.E. STOCKWELL, ENGINEER

SCALE
 0 100 200 300 FEET
 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 METERS

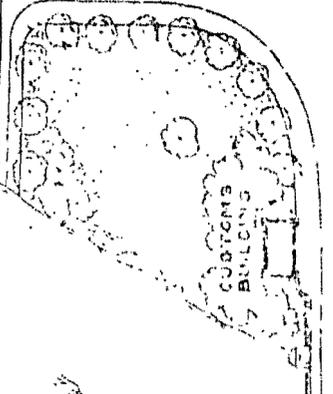
JUNE 1923

S. SA

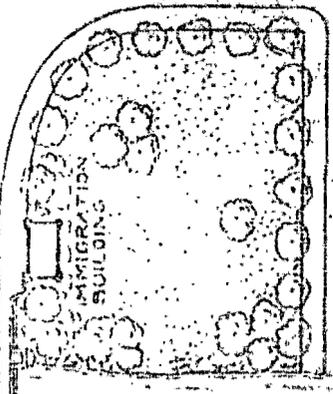


ST

ELEVENTH



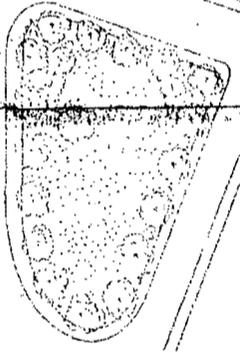
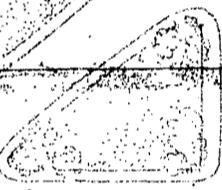
CUSTOMS BUILDING



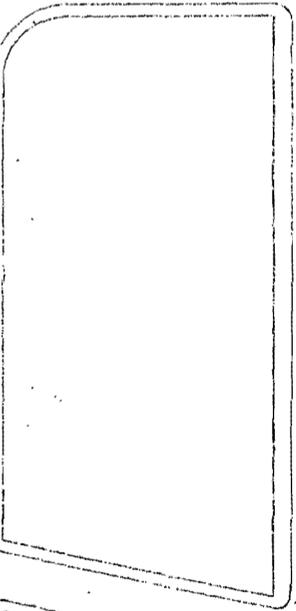
IMMIGRATION BUILDING

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

MIO BRANCO



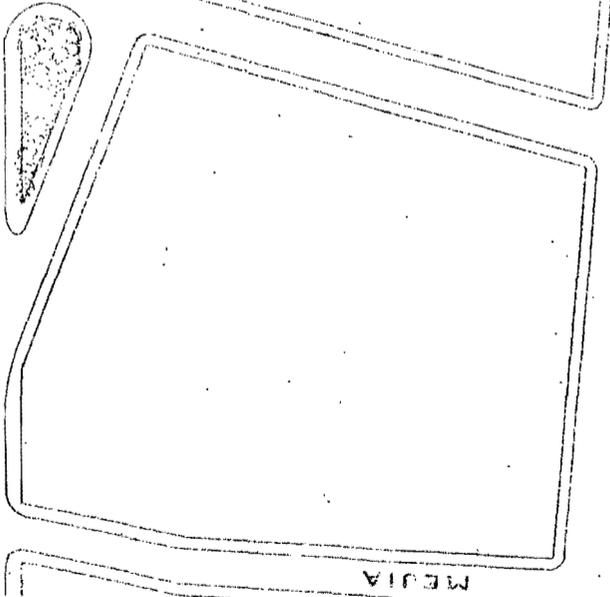
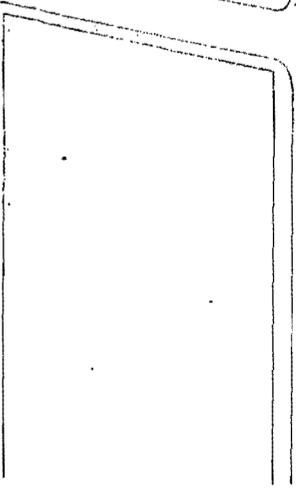
AVENIDA JUAREZ



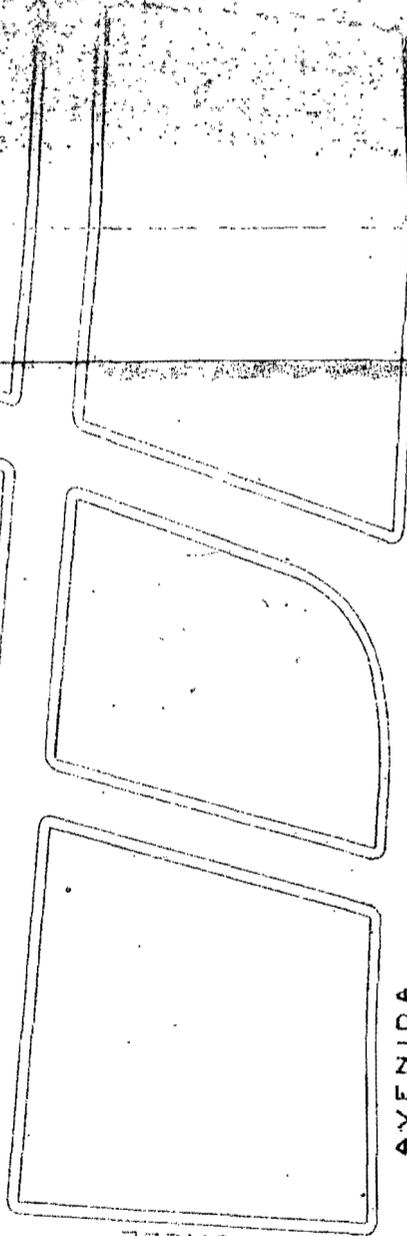
FERROCARRIL

AVENIDA

CALLE DEL



MEDIA



CALLE

AVENIDA

LERDO

RIO GRANDE

FIGURE V

CUSTOMS BUILDING

CENTER LINE

IMMIGRATION BUILDING

EL PASO

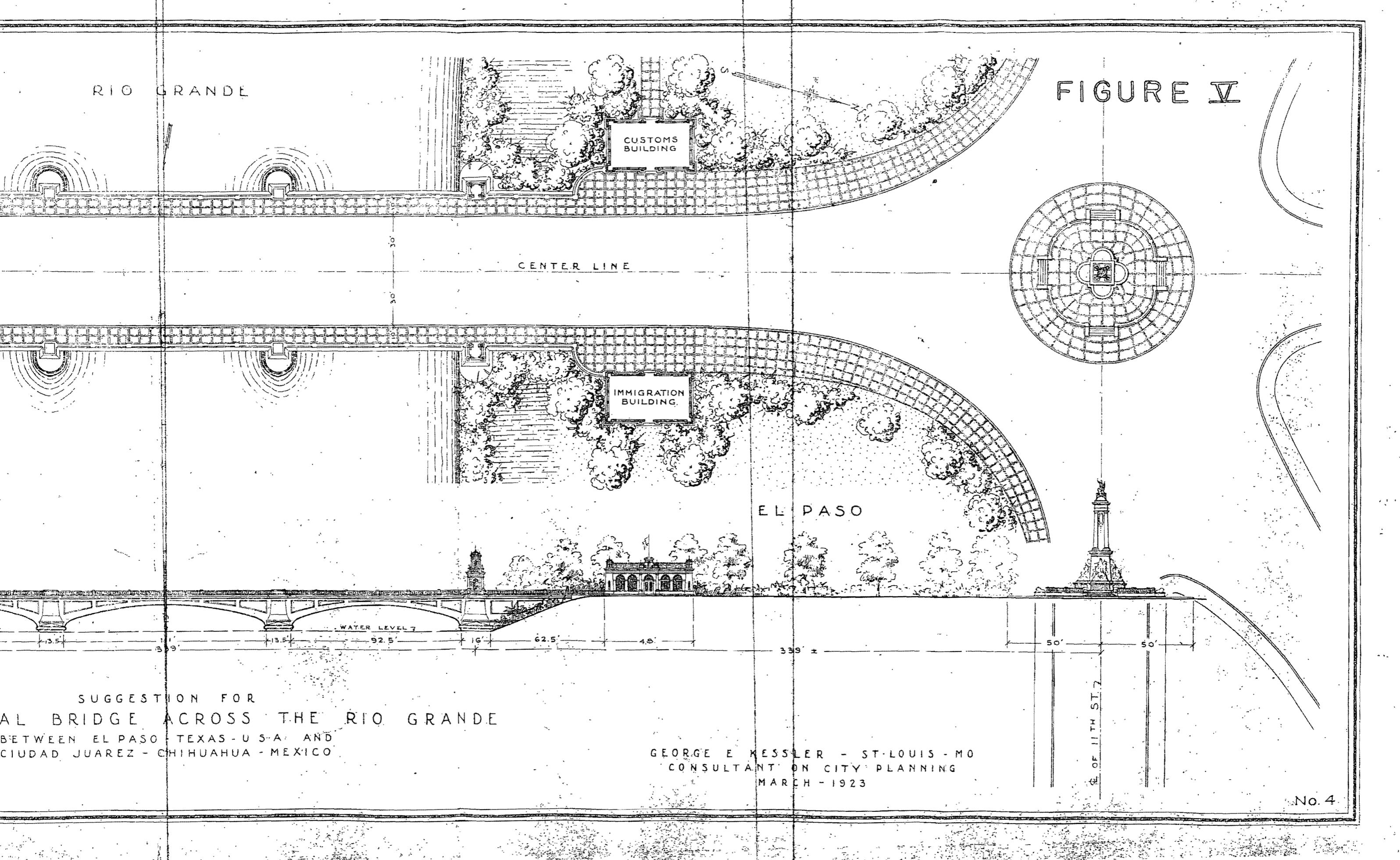
WATER LEVEL 7

E. OF 11TH ST. 7

SUGGESTION FOR
AL BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE
BETWEEN EL PASO TEXAS - U.S.A. AND
CIUDAD JUAREZ - CHIHUAHUA - MEXICO

GEORGE E. KESSLER - ST. LOUIS - MO
CONSULTANT ON CITY PLANNING
MARCH - 1923

No. 4



RIO GRA

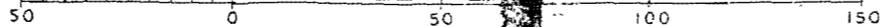
CUSTOMS BUILDING

IMMIGRATION BUILDING

CIUDAD JUAREZ

SUGGESTION
INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE ACROSS
BETWEEN EL PASO TEX.
CIUDAD JUAREZ - CHIHUA

SCALE IN FEET



25' 25'

48'

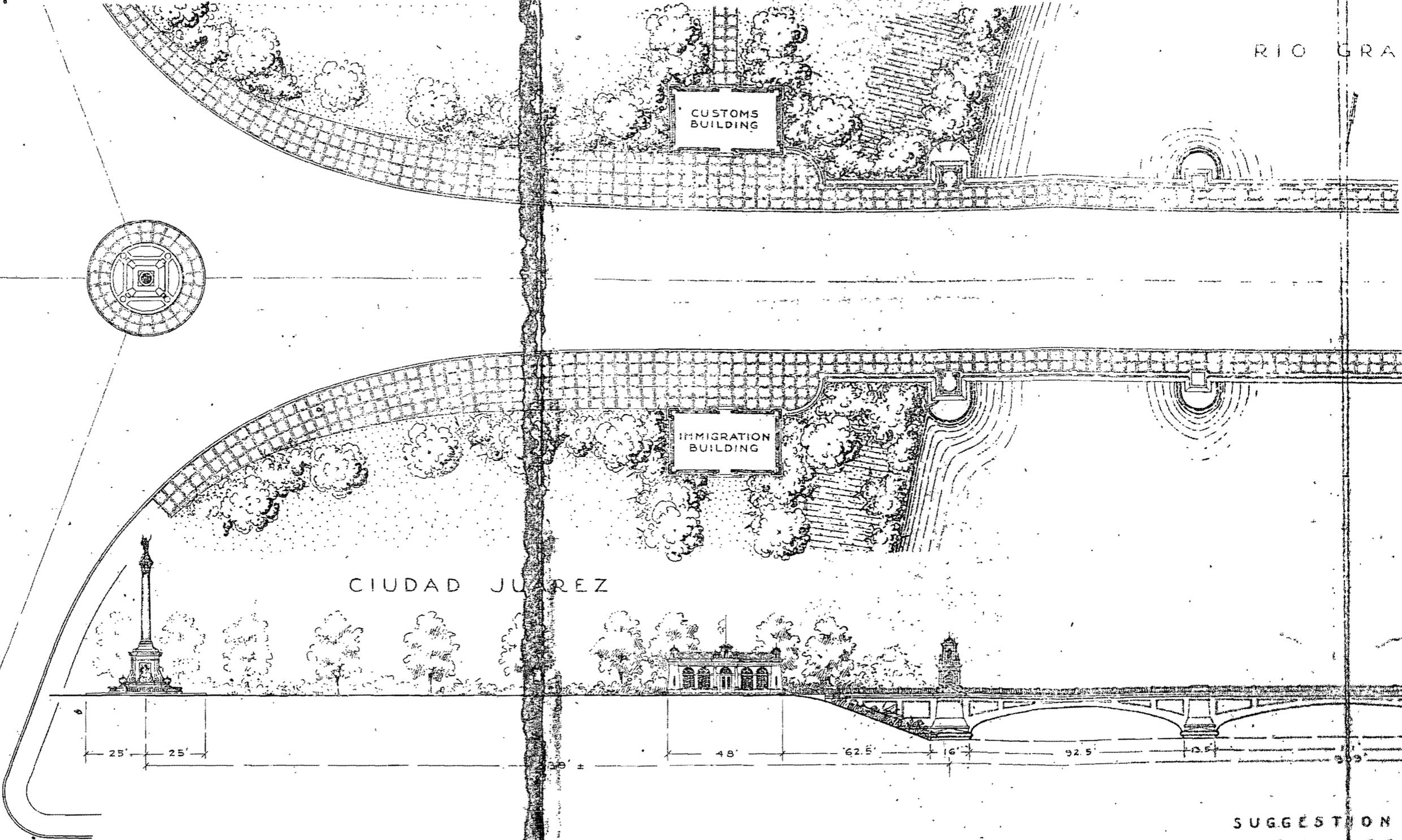
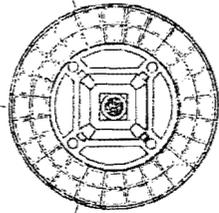
62.5'

16'

92.5'

12.5'

9.9'



with others on the Rio Grande was also recommended. This drive is discussed in another part of this paper.¹⁰

To date there is still no free bridge between El Paso and Juarez. Both of the timber toll bridges have been replaced with concrete structures carrying one-way traffic similar to the wooden structures. In 1958 the pressures on both sides of the river were brought to bear for the construction of a new free crossing. It had become evident that the existing facilities were not adequate. The Stanton Street Bridge carries three lanes of traffic which disburses on the Juarez side on the two-lane Avenida Lerdo and via one-lane Calle Chapultepec, which traverses a residential section of Juarez and carries the tourist away from the attractions normally desired in Juarez. Traffic on the United States side is backed up for a mile and a half regularly on weekends, in the evenings, and during work rush hours. When the traffic is so congested it can take an hour and a half to make the crossing.

Late in 1957 the new United States customs building was opened on the Santa Fe Bridge for returning traffic. This new structure separated pedestrian and vehicular traffic returning by elevating pedestrian traffic via escalator or ramp over vehicular traffic entering the building. The

¹⁰See "U. S. Highway 80 East" in Appendix B.

United States immigration offices are contained in the second floor of this structure. Automobile traffic crossing the bridge must turn right into an open area with ten inspection lanes. It is then exited onto South El Paso Street instead of South Santa Fe Street. This facility has increased the efficiency of this crossing to the extent that the only barrier creating congestion on Avenida Juarez is the collection of tolls. This still causes traffic to back up for several blocks during rush hours.

This congestion caused a great deal of attention to be focused on a new free bridge facility. In 1958 El Paso County agreed to build an access road from Hammett Boulevard to Cordova Island¹¹ if the Mexican officials would agree to build a road from the end of the county road across Cordova Island to the existing Cordova Island Bridge. This two-lane bridge, crossing the Rio Grande and connecting Cordova Island with the rest of Juarez, would connect this proposed route with the Calzada De Las Americas in Juarez. The City of El Paso owns the land adjacent to Cordova Island and agreed to allow the County to build a thoroughfare over its property, which had been used for sanitary fill, if the County would build a road which would meet the City's construction standards for arterial streets. The cost of such construction

¹¹ See Figure VI for location of Cordova Island.

THE CHAMIZAL ZONE



Chamizal Zone of Dispute

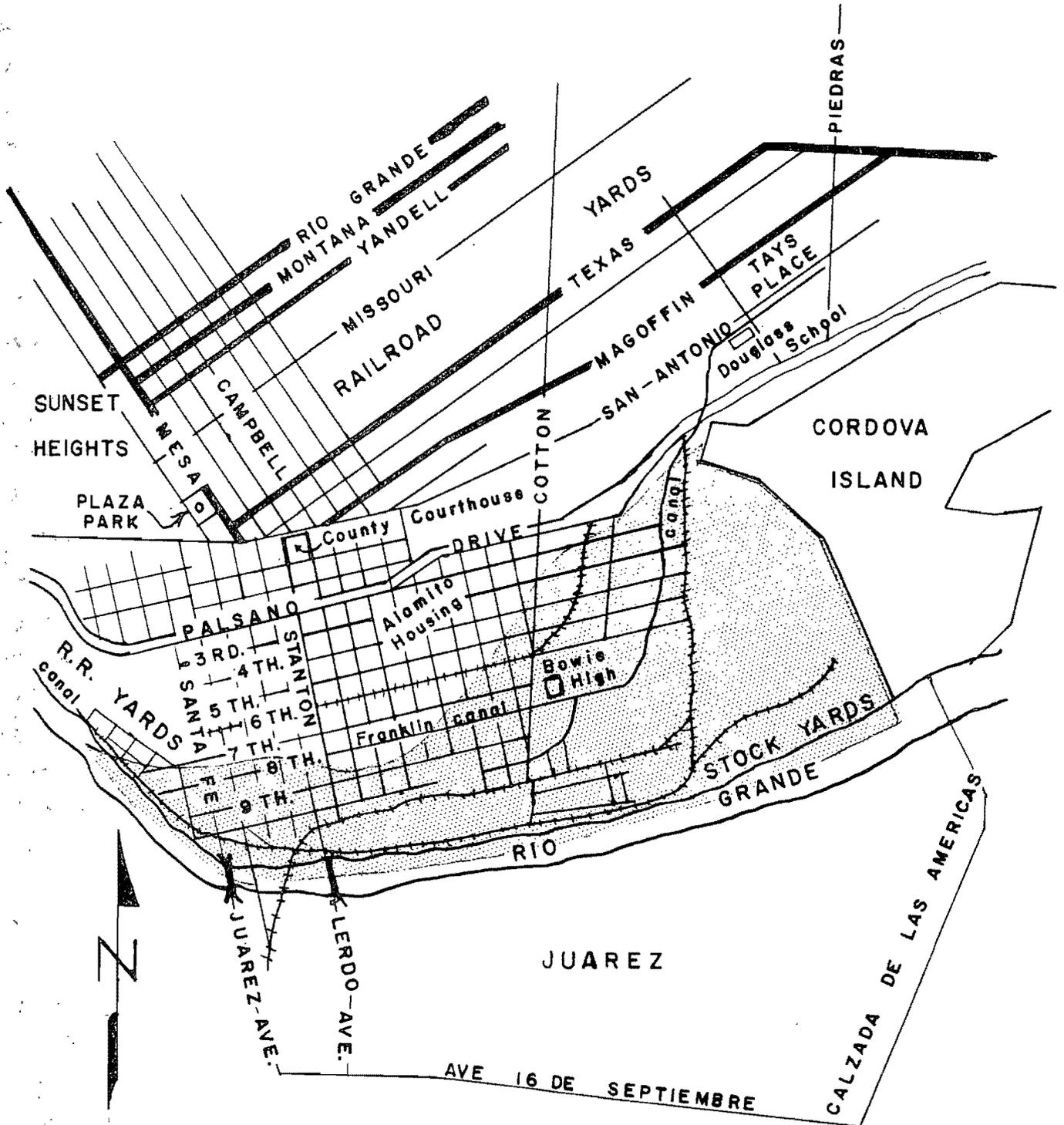


FIGURE VI

over this property would be very expensive considering that it must be constructed over twelve feet of unpacked loose fill. This factor, plus difficulties in obtaining another boundary crossing, have left this project in the discussion stage to date.

It is not specifically mentioned in the Kessler Plan as to whether Mr. Kessler knew of the "Chamizal".¹² The Chamizal is a large triangular parcel of land containing approximately six hundred acres bounded by Cordova Island, the present course of the Rio Grande, and a line joining the two at approximately 6th Street on the west. Figure VI more clearly illustrates the location. This piece of land is claimed by both the United States and the Republic of Mexico. It is in use, however, with homes and businesses. The northern boundary of the Chamizal is the 1852 river channel, as charted by an International Commission.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo defined the boundary as the middle of the Rio Grande River from El Paso to the gulf of Mexico. The charting of the river location at this northern boundary gave Mexico its claim to the Chamizal. Both nations have agreed that the river has shifted its main stream southward since 1852. Disagreement comes,

¹² John A. Hovel, Jr., "The Chamizal: A Description" (El Paso, Texas: An eight page dittoed brochure prepared as a planning progress report by the El Paso City Planning Commission, dated February 18, 1959).

and the United States has as its claim that the rules of international law select the owners of flood plain land according to how the river made its new diversion or channel.¹³

Land which becomes attached to one bank of a river which forms an international boundary becomes the property of that country only if the addition is achieved by accretion, with a slow and gradual addition of land being made with soil carried away from the opposite bank by erosion. On the contrary if the land is moved by avulsion, a sudden cutting off of the land by flood and torrential waters, such land remains the property of its original owner.¹⁴

The United States claimed the north bank was deposited by accretion. Mexico claimed it was done by avulsion. In 1907 the two countries agreed to maintain the status quo until the national ownership of this land could be settled finally. At present the laws of the United States are enforced in the disputed area and the State of Texas and the City of El Paso as well as El Paso County continue to exercise full control over the area. The middle of the present channel of the Rio Grande in this area is used as the boundary, in fact, between the United States and Mexico. Unlike other points of entry along international boundaries, the international bridges are bare of boundary monuments.¹⁵ It seems unlikely that a bridge similar to the one proposed by Mr. Kessler with monuments

¹³Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 5-6.

would be proposed for this site without mention of the Chamizal in the Plan. Until there is settlement of national ownership of the land in question, a new crossing at this point would be a difficult project.

Likewise, the allocation of federal funds for an international highway connecting the bridgehead as proposed by Mr. Kessler cannot be obtained for land which is in dispute as to international ownership.

The proposal for a free bridge across the Rio Grande is current. Negotiations are being made to acquire a new free crossing. The site proposed by Mr. Kessler has been abandoned, however. The Chamizal dispute makes such a location impractical when combined with the poor traffic handling facilities in the present central district of Juarez. The Cordova Island location appears to be in current favor for a crossing, with a direct connection with the Pan-American Highway on the Mexican side of the river being apparent and possible at this location. The theory and need indicated by the Plan are still present and will be inculcated in the construction at a slightly different site.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE COMMUNITY FACILITY PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN

Thoroughfares were discussed in Chapter III and the physical adequacy or inadequacy was noted for these traffic moving facilities. Chapter IV discusses the other community facilities proposed in the Plan as to their adequacy or inadequacy in the light of historical experience obtained in the period of time between the adoption of the Plan and the present.

WATER SUPPLY

The Kessler Plan recognized the need to acquire additional water supplies when it stated:

The supply appears to be sufficient for a long period in the future, but it is the general experience that underground sources do not suffice indefinitely for the needs of a large city, and El Paso is in a region where water is such a vital factor, it is a part of wisdom to look forward to the possible need for an inexhaustible source.

Fortunately such a source is available in the Rio Grande with the storage of Elephant Butte reservoir, and the City would do well to prepare the way for its

use when the time may come that it will be required.¹

The waters of the Rio Grande are being rapidly appropriated and used for irrigation purposes. If the city is to someday require from this source, as seems very probable, it will be wise to take promptly such steps as may be necessary to acquire the right to use it when needed. If this is neglected until the need for river water becomes imperative the cost will be increased.²

Kessler went further into the process of suggesting two means of obtaining water from the Rio Grande. One consisted of pumping directly from the river at some point above the City, and the other consisted of taking water from the Elephant Butte Reservoir for gravity supply.³ An economic and quality comparison was made to show that pumping at that time was by far the least expensive and that the gravity supply would be of much better quality and require less treatment.

The Planning Commission was given the specific duty in Section 10 of the ordinance creating it: "to study, investigate and report on plans for extension of the water supply and upon new sources of supply."⁴ This ordinance was drawn as a part of the Master Plan.

At the time of the Kessler Plan there was a great

¹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁴Ibid., p. 68.

amount of sentiment for the gravity supply from Elephant Butte, but the Plan at that time pointed out that the high cost due to high capital charges would make this very expensive.⁵ In 1935, ten years after publication of the Plan, a survey of ground water resources in the El Paso area was charted by the City Water Department with the cooperation of the United States Geological Survey. This survey showed that El Paso was pumping out water from its water table faster than the table was being replenished, but that there was a large supply good for many years of use at the then increased rate of use.⁶

By 1940 the water table was getting low enough to be of concern to City officials. A Water Development Committee consisting of Mr. W. E. Robertson and two other members was appointed by the mayor to report on the water supply situation. The committee, after studying all available data on the subject, recommended that the City take immediate steps to secure an additional water supply to supplement the underground supply. The City acquired the right to purchase two thousand acres of water rights from the Rio Grande. This was done and a new treatment plant was started.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶ City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1943, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1943), p. 17.

⁷ Ibid.

In 1947 the City owned about thirteen hundred acres of land for water rights and was negotiating to increase the right to purchase up to four thousand acres. This land had to be purchased at considerable expense and retired from farming use. This four thousand acres represented about five per cent of the federally irrigated farming lands in the Valley. This same year the Planning Commission recommended that the City explore the possibility of diverting intermittent flood waters on the Rio Grande below the Caballo Dam and storing them at a reservoir for use by the City.⁸

By 1951 years of drought had caused serious concern over the water problem. River water delivered to the City under its water rights could be rationed during times of water shortages, similarly to the rationing of water to agricultural users. The underground water supply was being over-pumped and the reserve further reduced during these drought periods. At the same time the City was having to over-use the water reserve. Farmers in the lower valleys were installing shallow wells and pumping plants to irrigate their lands. Many of these farmers actually had no water rights but were using the underground source of water which was being re-charged by the irrigation seepages. With the investments

⁸City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1947, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1947), p. 7.

made by these individuals in mind, it was evident that they would continue to use the underground sources. Thus the underground reservoirs would continue to be depleted even during times of plentiful river water when the City would not be using underground water sources.

A further distressing fact was that the Elephant Butte Reservoir had been full for only one season since its construction in 1916. The State of New Mexico had consistently failed to deliver to the reservoir the amount of water established in the Rio Grande Compact, incurring a water debt it can probably never repay. This was an indication that the Rio Grande watershed was over-developed; that water conservation should be practiced throughout this watershed; and that no further land should be placed under irrigation from that source. Thus Mr. Kessler's prediction that the Rio Grande River and the Elephant Butte Reservoir would provide an inexhaustible source of water was incorrect. It must be noted, however, that the engineers designing the project were also incorrect and that the error probably rests on Mr. Kessler's dependence on their engineering rather than on a study of his own.⁹

⁹City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1951, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission 1951), p. 26.

In 1951 fantastic suggestions were made that water be brought in from other watersheds where floods are a problem. This involved great expense, however, in pumping the water up to the high elevation of the City.

Two more practical solutions were proposed, however. One proposed the diversion of certain waters from the Colorado River watershed into the Rio Grande watershed. The State of New Mexico was entitled to this water under the Colorado River Compact. The other proposal involved the straightening and lowering of the Rio Grande River bed through the Albuquerque area from San Marcial, New Mexico, on upstream, in order to save water lost by evaporation and seepage.¹⁰

The Plan's prediction that Elephant Butte Reservoir would provide an inexhaustible source of water was incorrect. However, since the engineer's design of the project was incorrect in its assumptions, it may be considered that Mr. Kessler relied on this judgment in his predictions, rather than to make a separate survey of his own. The Plan, however, was correct in recommending the immediate acquisition of water rights. The cost of acquiring them later meant the retirement of land from growing crops at great expense to the City in both the actual purchase of water rights and the resultant loss in economic base.

¹⁰Ibid.

STORM DRAINAGE

At the time the Kessler Plan was undertaken the City had not witnessed any exceptionally heavy storms or wet seasons for a number of years. During the time from the last storm year of 1914 the community had grown, thousands of additional houses had been built, and many miles of pavement had been laid. These man-made changes had added to the imperviousness of the area and to the quickness of runoff. Kessler prophesied that there would be drainage difficulties during the next storm period. The Plan divided the City into topographical drainage areas, and went on to establish watersheds for the various parts of the City.

Kessler recommended that a comprehensive flood water drainage plan be prepared for the whole area of the future City. He also pointed out areas of special need. These included the Noble and Newman Street canals slated for connection to the Cebada drain, the Copia Street drain, the Government Hill draw, and the downtown area.¹¹

In 1928 the Robertson Committee proposed certain stopgap remedies for low areas without the preparation of any master plan. The majority of the proposals in the Robertson Committee report came from the areas of special

¹¹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 55-57.

need indicated in the Plan.¹²

The master drainage plan proposed in the Kessler Plan was prepared in 1930. The first drainage project constructed as a result of this master plan was a storm drain for the downtown area.

By 1943 the straightening and scouring of the Rio Grande channel made a drainage program more practical with a gravity system less expensive than the system of pumps proposed in the 1930 study. In this year the city engineering department prepared a new plan taking this factor into consideration. Except for a small flood in 1941, the precipitation rate had been below normal, as it was during the time of the Kessler Plan.¹³

During the six years following the 1943 drainage plan many of the dams and water sources proposed in the 1943 plan were constructed,¹⁴

In 1950 a rainfall of over three inches was unofficially recorded on the eastern slopes of Mount Franklin.

¹² W. E. Robertson, Report of the Robertson Committee to the Mayor and Council, City of El Paso, Texas, A Report Prepared by a Citizens Committee of Ten Citizens of the City of El Paso with Mr. W. E. Robertson Acting as Chairman and Coordinator for the Committee, (El Paso, Texas: City Planning Commission, 1928)

¹³ Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁴ City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1949, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1949), p. 8.

The drains and dams functioned as planned in all areas with the exceptions of the Lincoln Park area and the Durazno area. Much damage was done during the storm in the areas north of Van Buren Street which were newly annexed and which had not been included in the 1943 plan. A study of these areas indicated that evaporation ponds should be located in part of Fort Bliss to handle this overflow from north of Van Buren Street.¹⁵

By 1953 the growth of the City compelled the Planning Commission to accept plats where drainage was known to be bad because the problem could not be solved in the one plat alone. No master drainage plan of areas such as the Lower Valley had been prepared.¹⁶

In 1956 an engineering survey of the drainage of the Upper Valley was completed and one dam was constructed as a part of it. The Cotton Street Dam was also constructed. The survey, along with the construction of the projects, resulted from funds in the 1956 bond issue for drainage projects.¹⁷

¹⁵City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1950, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1950), p. 8.

¹⁶Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁷Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 6.

The wet years of 1957 and 1958 again focused public attention on drainage problems. Rapid growth in the north-east El Paso area and the Lower Valley had created new drainage problems.

A bond issue in 1958 focused on protection and on surveys for drainage areas in North East El Paso, the Durazno area, the Lower Valley, and the Upper Valley. \$2,524,000 in funds were voted for this purpose.

Although the Kessler Plan did not suggest specific projects to be undertaken, but rather recommended a master drainage plan and outlined special areas of need, at the present time it is noted that three special drainage plans have been prepared and all of the special areas of need have been corrected. In addition to this, the areas of new growth are programmed for drainage control projects.¹⁸

The storm drainage provisions and projections appear to have been adequate. The wet years brought about the results predicted in the Plan. The drainage problem predicted in the Plan occurred. The solutions projected in the Plan have been constructed. As the City has expanded the program started in the Plan has been extended into the new areas, and new problem areas are on the program of capital expenditures for construction in the near future.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 16-20.

SANITARY SEWERS

The Kessler Plan noted that the existing main trunk sewage line traversing 2nd Street, Cotton Avenue, and Olive Street was nearing its capacity and that it delivered the sewage to a sump from whence it was pumped to septic tanks near the river. This line served East El Paso, Government Heights, Fort Bliss and the remainder of the northeast portion of the City. While the elevations in these areas were considerably above elevations in the flat area served by the rest of the 2nd Street lateral, all of the sewage drained into it had to be pumped into the septic tanks. The Plan recommended the construction of an interceptor trunk line to collect the sewage from the area above Montana Street and to deliver it through a pressure line into the tanks without pumping. Such construction, the Plan stated, would relieve the existing mains in the lower portions of the City to an extent that they would be adequate for quite some time without enlarging. The interceptor line would also lower the cost of pumping from the 2nd Street line.¹⁹

The interceptor line proposed in the Plan was constructed in 1935. In 1942 the enlargement of Fort Bliss brought about the construction of a new and larger

¹⁹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

interceptor line to the tanks. The increased amount of sewage from Fort Bliss overloaded the septic tank treatment system and necessitated the construction of a new treatment plant in the vicinity of the overloaded tanks. With the assistance of the Federal government a primary treatment plant was constructed in 1943.²⁰

The growth of the community and the further expansion of Fort Bliss by 1951 had overloaded the treatment plant and objectionable odors emitting from the sewage treatment plant were then commonplace instead of an occasional occurrence. As part of the renewal of the Paisano-Hammett Boulevard area the correction of this problem was proposed. The treatment plant was enlarged and constructed for the full treatment of sewage.²¹

The proposals of the 1925 Kessler Plan were carried out completely as proposed, and additional facilities were constructed to handle extra loads caused by the enlargement of the military bases in the area. These new facilities were not proposed as a part of the Plan because the military base expansions and wartime construction were not foreseen at the time of the Plan, which was prepared some sixteen or seventeen years before the second World War.

²⁰ Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 17.

²¹ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 17.

Thus the sanitary sewer needs predicted in the Plan occurred and the solutions proposed had to be constructed. Additional facilities were constructed as a result of the expansion of Fort Bliss.

PARK DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kessler devoted several pages of his Plan to the development of park and recreation sites in the El Paso area. He classified the park program into the following types of recreational and park facilities: (1) community centers, (2) playgrounds, (3) neighborhood parks, and (4) large parks.

Playground and community centers were indicated to be a necessary item in conjunction with school property. The Plan recommended that the City negotiate to have a joint school and city playground program with play areas utilized and supervised after regular school hours.²²

Neighborhood parks were indicated to include Memorial and Washington Parks as well as numerous small parks such as Houston Square, Caruso Park, Austin Park, and other parks of less than a square block in area, Mr. Kessler stated. The Plan indicated that the neighborhood park functioned to provide open space and relief from the brick and pavement

²²Kessler, op. cit., p. 35.

of the City, and, where large enough, should provide athletic fields, tennis courts, and playgrounds. It was further indicated in the Plan report that, judged by the standards of humid climates, only Washington and Memorial Parks would be considered adequate in size for neighborhood parks. However, it was pointed out that the practical consideration of the expense of watering required a modest program in terms of park sizes.²³

Large parks were defined in the Plan as recreation facilities requiring too much space to be included in neighborhood parks. Examples of drives, paths, lakes, and golf courses were given. Specific mention was made of the Charles Davis Park, with over one hundred acres of land, as an example of a then existing large park.²⁴

The Plan specifically proposed the addition of a twelve-acre neighborhood park in the Morningside Heights area, and the acquisition of the Magoffin homestead property to provide recreation facilities near San Jacinto Junior High School as neighborhood parks.²⁵ For additional large parks the Plan proposed the acquisition of land in the vicinity of Rim Road north and east of El Paso High School to be known as Central Park, the development of McKelligan

²³Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²⁴Ibid., p. 40.

²⁵Ibid., p. 36.

Canyon to give access to camping spots, and a large park in the valley near the River with irrigation facilities to make possible picnic areas and a golf course.²⁶ Also proposed was the extension of Washington Park to include the city dump and sewage disposal property.²⁷

The Plan further recommended the acquisition of another block of land in the vicinity of Aoy School for playground purposes. In addition to this, the five-block area in the vicinity of the proposed new free bridge to Juarez was designated as a proposed park site.²⁸

The Plan made certain proposals for the development of existing park sites, as well as making these proposals for additional sites.

An athletic field was proposed for Memorial Park in the area east of Copia Street. Lighting with underground wiring was proposed. Mr. Kessler stated, concerning the intersection of Copper Street and Copia Street, that:

The corners should be well-rounded as shown by the Plan, for safety and convenience. Otherwise the intersection at Copia Street with high banks on each corner will be dangerous and unsightly.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 38. *

The Plan proposed the extension of Washington Park northward to Pera Street and southwest past the canal on land then owned by the City.³⁰

Further proposed as an improvement to existing park grounds was the proposal in the Plan for the development of Charles Davis Park. Kessler proposed leaving this as a desert park with native vegetation. A small lake filled with water pumped from the Sunset Heights water reservoir was also proposed. A bathing beach would be located on the north shore of the lake. It was proposed further that the College of Mines property and the Davis Park be developed in harmony to provide a play space for the entire western portion of the City.³¹

The twelve-acre school site in the vicinity of Morningside Heights proposed in the Plan was purchased in the exact site shown on the Plan. It was named Grandview Park. By 1951 the City had acquired four lots adjacent to the park site through tax delinquency. There were two privately owned lots separating two of the City owned lots from the other two city owned lots. The Planning Commission recommended this year that the City obtain the two privately owned lots for the extension of Grandview Park. By 1951 the only

³⁰Ibid., p. 39.

³¹Ibid., pp. 40-41.

major improvements of this park facility were the lights for the softball field. A swimming pool was proposed for this site.³²

To this date the Magoffin home has not been purchased as proposed in the Kessler Plan, and the highly developed area in the vicinity of the Magoffin homestead is without a park facility.

Central Park has failed to materialize as such. Arroyo Park, just north of the proposed Central Park, has materialized, however. The Central Park was indicated in the 1928 Robertson Report, along with the Rim Road Parkway, for a portion of the funds proposed by that committee.³³ In 1931 the Planning Commission made a restudy of the park and recreation plan of the City after a large number of people in the Government Hill area petitioned for a park to be located in that area. As a part of this restudy attention was again called to the fact that the area in the vicinity of El Paso High School had no large park. It was the recommendation of the Planning Commission that the Central Park site be the next park site purchase made by the City. It was further recommended that the new City water reservoir under construction in the area designated for the Central

³² Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 15.

³³ Robertson, op. cit., p. 16.

Park be constructed with a roof of sufficient strength and water tightness to permit recreational use of this flat surface.³⁴ The recommendations for the reservoir were not adopted by the City for lack of funds. The depression and the war hindered the program for this park site.

In 1953 the Planning Commission again reviewed the site. It was noted that the topography of the existing platted area of the park site was such that streets could not be developed in the manner in which the land was platted. It was further noted that the City was, at that time, owner of a number of lots in the area through tax delinquent titles. The Commission proposed a replat of the area for housing and for a park site. The redevelopment of the area would, in many cases, require the trading of land ownerships.³⁵ To this date no site is developed in this location. Some replatting has taken place but not in accord with the 1953 plan for the area. To the north and west of the proposed Central Park site the City presently owns about sixty acres of park site known as Arroyo Park. It is a low-lying district of about two blocks in width traversed by a drainage-way of the Crazy Kat Mountain area. The land was undesirable

³⁴ City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1931, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1931), p. 12.

³⁵ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

for residence purposes because of occasional flooding. It was relatively undeveloped and the majority of the property was acquired on delinquent taxes. Small payments were made by the City for non-delinquent and improved land. In accepting the site the City planned to develop the western end for recreation purposes and the eastern end for a natural desert park. In accepting the land an inferior residence district was not permitted to develop between Kern Place and Rim Road and the City was relieved of the burden of flood control.

In 1948 a portion of this area was leased to the tennis club for tennis courts and a club building. In 1949 the recreation department began the work of grading for a softball diamond located in accordance with the earlier plan for development of the park. Property owners of Kern Place and Rim Road came en masse to protest the location of this recreation facility.³⁶ Construction was halted and the northwest portion of the City is still without a major recreation facility. The 1959 capital improvement program appropriates funds for leveling, grading, and landscaping portions of this park to beautify an unsightly public area.³⁷

³⁶ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁷ Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 44.

Development of McKelligan Canyon into a park site as proposed in the Plan has been undertaken by El Paso County. The road over the Franklin Mountains through McKelligan Canyon as proposed in the Plan has not been undertaken although it is one of the roadways on a priority list of arterial highways prepared in 1958 by the Planning Department.

The large park near the river with picnic areas and a golf course as proposed in the Plan has been accomplished by the construction of Ascarate Park by El Paso County. This park, now within the City limits, has an artificial lake and golf course constructed within it. This park site was a part of the 1935 plan of the Lower Valley which was accomplished as a Kessler Plan recommendation also. The river channel had been straightened by that date and the land now developed as Ascarate Park belonged to the Federal Government. The land was deeded to the county and the park was developed partially with C.C.C. labor. Work on this park was halted by World War II. Development has now been completed and this park meets the requirements established for it in the Plan.³⁸

Although the property was owned by the municipal government, Washington Park was not extended to the river as proposed. Two conjectures can be made on this point:

³⁸Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

1. The dumping of garbage in a land fill operation has made the area unsuitable for park facilities until recent years.

2. The construction of Paisano Drive made a distinct barrier between the activities of Washington Park and the activities of the Coliseum and livestock area.

These factors have undoubtedly affected this proposal of the Plan.

Construction of Delta Drive, even though proposed in the Kessler Plan, has further divided the Coliseum area and the sewage plant area into further distinct use areas.

Modern traffic has taken on a different aspect from traffic of the Kessler Plan times. While Mr. Kessler proposed the Franklin Canal for foot paths for casual walks, today's highway engineers proposed it as an access-limiting feature for fast-moving arterial traffic. In this respect the otherwise sound philosophy of the Kessler Plan was revised under the present day philosophy of moving traffic. However, a ten-acre portion of this area south of Burleson School has been set aside and developed for recreational facilities for the neighborhood south of Paisano.

While the Plan proposed another block area in the vicinity of Aoy School for a park and recreation site, it was not until 1952 that this site was acquired. Then it

was acquired by the City in a clean-up program of tenements.³⁹ A swimming pool and bathhouse have been built on the site.

In addition to the specific recommendations concerning new park facilities mentioned before, specific studies were made of the development of Memorial and Washington Parks.

The Memorial Park Plan has been developed exactly as proposed in the Plan, with two notable exceptions:

1. The broad curving intersection of Copper Street and Copia Street.
2. The football stadium and track facility east of Copia Street.

The intersection of Copper and Copia was not developed as proposed and the limited visibility intersection noted by the Plan if such an intersection design were not followed is now existent and evident at the intersection. The football stadium, track, and grandstand have not been developed. With the change of transportation modes such a facility at this location would be unfeasible because of lack of parking facilities. The area has been developed instead into community rose gardens, parking facilities, and a baseball diamond.

³⁹City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1952, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1952), p. 2.

The Washington Park Plan has not been followed for reasons which limited the expansion of the facility as mentioned earlier. The extension of the park to Pera Street as recommended in the Washington Park Plan of Development portion of the Kessler Plan was accomplished.

Two of the parks owned by the City at the time of the Plan have been vacated or altered. The sixty-acre Roosevelt Park was vacated due to the expansion of Fort Bliss, which covered the entire neighborhood that it was to service. The platted area surrounding it and the park were never developed.

In 1949 the City, with Planning Commission approval, exchanged Davis Park for lands to the north of it belonging to the College of Mines. This was to make possible a more logical expansion of the college site. While there was some difference in value of the Davis Park land and the land acquired north of the college, the commission suggested

. . . that the College has other lands where the City sometimes needs right-of-way or land for other purposes, which should be kept in mind, so that the difference in value between Davis Park and the less valuable land to be acquired might be made more nearly equal.⁴⁰

At the time of the exchange the land was undeveloped.

The remainder of park properties purchased by the

⁴⁰ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 8.

City of El Paso are not specifically covered by the Plan. In most cases they should be covered in the County Plans, the formulation of which was proposed by the Kessler Plan.

The park program appears to have been adequate for the population. The proposals in the Plan were followed. Several sites have not been fully developed as proposed. Where this has occurred the functions of the park were of a specialized nature, such as the case of Davis Park with its bridle trails, paths, etc., or else the park was replaced by one of similar size in the immediate vicinity, as in the case of Central Park. The development of McKelligan Canyon and Ascarate Park in the county by W.P.A. help and funds are notable accomplishments. No new sites have been purchased that were not projected by the Plan, other than those sites that would have been in the County Plan proposed by Mr. Kessler. The parkways projected by the Plan appear to have been a daydream rather than a reality.

CIVIC CENTER⁴¹

The Kessler Plan proposed the use of three additional blocks and a part of a fourth block for a civic center in addition to the county courthouse block and the triangle then used for the city hall.

⁴¹See Figure VII.

Mr. Kessler postulated in 1925 that the then present city hall was inadequate for the then present needs. He also indicated that there was a need for a new Federal building. A museum and an art gallery were also indicated as needs for the future. It was further noted that the courthouse was without proper setting. With the demolishing of the then present city hall and with the restoration of that property to a city park, the courthouse would be in a very favorable setting.⁴²

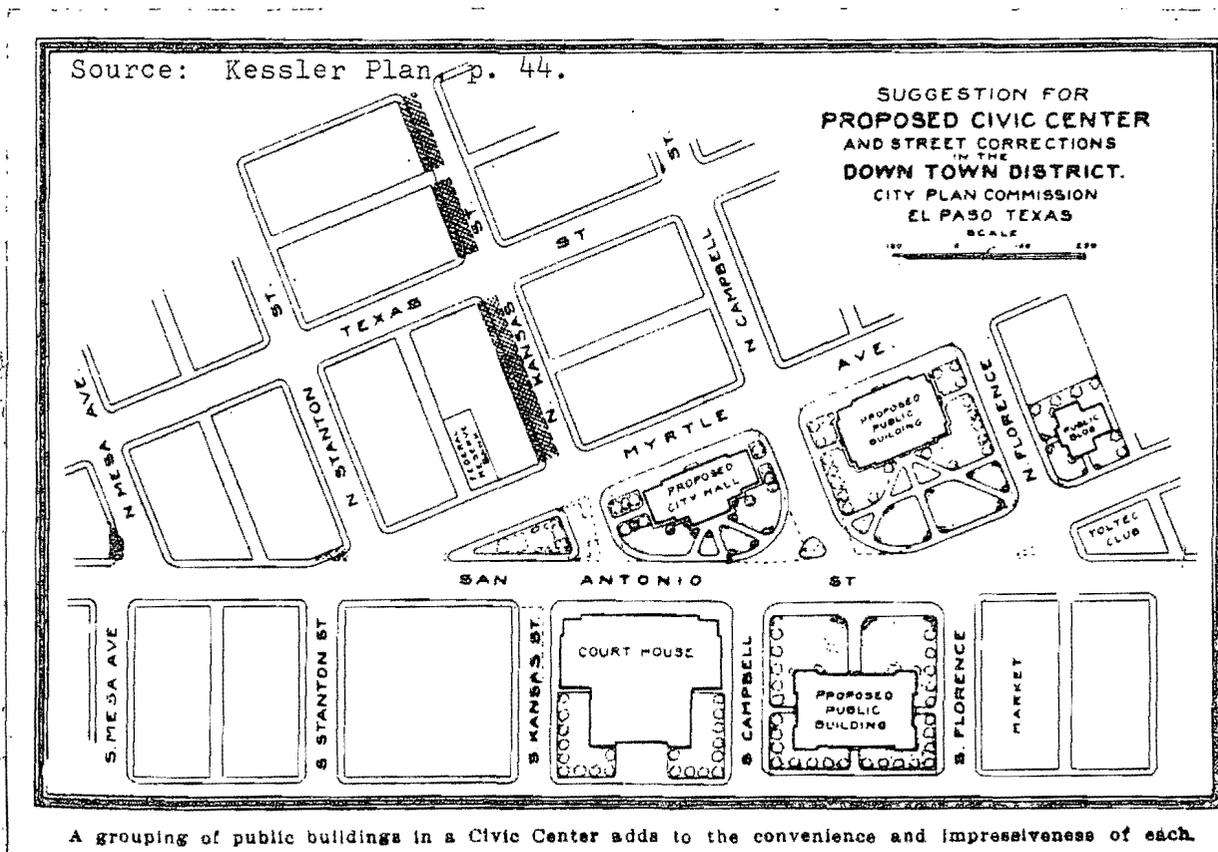


FIGURE VII

⁴²Kessler, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

The Robertson Committee in 1928 recommended that \$50,000 be spent for an addition to the then present city hall for some remodeling of its interior and for repairs to the Marr homestead which was proposed to be used by the health department. The water department was proposed to be in the new addition. It was the conclusion of the committee that these alterations would serve for several years until funds were available for construction of a building worthy of city offices. It was the opinion of the committee that other items in their capital budgeting program were more important for the then near future.⁴³

In 1949 the Planning Commission, in its recommendations to the city council, noted that a new city hall would be imperative as the present building was entirely inadequate for the operation of city affairs. By this time the Federal Courthouse had been constructed on the site originally proposed in the Kessler Plan for the city hall. The Commission proposed construction of the city hall on a site using the block east of the present county courthouse.⁴⁴

In 1950 further steps toward a new city hall were taken by the Planning Commission, with a recommendation that studies be made immediately for the selection and acquisition

⁴³ Robertson, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁴ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 9.

of a site and the programming of a building. It was noted that the water and sewage departments were in rented quarters; that the police and health departments were in old, unattractive, and overcrowded quarters; that the park department was located three miles from the city hall; and that the purchasing agent was located at the airport in order to get enough office space.⁴⁵

In 1951 the Commission further noted that the engineering department was then in quarters miles from the city offices and other city departments. The personnel department was in a building along with the city shops and water department warehouse. The council chamber was far from being adequate for the city hearings. In its 18' x 40' room only thirty people could be seated in permanent seats. Any overflow would have to stand.

The Planning Commission recommended that the block east of the county courthouse be purchased as the location of a new city hall and new health and police buildings, with the remainder of the block to be used for parking. The property on which the old police and health buildings were located would then be retained for parking.⁴⁶

In 1952 the Commission proposed that the council

⁴⁵ Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁶ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 12.

purchase the block east of the courthouse and initiate construction for buildings to house the health and police departments, and begin drawing up plans for the new city hall.⁴⁷

In 1953 the removal of the license department from the city hall allowed other departments in that building to expand. It was noted that should closer integration be made between the city and the county, the site east of the county courthouse would be ideal for the new city hall. An underground connection could be made under Campbell Street.⁴⁸

In 1957 the consolidation of city and county offices in the county courthouse with the remodeling and enlarging of that structure was proposed.

In 1959 the new combined structure was opened but there was still not enough room to handle all of the growing city departments. There are departments continuing to rent space outside of this municipal building. The enlargement of the courthouse into a county-city building has not solved the problem. It appears that the prediction of need for a new municipal building in a civic center in the area east of the courthouse is still a very present need.

Although no specific reference is made as to the

⁴⁷Annual Progress Report 1952, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴⁸Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 7.

contents of the structures in the civic center, it is assumed that Mr. Kessler, by inference in his report, intended to have the museum and art gallery in this complex. Also, a library may have been included as well. The buildings included in his sketch were sufficient for the uses. At the time of the study, the Federal Reserve Bank was located on Myrtle Avenue across from the city hall.

Listed as one of the big plans for the more distant future, a great municipal museum and art gallery was suggested by Mr. Kessler as a need of the City which would become increasingly pressing as time went on. The Plan indicated that a cost from \$500,000 upward should be regarded by farsighted El Paso-ans as a necessary development of the years. It was further suggested that a museum and art gallery might be a part of the civic center.

A large, fine residence with a block of ground surrounding it was acquired and is currently utilized as the International Museum. Primarily to house a group of valuable paintings offered to the City by the Kress family if the City would provide suitable fireproof quarters, the citizens of El Paso voted a bond issue in 1958 to cover construction of two new fireproof wings to be constructed adjoining the two sides of the present International Museum. Funds of \$725,000 were devoted to this construction to be performed in the

1959-60 budget year. It appears that El Paso citizens did see the construction of suitable quarters for a museum and art gallery as predicted in the Plan, but not as a part of the civic center.

Recently the new library was completed on a site directly in front of the old library building on Oregon Street. In 1958 the Federal Reserve Bank moved into new quarters in the half-block bounded by Main Street, the trainway, and Stanton and Campbell Streets. It appears that in the near future none of these uses sometimes associated with a civic center will be a part of the complex of buildings housing the seats of government.

CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS TO THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLETING THE PLAN PROPOSALS

Chapters III and IV discussed the physical adequacy or inadequacy of the thoroughfare proposals and community facilities proposals of the Kessler Plan. Chapter V discusses the remaining proposals of the Plan which did not fit into either of the two previous categories. Together these three chapters test the historical experience of El Paso with the physical plans proposed by the Kessler Plan. The collective results of the three chapters should give an indication as to how the physical plans have met the needs of the population living within El Paso. A series of conclusions will be included at the end of Chapter V in order to assemble in one place the results of the test of historical experience which is discussed in these three chapters.

THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Kessler Plan indicated that congestion in the downtown district was apparent as early as 1925. One of the causes of this congestion was indicated as being the bad

articulation of streets along San Antonio Street. The proposals to ease this situation included obtaining an easement in the Feder Building for the sidewalk on Mesa Street, south of San Antonio Street, and bringing the curb line of Mesa Street next to the building at this intersection, and removing part of an old building which projected out at the northwest corner of Myrtle Avenue and Stanton Street, thus extending the north line of Myrtle Avenue to San Antonio Street. It was further noted that Kansas Street and Campbell Street could be straightened out at their intersections with San Antonio Street with the construction of a new civic center which, incidentally, was also proposed in the Kessler Plan. It was also recommended that Kansas Street between Myrtle Avenue and Mills Street be widened.¹

The railroad grade crossings on the north side of the central business district were also referred to as one of the projects for correction in the central business district. This subject is covered in the portion of this chapter entitled "Railroad Grade Crossings."²

In 1928 the Robertson Committee proposed in its ten-year budget \$25,000 to straighten out the San Antonio Street-Myrtle Avenue intersection as proposed in the Plan, and

¹Kessler, op. cit., p. 27.

²See page 82.

\$75,000 to purchase the property at the northwest corner of Mesa Avenue and San Antonio Streets to correct the intersection and to continue the building line at its normal course along the west side of Mesa Avenue.³ In 1942 the northwest corner of Mesa Avenue and San Antonio Street was purchased for a new building belonging to Lerner Stores. The City negotiated to have the building set back twelve feet to the normal building line on Mesa Avenue and to have the corner at this intersection rounded on a six-foot radius. The cost of \$13,500 was borne by the City and by assessment for benefit of neighboring property. The City's portion was \$4,000.⁴ While this improvement helped a poor intersection situation, it did not solve the problem. To date this intersection is still a problem.

In spite of Mr. Kessler's prognostication that the buildings on the northwest corner of Myrtle Avenue and San Antonio Street were "old and will naturally be replaced in a few years,"⁵ the buildings still exist and no correction has been made at this intersection. As a result of this poor intersection and of the turning of the Juarez Street

³ Robertson, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴ City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1942, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1942), p. 6.

⁵ Kessler, op. cit., p. 27.

streetcar onto South Stanton Street from San Antonio Street, eastbound one-way traffic on San Antonio Street tends to congest at the intersection.

During the preparation of the 1925 Kessler Plan and as a result of Mr. Kessler's recommendation, South Kansas Street was widened to its full width just west of the courthouse prior to which several buildings facing on San Antonio Street had prevented the widening of the street. It was further proposed in the Plan that the area now occupied by the city hall be converted into a park and the jog in Kansas Street be straightened out.⁶ This is still a proposal of the City Planning Department.

In 1931 an announcement in the papers of a new building to be constructed which would be on part of the area to be widened on North Kansas Street brought about immediate consideration of this project. Construction of the proposed building was abandoned, however, and immediate action was not necessary.⁷ This project was not discussed again until 1943 when the Planning Commission, in reviewing the Kessler Plan, again referred the project to the City Council.⁸ In 1947 action was taken and Kansas Street was increased from

⁶Ibid.

⁷Annual Progress Report 1931, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁸Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 10.

forty to sixty feet in width between Mills Street and Myrtle Avenue.⁹ Having been converted to the only north and south one-way streets, Kansas Street and Campbell Street now carry a large amount of traffic. There is congestion on Kansas Street at Myrtle Avenue because of the narrow width of Kansas Street between Myrtle Avenue and San Antonio Street. This congestion would reach much larger proportions had the widening not taken place.

As a whole the proposals for rearticulation of intersections and widening of streets in the downtown area have met with little success. Where accomplished the benefits have been noted; where not accomplished present day traffic congestion indicates the accuracy of the prediction for the needed change.

THE FIVE POINTS DISTRICT

The Plan indicated that the Five Points District was the most important of the secondary business districts and that it would most likely retain its pre-eminence. It was noted that none of the streets then carrying the heavy east-west traffic of the district, especially Montana Street and Yandell Boulevard, crossed directly over Piedras Street, causing a very bad traffic situation. With the exception

⁹Annual Progress Report 1947, op. cit., p. 2.

of Pershing Drive it was further noted that a direct continuation of these thoroughfares was impracticable because of expensive improvements. It was noted that the acutely angled southwest corner of Yandell Boulevard and Piedras Street had no improvements on it, which would make it possible to cut back this corner. The Plan further noted that at Elm Street and Grant Avenue there was a small triangle occupying half the normal width of Portland Street and that this triangle, which is the only unrestricted parcel in a neighborhood otherwise restricted to residential purposes only, could well have a destiny of being used as a service station, store, or similar business place detrimental to the neighborhood and the adjacent school.¹⁰

Specifically, the Plan proposed that the following actions be taken in the Five Points District:

1. Make a considerable cut at the southeast corner of Montana Street and Piedras Street across the Masonic Hospital without interfering with the hospital proper to ease the flow of east-west bound traffic on Montana Street.
2. Cut off the southeast corner of Pershing Drive and Piedras Street.
3. Acquire the triangle bounded by Montana, Piedras, and Cedar Streets to develop as a plaza to stabilize this

¹⁰Kessler, op. cit., p. 28.

location as the center of the Five Points District, much as the plazas do in the downtown El Paso district.

4. Make a connection for Douglas Avenue to Piedras Street to relieve Pershing Drive traffic at some future date.

5. Cut back the southwest corner of Yandell Boulevard and Piedras Street for easier traffic flow.

6. Acquire the triangle of land bounded by Grant Avenue, Elm Street, and Portland Avenue for future widening of Portland Avenue.¹¹

At the time of the Plan the Carlsbad Highway was only a suggestion of the Plan and nowhere near a reality. Montana Street east of Piedras Street carried only local traffic. With the designation of Montana Street as the entrance for this new highway and with the new location of the airport also being served by Montana Street, it soon appeared that the problems indicated in the Plan would be even more complex than anticipated. By 1928 the Wyoming-Hueco thoroughfare was proposed to take the through traffic of the Almagordo Highway out of the heart of the Five Points District and route it more conveniently around the district. It was estimated that at that time the Wyoming-Hueco opening would cost approximately \$100,000.¹² No action was taken

¹¹Ibid., pp. 66-67.

¹²Robertson, op. cit., p. 19.

on this opening, however, and in the twenty years that lapsed from 1928 to 1948 expensive improvements had been allowed to encroach upon this right-of-way to the point that such a proposal would have been impractical.¹³

No action was taken concerning the hospital property until it was sold to Sears Roebuck and Company for the erection of a new store. In 1946 before the construction of the Sears store, the Planning Commission proposed a building line ten feet back on the east side of Piedras Street for all new construction in the area affected by the half-block jog of Montana Street. This plan was adopted by the City Council. Sears objected to this plan unless the City were to widen Piedras Street for one block in either direction from their store. This would have made a prohibitive cost and the City Council rescinded its action on the building line. Construction of the new Sears store closed forever the opportunity to make an improvement at this point of congestion at a nominal cost.¹⁴ In 1947 the roadway on Montana Street east of Piedras Street was widened from forty feet to fifty feet to try to improve the traffic

¹³City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1948, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1948), p. 2.

¹⁴City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1946, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1946), p. 3.

problem at this corner.¹⁵ The introduction to use of a one-way street couplet west of Piedras Street using Yandell Boulevard for eastbound traffic has further helped to alleviate traffic problems at this corner. With all of the various other improvements in the Five Points District designed to divert congestion from the District and from Montana Street and Piedras Street in particular, this intersection is still a major problem. \$516,000 has been budgeted for expenditure in the 1962-63 budget year for the rectification of this intersection. This project will include removal of business property west of Piedras Street to project Montana Street across Piedras Street at a right angle. This most likely will not eliminate all of the problems of eastbound traffic trying to turn east off Piedras Street on to Montana Street.¹⁶ The elimination of this problem was precluded when the City backed down on the building line proposed in front of Sears in 1946. The cost of correcting the articulation of Montana Street west of Piedras Street will be over five times the cost of the original proposal for the opening of the Wyoming-Hueco thoroughfare, which would have carried all through traffic out of the Five Points District.

¹⁵Annual Progress Report 1947, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁶Capital Improvements Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 37.

In 1958 the southeast corner of Pershing Drive and Piedras Street was corrected as proposed in the Plan. In addition, with the introduction of one-way streets on Montana Street and Yandell Boulevard and with the opening of Pershing Drive to Montana Street at Poplar Street to permit Pershing Drive traffic to avoid the congestion on Piedras Street, the congestion at this intersection has been considerably reduced.

The triangle bounded by Montana, Piedras and Cedar Streets has not yet been acquired for the purpose of making a plaza to stabilize the center of the Five Points District. A small plaza has been created at the intersection of Yandell Boulevard and Piedras Street as a result of the reorientation of Yandell Boulevard to cross Piedras Street at a right angle and connect with Alamagordo Street east of Piedras Street.

It was not until 1952, after a similar project was accomplished at Wyoming and Piedras Streets, that the southwest corner of Yandell Boulevard and Piedras Street was cut back as proposed in the Plan. At that time Yandell Boulevard was turned into Alamagordo Street to make a right angle connection across Piedras Street. The triangle formed by this rearticulation was converted into a small plaza as previously indicated. In 1953 the Planning Commission proposed that

this triangle be converted to a bus transfer point and waiting room with rest rooms and concessions.¹⁷ No further action has been taken toward construction of any structures within this triangle.

The triangle of property at Grant Avenue, Elm Street, and Portland Avenue was not acquired and, as predicted prior to the passage of necessary legislation to control the use of property through zoning, a service station was located within the triangle. The property is not now used as a service station but another commercial venture is still located within the triangle.

The predictions of the Plan have come to pass concerning the problems in the Five Points district. The City allowed the opportunity to correct the Montana Street-Piedras Street intersection to pass by and are now paying the price for this error. Most of the other proposals for this district have been accomplished in the past few years. There is, however, no park nor plaza in this district as proposed.

THE SYMMETRICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

One of the larger and more pressing problems noted in the Kessler Plan was the encouragement of symmetrical

¹⁷Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 6.

growth of the community. The area west of Mount Franklin had not developed correspondingly to development which had already taken place to the east and northeast. Mr. Kessler recommended that such development be pushed by the cooperation of city and county governments as well as by private enterprise.¹⁸ Although this area has not developed entirely as materially as the other areas, the development has tended to concentrate on more expensive housing. The widening of Mesa Avenue to Brentwood Avenue and the extension of Stanton Street north of Baltimore Avenue has helped to encourage growth in this area west of Mount Franklin. The growth of Crestmont Addition and Coronado Hills Addition and the development of a new country club in this area will further encourage growth. The widening of Mesa Avenue from Brentwood Avenue to the Crossroads should have a great affect on the area. It appears that although most of this growth has occurred in the last decade, it does follow the recommendations of the original Plan.

The symmetrical development encouraged so strongly in the Plan has finally started to come about as the population reaches the figure predicted in the Plan. The projections and provisions for this development appear to be adequate.

¹⁸Kessler, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

RAILROAD GRADE CROSSINGS

During the Kessler Plan survey period grade separations were non-existent in El Paso. Removing the surface railroad tracks from the heart of town was a project listed as one of the larger present and pressing problems for the community.¹⁹ The Plan specifically recommended that grade crossings should ultimately be eliminated from all intersections with streets designated in the Plan as main thoroughfares, and that classification yards and tracks not necessary for local service should be removed from the center of town.²⁰ Appendix C indicates the crossings which were covered in Mr. Kessler's proposal. As a result of Mr. Kessler's persevering insistence Copia Street was opened across the El Paso Southwestern Railroad track as a grade separation instead of grade crossing. The opening occurred during the survey period of the Plan.

Other than the goals for grade separation and switch yard removal noted in Appendix C, no specific recommendations were made concerning this problem. The Plan report did go into detail to offer suggested solutions. The abandonment of the present classification yards, and the spread of trackage from the west side of Cordova Island through South

¹⁹Kessler, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰Ibid., p. 33.

El Paso to serve a manufacturing district were suggested. A main line track elevation through the south side at about 2nd Street was proposed to allow auto and pedestrian traffic to flow freely to the bridges. This would reorient the trackage at the Union Station.

Also suggested was the rerouting of Southern Pacific Railroad trains using the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks from a point north of Fort Bliss along a line east of Fort Bliss to a junction with the Gulf, Houston, and San Antonio Railroad tracks at Alfalfa. The classification yards could then be located at Alfalfa on property already owned by the railroad. This would make the maintenance of two right-of-ways through the heart of town unnecessary. With the El Paso Southwestern Railroad line abandoned, the old right-of-way could be used for a boulevard with few cross streets to serve the northeast area. Railroad grade separations could be enlarged and used as automobile traffic separators.²¹

In 1927 the railroads submitted a plan for street underpasses which the City found unacceptable. A city planning consultant specializing in railroad problems, Mr. W. D. Hudson, was engaged and plans for a track depression in the alley between Main Street and Franklin Street were proposed.

²¹Ibid.

Relocation plans for the railroad yards and shop proposed by Kessler were rejected by the railroads as being too costly.²² Developments at Fort Bliss made the abandoning of the El Paso Southwestern Railroad right-of-way as proposed by Kessler difficult.

The Altura Boulevard undercrossing of the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks was proposed as a project of primary importance for the expenditure of capital funds in the 1928 Robertson Committee report. Altura Boulevard was a part of the inner circle of boulevards proposed by Mr. Kessler.²³

In 1935 the availability of \$200,000,000²⁴ for grade crossings called the attention of the Planning Commission to the grade crossing situation in El Paso. Suggestions were first made that the Federal government should be asked to build one or more underpasses in the downtown area. Agreement could not be reached on consolidating all of the tracks on Main Street for an undercrossing. An under- or overcrossing of the tracks in the alley between Main Street and Franklin Street would be impossible because of the topographic problems of connecting such a crossing in grade

²²Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

²³Robertson, op. cit., p. 18.

²⁴City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1935, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1935), p. 8.

with Franklin Street. The railroads, because of the economic depression condition, were in no condition to be persuaded to move tracks. The Commission decided to press for possible underpasses outside of the central district.

Proposed for separation were:

1. Dyer Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.

2. Wyoming Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.

3. Montana Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.

4. Piedras Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.

5. Copia Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.

Dyer Street had been decided on by the Commission for the major thoroughfare for the Alamagordo Highway instead of Marr Street one block to the west. This eliminated the diagonal intersections at Tomkins Way. As a result of this 1935 list, the Dyer Street undercrossing was built.²⁵ In 1937 it was generally agreed that Wyoming Street should be the location for the next construction of a new separation. There was dissenting opinion for a downtown overcrossing

²⁵Ibid., pp. 8-9.

instead, so unanimity of the Commission was beginning to break down at this point. After a thorough discussion it was decided that track depression was the solution to the downtown crossings. Such a project had the disadvantage that it could not be done in small units over a period of years but would have to be done as a whole project between Campbell Street and the Union Station. The Commission agreed that the depressed trainway project would be its goal for the railroad problem in the downtown area. It was further agreed that it would be short sighted to adopt an inferior plan for immediate expediency.²⁶

In 1942 the Commission reviewed its program and decided that the 1937 track depression plan was the best solution to the downtown grade crossing problem and recommended that it be one of the first post-war projects undertaken. The Commission recommended that the Southern Pacific Railroad Company be requested to get plans for such a project in shape so that work could be started quickly as soon as the war was over and financing could be arranged.²⁷

Also recommended by the Commission in 1942 was the underpass at Piedras Street across the Texas and New Orleans

²⁶City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1937, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1937), p. 2.

²⁷Annual Progress Report 1942, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

Railroad tracks, a viaduct at Octavia Street over the Southern Pacific Railroad yards, and a viaduct or underpass over the Southern Pacific Railroad yards at Cotton Street. Octavia Street paralleled the Ange Street crossing proposed in the Kessler Plan and was one block east of it.²⁸

In 1944 the Texas Highway Department proposed a Preliminary Plan of Street and Highway Development for El Paso and vicinity. Mr. Jac L. Gubbels, Director of Urban Planning for the Highway Department, prepared the report and proposed the expenditure of \$5,599,840 exclusive of right-of-way acquisition and property damage funds for the project. In his report Mr. Gubbels made the statement that the growth of El Paso's central business district had been to the north and the northeast but that the tracks had been a definite barrier for further growth in that direction. As a result of this growth, the southern portion of the retail area had begun to become blighted. Mr. Gubbels thought that the removal of the track barrier would extend the growth of the retail area across the tracks and result in even more blight in the southern portion. He indicated that in his opinion the elimination of the rail barrier would by no means facilitate a loosening up of the then present traffic congestion,

²⁸

Ibid., p. 5.

since the retail center was, in itself, a definite barrier to good traffic flow.

He proposed, as an alternative to the track depression plan, a plan that he felt would "restore good traffic flow, retain and restore real estate values, prevent blight, give convenient access to all parts of the City, and cost much less in the long run than the depressing and elevating of the tracks."²⁹ The alternative plan involved the construction of a street belt one hundred twenty feet wide traversing the central business district in a circuitous pattern along Missouri Street, Santa Fe Street, Overland Street, and Campbell Street, with underpasses crossing the tracks at Santa Fe and Campbell Streets. It was determined that the plan adopted for highways in this year would affect the road programs for years to come to the viewpoint of the Commission should be broad with no avoidable mistakes, with costs taken into consideration.

Mr. Gubbels' plan concerning the downtown grade separation met with little favor, but the Commission agreed that a proposal from such a reputable source should not be dismissed without careful consideration of its merits. The Commission noted that the tracks had undoubtedly kept the main business district south of Main Street, but there had

²⁹City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1944, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1944), p. 2.

been a growth of small business north of the tracks continuing as an extension of the main retail center. They theorized that the policy of leaving the tracks as a barrier, encouraging traffic to use Santa Fe and Campbell Streets, and blocking Franklin Street, as would be the case with the proposed underpasses, could develop a separate business district north of the tracks. They concluded that this would be more menacing to the stability of the then present central core because of the advantage of the majority of the purchasing power coming from north of the tracks. A district on the north side of the tracks had a competitive advantage over a central core south of the tracks. The tracks as a barrier would then tend to keep traffic north of the tracks rather than south. The noise, unsightliness, delays, and danger would still remain on the major crossings. The Commission further concluded that it would prefer the gradual growth northward of the central area to the development of two competing central cores separated by a rail barrier. The Commission further noted that the \$900,000 that Mr. Gubbels had allowed in his estimate for construction of the Campbell Street and Santa Fe Street underpasses would be a substantial contribution toward a complete solution. The track depression plan adopted in 1937 was estimated to cost \$3,000,000, of which the railroad would bear the major part. It was the

conclusion of the Commission that if the two underpasses proposed by Mr. Gubbels were constructed, there would in time be demand for other underpasses, so that the final expense would approximate that of the track depression plan with a much inferior result. As a result of this thinking, the Commission recommended that

. . . the solution of the downtown grade crossing problem should be first in importance in the highway program and no plan inferior to the track depression plan of 1937 should be considered as satisfactory.³⁰

Such a firm stand on principles began to bear fruit in 1946 when the Southern Pacific Railroad promised to consider the track depression plan. The State Highway Department indicated a willingness to participate in the cost of the track depression project notwithstanding the report of Mr. Gubbels.

The firm of DeLeuw, Cather and Company was employed to evaluate the plans proposed. A pit and bearing test was taken and the soil showed ideal conditions for the depressed track construction should that plan be adopted.³¹

By 1947 the definite agreements had been reached by the railroad, the City, and the State Highway Department for the traffic depression plan proposed in 1937. Plans and specifications were well advanced and construction was

³⁰Ibid., pp. 1-3.

³¹Annual Progress Report 1946, op. cit., p. 2.

projected to begin in the fall.³² In 1951 the depressed trainway for which the Commission had worked for twenty-five years was completed and in operation. In connection with the downtown trainway contract, an overpass at Cotton Street over the Southern Pacific Railroad yards was also constructed. This was another crossing recommended in the Kessler Plan.³³

In 1949 the Commission listed in priority for separations the following grade crossings outside of the central business district:

1. Piedras Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
2. Cotton Street across the Texas and Pacific Railroad yards.
3. Boone Avenue across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
4. Copia Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.³⁴

In 1950 Hawkins Way across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks, North Loop Road across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks, and Piedras Street across the El

³²Annual Progress Report 1947, op. cit., p. 3.

³³Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁴Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 6.

Paso Southwestern tracks were added to the grade crossing list.³⁵

The 1959 capital improvements budget includes funds for construction of the following grade separations:

1. North Loop Road across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
2. Copia Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
3. Fred Wilson Road across the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks.
4. Hawkins Way across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
5. Montana Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
6. Piedras Street across the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
7. Piedras Street across the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks.
8. Yandell Boulevard across the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks.³⁶

Assuming that funds are spent for the above

³⁵ Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁶ Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., pp. 21-24.

separations, approximately twenty of the original forty proposed grade separations will have been accomplished, or a record of fifty per cent. In addition to those proposed, construction of Paisano Drive has created two additional grade separations including one at the south of the Union terminal which Mr. Kessler proposed for a possible grade crossing on a relief route to avoid climbing the grade at West Main Street.

According to a public statement by Mr. J. L. Long, Southern Pacific Railroad superintendent, published in August, 1958,³⁷ there are still sixteen daily trains passing through El Paso in addition to non-daily movements and local within-the-community movements which would tend to emphasize Mr. Kessler's prediction of the importance of the community for rail traffic.

With fifty per cent of the grade separations proposed in the Kessler Plan accomplished or programmed for construction, and the majority of the remaining crossings either abandoned because of their thoroughfares being abandoned or still under consideration for separations, it would appear that the predictions concerning the need for grade separations were adequate and the Plan was thus adequate in this matter. In addition, after careful study and considerable tenacity

³⁷ Article by Janet Archibald, The El Paso [Texas] Herald-Post, August 19, 1959.

in upholding the proposals of the Plan, the complete ^Aelimination of the railroad hazards in the central business district was accomplished with the construction of the Bataan Trainway rather than through piecemeal crossing-by-crossing solution.

AVIATION PROJECTS

Aviation was given some attention in the Plan although aviation was far from the advanced position to which it has now developed. In a far-sighted statement Mr. Kessler said:

The city builders of the past are criticized for not foreseeing and providing better for the traffic condition of today. If we do not take note of the rapid growth of aviation and make some provisions for it we lay ourselves open to the same criticism.³⁸

The Kessler Plan proposed that the upper part of the water works property west of the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks be set aside for aviation purposes when needed. If the golf links were rearranged they could be moved in order to allow a "flying field" or the field could be placed in a larger area east of the tracks. Since the Plan both the golf course and the area east of the tracks have been acquired for use as a portion of Fort Bliss.³⁹

Three years after the completion of the Plan the Robertson Committee indicated their belief in the growth of air transport. Funds for construction of an administration

³⁸Kessler, op. cit., p. 43.

³⁹Ibid.

building and a hanger were proposed by the committee as a part of their study on capital expenditure budgeting.⁴⁰

In 1928 when the time came to establish an airport, the golf course site was entirely inadequate for an airport and the larger space east of the tracks was used for airport purposes as proposed. This was soon enlarged and outgrown and the airport was moved to its present location to get further from the mountains and to consolidate the American Airlines facilities and the city facilities into one modern unit.⁴¹

In 1937 a new municipal airport administration building was given top priority for W.P.A. moneys and construction of this unit was undertaken. The modern unit proposed earlier was constructed.⁴²

By 1942 the Commission prophesied that the end of the war would release great numbers of aircraft, manufacturing facilities for aircraft, and trained pilots, so that an expansion of air transport could be expected and increased facilities at the municipal airport would be needed.⁴³ Prior

⁴⁰Robertson, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴¹Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴²Annual Progress Report 1937, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴³Annual Progress Report 1942, op. cit., p. 6.

to this easements were acquired from Fort Bliss to expand the airport, and by 1943 plans were under way to acquire additional easements for a large terminal plant.⁴⁴

Through these years the City had acquired land in nine different grants east and south of the air facility for the enlargement of the airport and for airport purposes. The latter was construed by the city attorney to mean the sale or lease of such lands with proceeds devoted to permanent airport improvements. Portions of the grants were designed, planned, sold, and leased for an industrial park, tourist facilities, and a subdivision for homes, schools, parks, and shopping centers. The proceeds of these actions were placed in airport improvement funds.

In 1958 some of these funds, along with a bond issue voted by the populace, marked the beginning of intensive large-scale improvements of the municipal airport facilities. Additional improvements are projected in the 1959-1965 capital improvement program to be financed from funds obtained from airport operations.⁴⁵

Though George Kessler had the foresight to make some provisions for the growth of aviation, it is doubted that he could possibly have foreseen the magnitude to which it

⁴⁴Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁵Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., pp. 10-13.

has grown during the period of time in which his population increases became realities. The farsightedness of the Plan in regard to aviation projects is to be particularly noted. The airport was located in the area proposed. The area has been enlarged and adequate facilities for today's needs and the project's future needs are in current existence. W.P.A. funds were used to construct the terminal and air strips, as a result of having the Plan prepared prior to the depression. The Plan has been adequate in theory and practicality in this area of need.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Concerning the public transportation system, the Plan stated:

El Paso is well-served by trolleys considering the changing conditions in this business due to the great number of private automobiles, the jitney and the automobile bus. There is no evidence that the trolley will be replaced and we must plan for its expansion as the City grows and more service is demanded.⁴⁶

This statement concerning the fact that the trolley would not be replaced was certainly an illustration of how changing times can make predictions incorrect. The use of the bus was then expanding according to the statement, but apparently the planner did not feel it was suitable for mass transportation. By 1943 the trolley had long since ceased

⁴⁶Kessler, op. cit., p. 51.

to be an expansion problem. Only three trolley lines remained in operation, and the remainder of the City was served by buses and private automobiles. The Planning Commission noted at this date the good fortune of the community in having three trolley lines left during those times of gas and tire shortages and rationing. It was noted even in 1943 that buses were growing larger and more numerous. Thoughts of the Planning Commission were then put toward having corners widened and cut back where the buses turned and improving the pavement where the buses stopped frequently. Also discussed were loading shelter and terminal facilities near the downtown plaza.⁴⁷

By 1953 the Commission had obtained a growing appreciation for the important place of public transportation in the traffic patterns of the City. It was deemed advisable to improve the transportation facilities rather than to provide downtown parking facilities for all of the automobiles that would come to the City center if mass transit were neglected. Cooperation of the City and the bus company was urged by the Commission in such matters as street improvements, loading facilities, and traffic regulations. It was pointed out that the Plaza, City Hall Park, and Five Points were places where facilities for the better handling of bus

⁴⁷Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 16.

traffic might be provided.⁴⁸ Specific plans for a bus loading facility with waiting rooms, rest rooms, and concessions were presented for the triangular park at Yandell Boulevard and Piedras Street in Five Points.⁴⁹

The reliance on the trolley as a lasting means of transport has invalidated the proposals of the Plan with respect to public transportation. The trolley was not "here to stay". Only the Juarez streetcar line remains.

REGULATED RIVER CHANNEL

Mr. Kessler proposed that the Rio Grande River be rechanneled with levees from the upper end of the El Paso Valley. By international agreement this would fix a location of the channel which would be maintained, thus stabilizing conditions in the valley to the extent that drainage improvements could be made with some assurance that they would be permanent and adequate. The straightening of the channel would cause a greater stream velocity and discourage the silting of the river bed. The Riverside Drive proposed in the Plan⁵⁰ would be located on one of the levees.⁵¹

⁴⁸Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁰See also Chapter III, "International Highway and Bridge.

⁵¹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 57-58.



By 1928 the proposal for straightening the Rio Grande was in the hands of the International Boundary Commission. This resulted in the straightening of the river channel from Cordova Island eastward. This reduced the flow problem, improved drainage, and reduced the mosquito problem in the lower valley.⁵²

The Rio Grande River between Cordova Island and the Mexican diversion dam has not been corrected in its course. A probable reason for this project not being accomplished is the Chamizal dispute discussed in Chapter III.⁵³

Thus, the provisions for a regulated river channel below Cordova Island have been accomplished as proposed in the Plan, to the benefit of both American and Mexican properties. The portions of the river between Cordova Island and the Mexican Diversion Dam have not been corrected in course to date. The theory is still a good one, however, and shows the adequacy of the Plan in this area of physical development.

URBAN RENEWAL

Although "urban renewal" as a term was not in common usage at the time of the Kessler Plan, as it is today, the

⁵²Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵³See Chapter III "International Highway and Bridge."

principles involved in urban renewal today were discussed thirty-four years ago in the Plan. Mr. Kessler indicated that Chihuahita, the area south of 2nd Street inhabited by a large percentage of Latin American inhabitants and including the "Chamizal" zone discussed in this paper with the bridge proposals, was "an eyesore, unhealthful, and a disgrace to the city."⁵⁴ He indicated that it could be made into a section of exotic charm and of special tourist interest. He further suggested that a large market place and outdoor fair be provided in this section, possibly as a part of the bridgehead improvement.⁵⁵

In 1935 the City Planning Commission reaffirmed Mr. Kessler's statements about the conditions of Chihuahita and extended the opinion that slum conditions not only existed there but in other southside districts as well. The Commission endorsed a proposal that the Federal government be requested to make a survey for the establishment of a slum clearance and low-cost housing project for the City. A housing survey was made by the city engineer's office in November and December, 1934. In the area under study only 933 of the 3,810 properties surveyed were satisfactory for habitation. Five depression years had reduced the area to

⁵⁴Kessler, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁵Ibid.

this condition. Families were moving across the tracks to a low-class area north of the south side slums and creating a new blighted area. As a result the United States Housing Authority built two low-cost housing projects, Alamito and Tuys Place, clearing some of the worst slums.⁵⁶

In 1943 the Planning Commission again surveyed the blight problems of the south side. It was their recommendation that with the return of peace and the end of the acute housing shortage, houses in the south side area which were unsanitary and unfit should be demolished or improved to meet higher standards. The Commission proposed that the housing code be amended to require more sanitary facilities for any living quarters. In this year also the Commission discussed the possibility of having legislation passed in Texas to facilitate the assembly and redevelopment of blighted areas by private or public corporations in order to perform neighborhood conservation and rehabilitation.⁵⁷

In 1951 the Commission centered its efforts on the renewal of an area in the vicinity of the Coliseum, including the abandoned city dump. This resulted in the improvement of the sewage disposal plant in the area to a full treatment plant, the erection of a Federal Housing Project, the extension

⁵⁶Annual Progress Report 1935, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

⁵⁷Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 20.

of the Coliseum facilities, and the construction of a new school and playground facility in the area.⁵⁸

In 1957 the Commission again reviewed the possibility of urban renewal under more current federal regulations. It was the recommendation of the Commission that such a study be continued. In view of the serious nature of the Urban Renewal Contract, the Commission did feel that a thorough study and careful preparation should be made to prevent premature or haphazard starts into such a program.⁵⁹

Although George Kessler visualized the improvement of urban slums, he could not be expected to propose, and he did not propose in the Plan, the methods of urban renewal and slum clearance which have occurred in the past three decades. It is noteworthy that the recommendation for housing improvement by a government project was proposed as a part of the Plan. Although several projects have occurred to clear Chihuahita of unhealthy living conditions, no efforts have been expended to change the area into one of exotic charm, open markets, outdoor fairs, etc., as recommended in the Plan. Instead it is an area of not too pleasant views to be hurriedly and unobservantly traversed in order to cross the bridges to Juarez. Again reference must be made to

⁵⁸Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁵⁹Annual Progress Report 1957, op. cit., p. 5.

the Chamizal which has prevented large amounts of governmental funds from being expended in the area.⁶⁰

ZONING

Zoning was not legal in Texas in 1925, but the Plan discussed its desirability and recommended that El Paso prepare a Zoning Ordinance as soon as there appeared to be a reasonable chance that it would be sustained by the courts. The reasons used to substantiate zoning were commonsense reasons such as:

A store or garage may destroy the desirability of a section for quiet residence, or a factory may change the character and destroy the values in a retail business district, or residences may depreciate an industrial district by cutting off room for expansion and bringing in inhabitants who may in time complain of the noise and dirt of factories, even though the factories may have been there first.⁶¹

The Plan went further to spread the "gospel" of the successful zoning program of other cities in the country.⁶²

A zoning plan⁶³ was prepared for the City which divided the community into three simple districts: residence, business, and industry. It was further indicated that the residence district could be divided into dwelling and

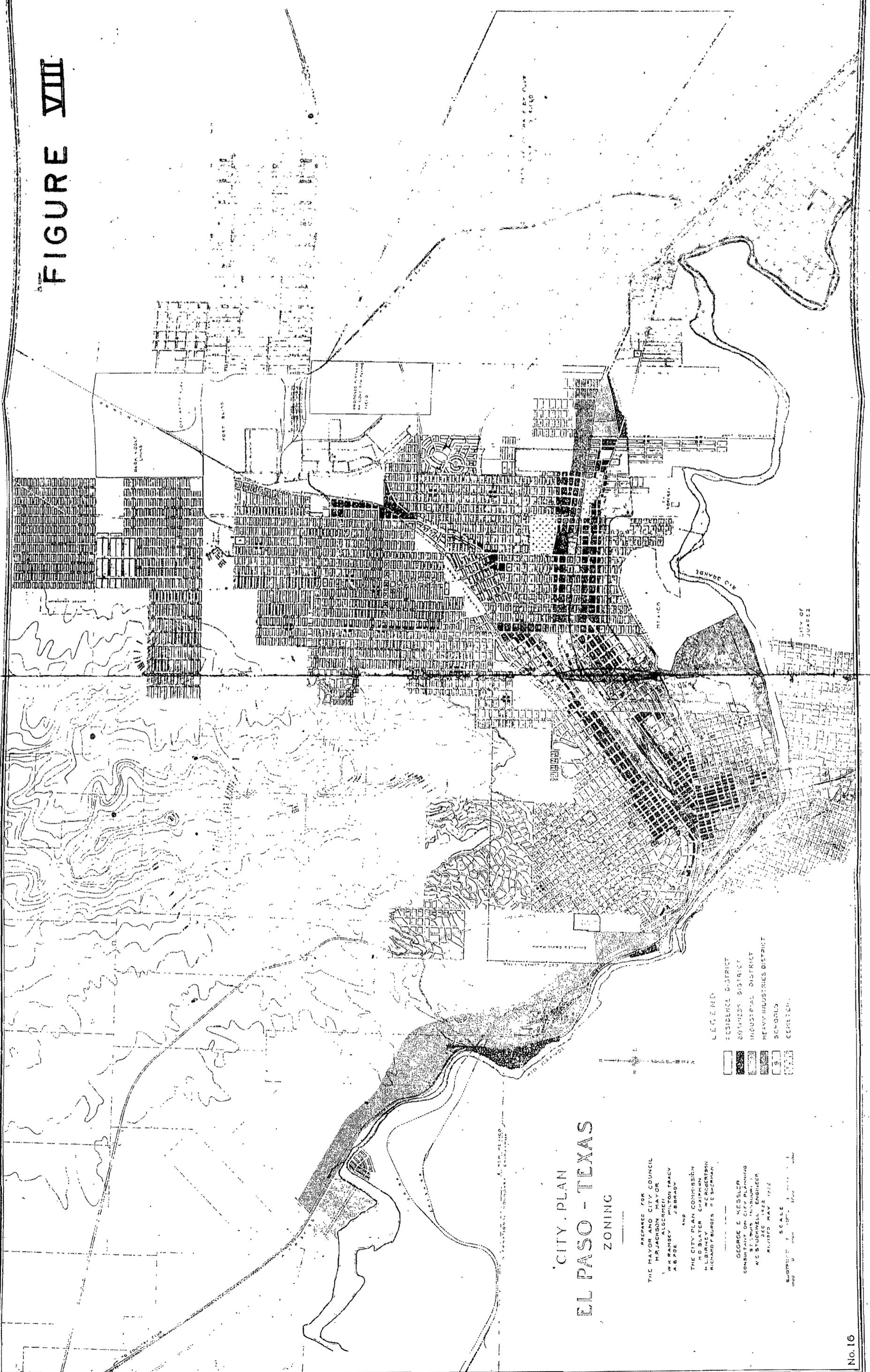
⁶⁰See Chapter III, "International Highway and Bridge."

⁶¹Kessler, op. cit., p. 58.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 58-60.

⁶³See Figure VIII.

FIGURE VIII



CITY PLAN
 EL PASO - TEXAS
 ZONING

PREPARED FOR
 THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
 MR. JACKSON MAYOR
 MR. ALGERMEN
 MR. W. K. RAMSEY
 MR. MILTON TRACY
 MR. A. B. POE
 MR. J. BRADY

AND
 THE CITY PLAN COMMISSION
 MR. D. SLATER CHAIRMAN
 MR. L. BRANLEY
 MR. W. C. ROBERTSON
 MR. RICHARD F. BURGES
 MR. R. E. SULLIVAN

GEORGE E. WESSLER
 CONSULTANT ON CITY PLANNING
 812 LAWYERS BUILDING
 400 B. B. BOYD BUILDING
 JEC 1012
 EL PASO, MAY 1922

SCALE
 1" = 1000'

- LEGEND
- RESIDENCE DISTRICT
 - BUSINESS DISTRICT
 - INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT
 - HEAVY INDUSTRIES DISTRICT
 - SCHOOLS
 - CEMETERIES

apartment districts. The Plan showed only one residence district, however. It was indicated that the Mexican custom of having small stores in the residential sections should not be further encouraged but that the existing stores, as non-conforming uses, would be sufficient for the population.⁶⁴

The business district would allow commercial, residential, and light manufacturing uses. It was indicated that local business districts should be provided at approximately half-mile intervals and wherever any considerable number of stores are already established.⁶⁵

The industrial districts would allow the uses permitted in the other zones but all other uses would be permitted with the exception of certain industries which gave off offensive odors, noises, or fumes. These uses were to be placed in an area designated as a heavy industrial district.⁶⁶

It was indicated that area regulations providing for certain minimum requirements of light and air be included in the regulations. The percentage of lot to be occupied should be specified, as well as minimum amounts of open space in

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 60-61.

front, side, and rear yards. Standards of housing in El Paso at the time of the Plan recognized that no apartment or tenement house could occupy more than ninety per cent of a corner lot or more than seventy per cent of other lots.⁶⁷

The zoning map classified the majority of the community as residential, with four corner clusters of business zones every one-half mile along thoroughfares or trolley lines, with strips of commercial along certain streets where such use was then existent. A three-block swath from Yandell Boulevard to the railroad yards running from the central business district to the Five Points District was also zoned for business. A similar swath followed Texas Street and Myrtle Street and continued east from Piedras Street along Alameda Avenue.⁶⁸

Most of the area along the railroad tracks was proposed for industrial districts, as was the area of South El Paso.⁶⁹

No ordinance was submitted with the Plan. The first zoning ordinance was passed in 1930 and apparently followed the proposals in the Plan.⁷⁰ In its review of the zoning

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁸ See Figure VIII.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 13.

situation in 1943, the Planning Commission noted that an over-optimism on the part of Mr. Kessler had resulted in over-zoning for business and industrial purposes. In this year they prepared a new zoning map, reducing the apartment, business, and residential districts and enlarging the residential districts. A new residential district was created making new construction spread out and not "overcrowd" the land. Front yard set backs were increased in the new zone from twenty feet to twenty-five feet. The minimum lot width was increased from $37\frac{1}{2}$ feet to 50 feet in the new zones. The annual reports swell with rezone cases and the extension files of the Board of Adjustment indicate the inadequacy of the zoning proposals.⁷¹

It must be recognized that the American way of life has changed with the development of the automobile. It is no longer necessary to have the "corner grocery within walking distance." The housewife now drives several miles to the supermarket. Efficient shopping facilities no longer prefer to string out along arterials or on four-corner locations, but prefer to have integrated centers with abundant off-street parking. Industry prefers large open areas with parking facilities for employees, not small lots with loft buildings. The residential design has changed to the extent

⁷¹Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 19.

that even fifty-foot lots are no longer adequate. These changes in our way of living make a zoning pattern as professed in the Plan an antiquated and useless one.

The fact that no land use or occupancy studies were made prior to the ordinance did not make the ordinance any more fitting to the realities and needs of the area. The technology of making these studies has progressed in the intervening years from the date of the Plan to the present.

The fact that a substantial number of court cases have been added to the repertoire of experience in this field, plus the fact that many of them have, by their decisions, completely changed the course of zoning policy throughout the nation, must also be taken into consideration when reviewing the zoning recommendations of the Plan.

Zoning was not legal in Texas at the time of the Plan. The Plan did, however, make certain zoning proposals which were to be put into effect at such time as it appeared that they would be sustained in the courts. The proposals in the Plan were simple. They were not adequate, however. The files of the Board of Adjustment and the rezones of the Planning Commission so indicate.

The zoning recommendations have not been adequate through the years and have not been a good tool of implementation of the Plan. While the other physical recommendations

have been adequate, this portion of the Plan was highly inadequate.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The test of the historical experience⁷² with the Plan to see if the physical plans for development of the community have met the needs of the population living within the community indicates:

1. The predictions of need by historical observation have been remarkable in their accuracy.
2. The projected physical plan of the community by historical observation has been remarkably adequate.
3. If the practical physical developments have not been accomplished as proposed in the Plan, they are either projected for construction or action, or they are theoretically properly located and are still items considered for future action.
4. The proposals for urban renewal, limited access highways, and highway and railroad grade separations usually associated with current planning were notable because of their presence in this Plan adopted as early as 1925.
5. The thoroughfare needs prediction and projections

⁷²This test covers items discussed in Chapters III, IV, and V.

were remarkable in their accuracy over the period of time from the adoption of the Plan to the present.

6. The Plan proposals for park, museum, and civic centers and other cultural centers have been adequate. The needs predicted have occurred and in most cases the projections of the Plan have been followed.

7. The predictions and plans concerning public transportation have been a complete failure due to the Plan's reliance on the fact that the trolley would be the prime means of transportation within the City. Historical evidence has disproved this prediction and the Plan projections in public transportation.

8. The zoning as generally proposed in the Plan was placed in effect some five years following the Plan. The increasing technology in the zoning field has invalidated much of the zoning reasoning used in the Plan and the zoning adopted became unwieldy and inadequate as a tool for implementing the Plan.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHYSICAL ADEQUACY OF THE PLAN AS INDICATED BY ACTIONS TAKEN WHICH WERE NOT PART OF THE PLAN

Actions which were taken by the Planning Commission in the years subsequent to the adoption of the Plan but which were not included as part of the Plan should indicate basic weaknesses in the provisions of the Plan which kept it from meeting the needs of its projected period. Thus these actions which were taken by the Commission indicate a general weakness in the Plan or the results of projections not included in the Plan.

The number of these actions taken in the years subsequent to the Plan is remarkably small. There are approximately five new policies adopted by the Commission that were not properly projected or included in the Plan. They are

1. Curb cutting regulations.
2. The Wyoming-Hueco Street Traffic Route.
3. East Rim Road.
4. One-way streets.
5. Parking.

CURB CUTTING REGULATIONS

In 1931 the Planning Commission recognized the problems caused by drive-in stores, gas stations, etc., which cut excessive portions of the curbs for vehicular traffic to enter and leave their premises. The Commission noted that such a policy of excessive curb cutting limited curb parking space and made it inconvenient and sometimes dangerous for pedestrians. The planning staff was directed to make a specific study of abuses in this practice so that the Planning Commission could make specific recommendations to the City Council as to a policy to be developed on this practice.¹

This particular phase of legislation does not always come as a study of planning officials, and it is not unusual that it should not be a part of the Plan. The important factor to be noted, however, is that in making such a survey the Commission was fulfilling portions of the ordinance creating the Commission and establishing its duties, as follows:

Whenever it is proposed to make any general alteration in the street or highway system of the city or any portion thereof, or to open, close, widen, or extend any street, boulevard, or highway in the City of El Paso, or in the territory adjacent thereto . . . such proposal before it is acted upon shall be referred to the City Plan Commission for advice and consultation.

¹Annual Progress Report 1931, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

It shall be the duty of the City Plan Commission . . . to make studies and recommendations for the improvement of sanitation, recreation, and the general welfare of the public, and to improve traffic, transportation, and the general convenience of the public.²

Since the ordinance creating the Commission was a part of the Plan and established the duties of the Commission to extend its duties to cover future problems such as the curb cutting problem, it may be established that the Plan foresaw that needs not necessarily covered in the Plan might occur and provided a means for solving such future problems.

THE WYOMING-HUECO STREET ROUTE

Less than three years subsequent to the publication of the Plan, this amendment was made to the Plan. It called for a diagonal thoroughfare to be constructed from the intersection of Wyoming Street and Piedras Street to the intersection of Hueco Street and Montana Street. Although a traffic route from the Carlsbad Caverns area and a new flying field were both generally proposed in the Plan, the Plan was not prepared to have traffic from both enter the City via Montana Street. Because of the juxtaposition of these two facilities, and an anticipated traffic increase from both of them, the Wyoming-Hueco Street traffic route was proposed.³ The

²Kessler, op. cit., p. 68.

³Robertson, op. cit., p. 19.

proposal, however, gathered no more momentum than to be included as a Plan Commission proposal. In 1949 this thorough fare proposal had not been effectuated and expensive improvements constructed on the right-of-way precluded any construction at a reasonable cost over the right-of-way. It was dropped as a project and attention was focused on Montana Street as the prime thoroughfare for handling this traffic. This in turn became a project not envisioned in the Plan which, because of lack of acceptance by community officials, was dropped for substitute measures.⁴

EAST RIM ROAD

In 1948 the Planning Commission proposed the extension of Hastings Street to the Carlsbad Highway (U. S. 62). Since the road would follow along the rim of the East Mesa, the name for it was proposed as East Rim Road. An eighty-foot right-of-way was secured for this thoroughfare through the Terry Allen Addition and Hastings Street was opened between Reynolds Boulevard and Howze Avenue in conformity to the addition to the Plan.⁵ By 1952 the right-of-way had been acquired for this thoroughfare as planned.⁶ To date.

⁴Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵Annual Progress Report 1948, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶Annual Progress Report 1952, op. cit., p. 1.

the right-of-way is reserved but unopened for public use. It would be only considered judgment to evaluate this route. However, the increasing traffic on Highway 62 will undoubtedly use the East Rim Road as an alternate routing to Montana Street when this route is opened. It will help facilitate movement of traffic with a desire to travel into the Manhattan Heights area.

The Plan did not propose such a routing but it must be assumed that the expansion of Fort Bliss with its southern boundary adjacent to this proposed thoroughfare was not contemplated at the time of the original Plan. This military property was destined, in 1925, to be developed into residential property with east-west thoroughfares running in areas north and south of this later proposed East Rim Road.

Trowbridge Street was proposed in the Kessler Plan to extend easterly from its intersection with Womble Road. The extension of Fort Bliss, the construction of the Carlsbad Highway, and the relocation of the airport, all had competing effects which prevented this eastern portion of the City from developing as proposed in the original Plan. In lieu of proposed thoroughfares running parallel to the proposed East Rim Road three blocks north of it and four blocks south of it, the East Rim Road has developed as a substitute for these two thoroughfares as a result of development not anticipated in

the Plan. The philosophy of extending thoroughfares in this vicinity is kept, however, though not in the exact location as proposed in the Plan. The proposal of the Planning Commission thus is complementary rather than conflicting to the original Kessler Plan.

ONE-WAY STREETS

The Kessler Plan made no specific mention of one-way streets as a method of lessening traffic congestion. At the present time there are eleven streets or portions of streets involved in one operation to increase traffic flow. They include San Antonio Street, Magoffin Avenue, Myrtle Avenue, Texas Street, Missouri Street, Yandell Boulevard, Montana Street, Rio Grande Street, Arizona Street, Kansas Street, and Campbell Street. They represent, for the most part, peripheral streets which do not traverse the central core of the City. Texas Street and San Antonio Street are the only one-way thoroughfares that enter the heart of the central business district.

By 1951 the standards for lane widths, median strips, and parking lanes had increased to the extent that a minimum two-way thoroughfare in the state or federal highway system required a 94-foot right-of-way. The majority of right-of-ways in El Paso were 70-foot. Using these standards as a

criteria for traffic moving facilities, the Planning Commission decided to investigate developing one-way street couplets for highways entering the City. A thorough study was made by Mr. Harry Corbett of the State Highway Department, acting as a citizen.⁷ The study was reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and in 1953 a proposed system of one-way streets was recommended to the City Council.⁸ The program presented has, for the most part, been adopted and placed in operation.

It appears that one-way streets are one method of traffic engineering technology that has developed with the congestion caused by the increased use of thoroughfares designed to serve the traffic at the time period in which the Plan was drawn. The increased emphasis on the use of the automobile for transportation rather than for pleasure was not foreseen at the time of the Plan. The Plan, in essence, projected future street requirements on the then accepted standards of street usage and projected the automobile as a pleasure vehicle rather than a transportation vehicle. This was apparently the basic lack of foresight which occasioned the inadequacy of the thoroughfares to handle current traffic loads and thus necessitated one-way

⁷ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

⁸ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 6.

street operation. The evaluation of the design of the motor vehicle may also account for this necessary readjustment of arterial standards. The automobile has become wider, lower, longer, and faster in design. Thus the need for higher speed traffic facilities and wider lanes has occurred. This evolution in the automobile industry was likewise not envisioned within the Plan.

PARKING

The Kessler Plan makes no specific reference to parking or parking standards. Parking was not the problem at the time of the Plan that it has currently grown to be. By 1945 the parking problem had reached the point that the Planning Commission recognized the need for offstreet parking facilities in the downtown district and recommended that steps be taken toward the solution of the problem. It was noted at that time that effective action was difficult under the then existing laws.⁹ By 1952 the decentralization of business had reached the point that the Commission recommended that the City accept as a public responsibility the furnishing of offstreet facilities in connection with the street system and that legal means be sought from the state legislature for the issuance of revenue bonds to be paid from the revenues

⁹Annual Progress Report 1947, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

of new facilities and existing parking meters. It was felt that the guarantee of revenues from these facilities would be necessary to make the bonds marketable. The bill proposed was introduced and fostered by El Paso County representatives in the legislature but failed passage. An amendment to the City Charter was then proposed to allow all persons owning property in the local improvement district for such facilities to vote, rather than those residing within the district, so that bonds could be issued on such a basis. Such a charter amendment was made. Improvement district bonds were voted for offstreet parking facilities for a district bounded by the trainway, Campbell Street, Overland Street, and El Paso Street, said streets containing generally the central business district.¹⁰ In 1953 the parking improvement district went into litigation because of a challenge of its legality.¹¹ By 1958 no parking facilities had been purchased or constructed but at that time a survey was performed by a group of consultants to ascertain the proper location, sizes, expenses, etc., for these facilities.

In 1956 the City passed an amendment to its zoning ordinances providing offstreet parking and loading requirements for all uses and areas in the City. The central

¹⁰Annual Progress Report 1952, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

¹¹Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 4.

business district was absolved by resolution from these requirements. For similar reasons to those indicated for the adoption of one-way streets, the Plan did not anticipate the problem of parking in the downtown area. With regard to the automobile and its impact upon the Plan, Mr. Kessler's planning was not for projected needs of thirty years, but was rather a projection based on expansion of 1925 parking needs for an additional thirty years.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The remarkably few acts taken by the Planning Commission which were not part of the Plan speak well of the adequacy of the Plan. Of those taken three, curb cutting, one-way streets, and parking, were occasioned by the increase in number, size, and speed of automobiles, which were not envisioned in the original Plan.

The Wyoming-Hueco Street traffic route was occasioned because of the specific location of the Carlsbad Highway as it entered the City on Montana Street. This proposal was not accomplished over a period of years, so that improvements were located in its path to the extent that it became impractical. Stopgap solutions to resolve the problem had to be taken at the intersections of Piedras Street and Wyoming Street and of Piedras Street and Montana Street.

Construction of the East Rim Road extending Hastings Street to the Carlsbad Highway may be considered to be occasioned by the enlargement of Fort Bliss, which was not envisioned in the Plan. In theory, it replaces a Kessler Plan boulevard which would have been parallel to and north of it in the area which is now part of Fort Bliss.

The test of the adequacy of the Plan as measured by the actions taken by the Planning Commission and legislative officials indicates:

1. The Planning Commission and the legislative officials of the City accomplished remarkably few acts in the direction of the physical development of this community which were not included in the original Plan.

2. The majority of the acts accomplished which were not proposed in the Plan deal with the results of the increase in number, size, and speed of automobiles, which were not originally envisioned in the Plan.

The Plan as a whole appears to have been quite adequate through the historical period observed. The inadequacies appear to have been caused primarily by:

1. Lack of scientific investigation in the preparation of specific predictions.

2. Increase of technology in certain areas which has occurred in the period of time following the Plan. The

changes in zoning ordinance format, design, and content, and the increased library of judicial experience would be some good examples of this increase in technology.

3. Changes in the transportation habits and media of the public in the years intervening from the adoption of the Plan have been great. Notably the change of public travel habits from public transportation to private automobile with the resulting technological changes in both fields of travel would be good examples of this change in transportation habits and media.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXTERNAL FORCES WORKING ON THE PLAN

Two major economic forces left their effect on the Kessler Plan. It was during the thirty-year period which was projected in the Plan that the United States went through the upheavals of a major economic recession and a major world conflict. These two economic upheavals could not possibly occur without leaving major imprints on the life of the community and upon its development. Therefore the consequences of these two occurrences on the Plan must be analyzed.

THE DEPRESSION OF THE EARLY THIRTIES

The crash of October and November, 1929, left men and women in all walks of life penniless overnight. It was but a part of an economic depression which was the plight of the world. Since the cities depend on tax moneys to subsist, it is only logical that a major economic recession would be felt by the municipal government. Persons with speculative property were no longer able to maintain their taxes. Cities were thus short of tax revenues. Bonded obligations were still current for municipalities, so they reached an economic

situation similar to that of private individuals who were unable to meet their financial obligations. The municipalities, however, have the advantage that their obligations become public debts, so no bankruptcy proceedings were instigated.

The public debt of the Federal government during the period 1933-1936 increased from \$16,185,000 to \$33,785,000, or an increase of twice the original debt.¹ Portions of this increased Federal debt were moneys appropriated on a loan basis to states and municipalities who were unable to meet current obligations because of the decrease in revenues brought about by the depression. In addition to the loan moneys available to the municipalities, additional moneys were available through the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) on a share-of-expense basis for public works within the community. During the years from 1934 to 1936, \$1,169,880 was spent on W.P.A. projects by the Federal government.²

Since the Kessler Plan had proposed a number of public works programs, the City was in a good position to obtain persons and moneys through the W.P.A. to help it accomplish the public works proposals suggested. The program

¹Educators Association Inc., The Volume Library, (New York, New York: Educators Association Inc., 1947), p. 1429.

²Ibid., p. 710.

for the City was proposed and the only limitation on the extent of accomplishment was the City's share of the funds for the projects. It was through this fund source that El Paso accomplished construction of the grade separation on Dyer Street, the Copia Street Drain, the Manchester Street Bridge, the curbs and sidewalks on Portland Street, and improvements at the City sewage disposal plants. The municipal airport and terminal building were constructed using W.P.A. funds and personnel.³ The County built two large county parks, Ascarate and McKelligan Canyon, using these funds.⁴ Both parks were located and developed according to the Kessler Plan. Thus, while the depression was disastrous, in many ways it became a blessing in disguise by forcing a public works program which followed Kessler Plan proposals.

THE RETURN TO A WAR ECONOMY

From the early days of Mexican-American hostilities, El Paso has been a military center. Fort Bliss was formed as a cavalry post in 1848⁵ to keep peace and order in this

³Annual Progress Report 1937, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁵William Rule, "Facts on El Paso Military Installations" (El Paso, Texas: An eight page typewritten manuscript dated 1958, prepared by William Rule, Col., U.S.A., Ret., concerning the history, size, and economic implications of

border town. Numerous Mexican and Indian uprisings were squelched as a result of troops stationed at this point. The Fort also became the last check point for camel trains traveling from San Antonio to California. The Fort expanded prior to 1917 under the command of General John J. Pershing and became a military training center for World War I. In 1920 the William Beaumont Army Hospital was founded on a 272-acre site adjacent to Fort Bliss.⁶ In 1919 the Border Patrol was formed with facilities and cooperation of the Aviation Section Headquarters.⁷ The forerunner of Biggs Air Force Base, the "United States Aviation Field," was organized July 1, 1920, and had Captain Claire L. Chenault as an aviation engineer officer from 1922 to 1924.⁸

The importance of El Paso as a military center, as can be noted from the establishment of the various military bases, was an established fact prior to World War II. At the time of the Plan, however, the world was satisfied that peace would be a lasting thing. The armistice had ended the war of wars.

military installations in El Paso. Col. Rule is currently zoning administrator for the City of El Paso Planning Department), p. 5.

⁶Ibid., p. 1.

⁷Ibid., p. 1.

⁸Ibid., p. 1.

In 1941 this country entered into one of the greatest conflicts recorded in world history. It was natural to assume that it would have some impact on the military installations in El Paso.

Fort Bliss became an active training center in 1942. The First Cavalry Division was mechanized and thousands of acres of wastelands to the north and east of the Fort were purchased for maneuvering areas and artillery ranges. After the First Cavalry Division was sent to combat duty in the south Pacific, the Fort and its various ranges became a center for anti-aircraft artillery training.⁹

William Beaumont Army Hospital became a training center for enlisted men and officers of the medical corps. Approximately sixteen thousand men were trained. In 1944 a W.A.C. complement was added to the hospital and a training center for approximately five hundred women a month was opened. During the war wounded personnel from the European and Pacific theaters of operations made a peak patient load at the hospital of almost six thousand persons.¹⁰

The growth of Biggs Air Force Base, stimulated by World War II, was phenomenal. \$10,000,000 of construction expanded the old field into a completely modern air base.¹¹

⁹Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹Ibid., p. 2

The end of World War II did not end world hostilities. The Korean conflict turned Fort Bliss into a Replacement Training Center in anti-aircraft training.¹² The peak patient load at William Beaumont Army Hospital rose to 1200 patients.¹³

The increased emphasis on our nation's defense program made itself felt in the El Paso area, forty-one miles north of the El Paso City limits, at the southern end of the Tularose Basin. The development of guided missiles became a factor which turned this wasteland into the nation's largest inland missile range with millions of dollars worth of installed electronic equipment and thousands of persons employed, both military and civilian. Exact figures on the White Sands Missile Range cannot be obtained for security reasons.

The large range areas, plus the accessibility of the White Sands Missile Range, led to the conversion of Fort Bliss to the country's only Guided Missile Training Center. Instruction in all phases of guided missiles and anti-aircraft artillery for both officers and enlisted men of the army, as well as students representing participation of the U. S. Navy, U. S. Air Force, and U. S. Marine Corps, is provided at the

¹³Ibid., p. 4.

utilities.¹⁸ Its impact on the economy of the area may also well be noted.

From a humble beginning of a 13-man personnel complement and 208 acres of land containing two aircraft hangars and one balloon hangar, Biggs has grown to a complement of 6,600 military personnel and 350 civilian personnel on a base of 746 acres with an inventory value in excess of three hundred million dollars. Of the 6,600 military personnel, all but 850 families live off the post in dwellings within the City limits. The annual military payroll averages twenty-four million dollars, while contracted services and locally purchased supplies account for an annual expenditure of an additional thirteen million dollars annually. The impact of the military installation may also be well noted.¹⁹

A part of the old Logan Cantonement area of Fort Bliss has been set aside as a border patrol academy and though it covers approximately a ten-acre tract and the persons staffing it would be negligible when compared to the other military installations, it does have its part in the military economy of the area.

The expansion of military facilities may be noted

¹⁸
Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹
Ibid., p. 2.

in the population trends. The City of El Paso had failed to increase in population at anywhere near the pace predicted in the Kessler Plan until the just previous nine years. It has been during this nine years that the greatest increase of military base facilities has occurred. It has been in these nine years that the guided missile programs have developed. The impact of the military has contributed substantially to the increased population to enable it to reach a figure similar to the one proposed in the Plan.

The increase in this particular economy has over-balanced the economic base that was originally established in the Kessler Plan.

The increase in the size of Fort Bliss, which was not envisioned in the Plan, changed the existing and predicted uses of large areas north and east of the Fort. The Alhambra Gardens Subdivision was incorporated into the Fort and Roosevelt Park was abandoned. The Fort took control of the municipal golf course, and the City constructed a new one in Ascarate Park. The development of the City in a north-easterly direction was prohibited by the Fort expansion. The airfield was moved to the south end of the Fort because of its expansion. Changes in the road and boulevard patterns of the eastern portion of the City were changed by the acquisition of lands for Fort Bliss, making them impossible

or impractical proposals. The wide expanse of the Fort forced the development of the North East El Paso area north and east of the Fort. This development was accompanied by requirements for streets, parks, schools, and public facilities which were not envisioned as a part of the Plan since there was suitable area for development closer in to the City at the time of the Plan. This same suitable area became a portion of Fort Bliss.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The depression of the early thirties and the return to a war economy appear to have had the following effects and consequences as external factors working on the Plan:

1. The Kessler Plan neither predicted the depression nor envisioned the war so no provisions were made for the effects of either.
2. The depression of the thirties had many ill-effects on everyone concerned. It did have, however, the quality of a blessing in disguise in helping to implement some of the proposals of the Plan. The fact that the Plan was in existence prior to the depression gave the community a long range policy to work toward in W.P.A. projects rather than accomplishing short range projects arising at the time.

3. The return to the war economy has probably had the greatest effect on the Plan, although the City has had a military history. It brought an upsurge in the economy of the area during World War II. The real impact did not affect the area, however, until the development of guided missile facilities and programs in the area.

4. The military economy has affected the economic base to the extent that it has now become the basic industry with those listed in the Plan becoming secondary, though not unimportant, in nature.

5. The military economy appears to have brought about the upsurge in population to the point that in a nine-year period the City has nearly reached the population which the Plan predicted for a thirty-year period. This had failed to materialize previously.

6. The increase in the size of Fort Bliss changed the ecological distribution envisioned in the Plan and thus necessitated some changes in the physical plan which would probably not have been necessary had the space acquired by the Fort been put to the uses envisioned in the Kessler Plan.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXTENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN AND THE COST OF NON-ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this portion of this paper is to ascertain the pulse of public acceptance of the Kessler Plan and the cost, where measurable, of the non-acceptance of the Plan.

The acceptance can be measured only by empirical evidence of accomplishments and the evidence of behind-the-scene efforts to "sell" the Plan.

The cost of non-acceptance is a difficult cost to measure. There are many ways in which the non-acceptance of the Plan costs the City. Most of the time these costs are measured in intangibles such as the general welfare of the public, lack of accomplishment of esthetic features of the Plan, overcrowding of certain facilities, etc. Very often it is indicated that the lack of acceptance of the Plan can induce monetary loss, but the measurements of these losses are highly intangible because no subsequent actions have been taken which were caused by the lack of acceptance at the proper time.

THE EXTENT OF ACCEPTANCE

The best measure of the acceptance of the Plan is the fact that the majority of the proposals indicated in the Plan have been accomplished over the period of years intervening since its adoption. George Kessler made numerous addresses to clubs and organizations in El Paso selling planning long before the Plan was written. His local engineer stayed in El Paso as City Plan Engineer after completion of the Plan to insure its implementation.

The Kessler Plan association had been established in Dallas to continue selling the Kessler Plan for Dallas.¹ Such an organization was not necessary in El Paso. El Paso did, however, have speakers from outside the community come in from time to time to speak on planning before the joint meetings of the City's luncheon groups.

THE COST OF NON-ACCEPTANCE

There are two special items historically noted in the actions of the Planning Commission which indicate a cost of lack of action on the Kessler Plan proposals at a proper time. One of these items reflects a specific monetary item.

¹ Correspondence on file in the El Paso Planning Department substantiates the existence of this organization and indicates its purpose.

The Purchase of Water Rights

The Kessler Plan proposed that the City acquire water rights from the Rio Grande River. The City's water rights could have been included in the original dam project plans with little expense involved for the City.² No action was taken, however, until 1940, some fifteen years after adoption of the Plan. By 1940 water supply had become acute and the City was beginning to deplete its water table well supply. By 1943 the City had to acquire, by means of purchase, approximately 5300 acres of land, at considerable expense, and to remove this land from cultivation in order to obtain the water rights. Not only did this purchase remove the land from the property tax base of the area, but it also removed approximately five per cent of the federally irrigated farm lands from the valley, thus reducing this amount of economic base.³

The Montana Street-Piedras Street Intersection Correction

The Plan proposed that a considerable cut be taken across the Masonic Hospital grounds located on the southeast corner of Montana Street and Piedras Street. It was

²Kessler, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

³Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

noted that such a cut could be made without influencing the hospital proper and that such a cut would ease the flow of east-west traffic on Montana Street.⁴ No action was taken to perform this intersection correction. An alternate solution to this intersection correction was proposed by the Commission in the construction of the Wyoming Street-Hueco Street trafficway. The cost of this latter trafficway was estimated at the time to be one hundred thousand dollars.⁵ No action took place on the Wyoming Street-Hueco Street proposal and it had to be abandoned because new structures built made the proposal unworkable at a reasonable expense.

In 1946 the Masonic Hospital was torn down and Sears Roebuck and Company purchased the property for a new store. A special building line was proposed by the Planning Commission, which would help alleviate the traffic congestion at this point. The City Council adopted the special building line, Sears objected, and the Council rescinded its action. Sears built their building covering the corner, which closed this property for any street purposes.⁶

The introduction of one-way streets failed to help materially in this intersection. In order to correct the

⁴Kessler, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵Robertson, op. cit., p. 19.

⁶Annual Progress Report 1946, op. cit., p. 3.

articulation, the funds are programmed to remove commercial buildings across from Sears in order to correct this intersection. This correction will be more awkward than the original proposal, and the cost is projected at \$516,000.⁷ This is five times the cost of the original Wyoming Street-Hueco Street trafficway proposals, and is an expenditure which would not have been necessary at all if proper actions had been taken to correct the intersection as proposed in the Plan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The extent of acceptance is apparent in the fact that the majority of Plan proposals have been accomplished. The cost of non-acceptance is clearly indicated in two expensive stop gap measures necessitated by the fact that the proposals were not followed or were not completed within the framework established in the Plan. The specific dollar and cents figures indicated as the cost of non-acceptance of the Kessler Plan might make a good reference for use when a planning commission is trying to justify expenditure of municipal funds on capital improvements that appear to be imperative for immediate action. Often similar examples

⁷Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 37.

within a local community are impossible because this cost can be measured only in intangibles. If the local municipal officials can be swayed by figures and experiences of other communities, then measures such as those indicated in this chapter would be useful.

CHAPTER IX

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PLAN COMPARED TO PRESENT DAY PLANNING PHILOSOPHY

This section on the philosophy of the Plan compared to present day planning philosophy attempts to indicate the adequacy or inadequacy of the Plan from a planning principle viewpoint rather than the adequacy of the physical parts of the Plan.

For this purpose, the adequacy of the Plan is discussed in two divisions:

1. Comparison of specific Kessler Plan concepts.
2. Comparison of the Plan to specific contemporary Plans.

The part pertaining to the comparison to specific Kessler Plan concepts takes certain planning principles discussed in the Kessler Plan and makes specific reference of these principles to similar present day planning principles, as can be noted in current planning programs or which were inculcated as a part of the curriculum at the University of Washington during the tenure of instruction of the author of this paper.

The part pertaining to the comparison of the Kessler Plan to specific contemporary plans takes specific plans and compares the Kessler Plan by content and associated principles.

COMPARISON OF SPECIFIC KESSLER PLAN CONCEPTS

The following portion of the paper indicates points of specific physical plans noted in the Kessler Plan. Many of them are currently accepted in general by planning agencies in their preparation of public policy in the development of their individual communities. Time is a test for these philosophies noted in the Kessler Plan.

Parking Strips

The Plan advocated narrower pavements on streets which did not carry heavy traffic, and parking strips between the curb and the sidewalk to be planted and cared for by the City with the cost assessed against the property. This scheme would be put into effect when the property owners on a street would voluntarily raise funds for the original installation and petition the City to take charge of the maintenance. The maintenance cost would be taken care of by the simple system of raising the assessments enough, because of the benefits, to produce the cost of

upkeep at the prevailing tax rate.¹ While the principle of establishing a street classification system according to estimated traffic density is a rather common planning principle, the development of city-maintained parking strips appears to be more of a daydream than a reality. This is in no way to discredit the logic in the proposal, but rather to indicate the experience of the proposal. In El Paso the idea was tried on Rio Grande Avenue for a short time. The assessment, however, was a special one at a flat rate, less than the cost. Owners could withdraw from such a program at will and the City was then forced to operate the program at a loss. As a result, the Plan was abandoned and the deterioration of the parking strip was immediately apparent.²

Urban Renewal

As previously discussed in the historical experience as to adequacy or inadequacy of Plan proposals, the Plan proposed an early effort at urban renewal and slum clearance.³ The program proposed in the Plan included voluntary rehabilitation of the area by owners and residents as currently proposed in the Federal program, as well as for complete clearance and reconstruction where needed.

¹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 44-47.

²Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 14.

³See Chapter V, "Urban Renewal".

Joint School-Park Facilities

The Plan proposed that the City "Provide for the all year daily and nightly use of school buildings and school grounds so far as practicable by the people for recreation and social purposes."⁴ This currently acceptable planning principle is notable for its early appearance in El Paso as a result of the Plan.

Abandonment of Unnecessary Streets

The Plan proposed that unnecessary streets and parts of streets be abandoned and that the space thus saved be turned into public playgrounds and parks.⁵ While current planning philosophy calls for abandonment of unnecessary streets by replatting, vacation, or a combination of both in a redevelopment project, the conversion of these streets into small parks and playgrounds is not as ideal today as at the time of the Plan, although the development of the park-spine green belt might help the City approximate the Kessler proposal. The economics of maintenance prevent the logical upkeep of such areas unless interconnected. The expense of maintenance and upkeep has caused a reorientation

⁴Kessler, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵Ibid.

of thinking as to the minimum size of a park and of play-ground areas in the intervening years from the time of the Plan to the present.

Platting Standards

The Kessler Plan proposed for the residential areas where development had not occurred that "gridiron" platting be revised and modified to conform with the topography.⁶ The principle of avoiding gridiron plats on any topography as well as the principle of following contours in platting are both accepted and followed as present day planning policy. The proposal in the Plan indicates attention was given to the subject thirty-four years ago.

Street Width Standards

The Plan stated:

Streets, like all other structures, should be designed for the purpose for which they are intended. To have one standard street is to be justified only by the absence of any general plan and by the saving in mental effort of trying to decide what the future requirements of the street will probably be.⁷

Within the standard 70-foot right-of-way prevalent throughout El Paso, the Plan proposed pavement widths of

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Ibid., p. 28.

32 feet for a residence street, forty feet for a secondary street, and 46 feet for a thoroughfare. Within the 100-foot right-of-ways thoroughfare pavements of 25-foot widths were proposed for each side of a median strip of 20 feet which contained a double-track trolley. It was indicated that the trolley median could be paved when needed. Boulevards within 100-foot right-of-ways were proposed to have a 40-foot pavement.⁸

The standards appear to be on the skimpy side when compared to present day street width proposals. By 1943 the El Paso Planning Commission noted that the 32-foot pavement proposed for residential streets was inadequate and that it should be increased to 34 feet.⁹ By 1950 the Commission increased the standard for major thoroughfares from 46 feet, as proposed in the Plan, to 54 feet.¹⁰ New standards were in effect in 1958 for new right-of-ways for collector streets with 64-foot pavements and 120-foot right-of-ways for arterial streets with 32-foot pavements separated by 24-foot median strips.¹¹

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁹Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 9.

¹¹Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 41.

Standards have changed and trolleys have ceased to be a problem for inclusion in street design. However, it is notable that a classification system was established in 1925 to give a basis for policy in street development patterns and to give the Commission a basis for changing the original policy in relation to more current needs of traffic movement.

Regional Planning

Planning for the future, to be entirely effective, must reach out beyond the present city limits and embrace the whole region of which El Paso is the center.¹²

Thus the introduction to the concept of regional planning was made a part of the Plan. The regional plan as embraced in the Kessler Plan included the Upper and Lower Valleys, the then inhabited areas of El Paso County. It has since been extended to cover the North East El Paso area. Rudimentary planning elements such as thoroughfares and park sites are adopted by the County Commissioners. Since the Texas enabling legislation to date makes no provision for a county planning commission or county zoning, the implementation of a plan for the region depends only on the capital expenditures of the county government and

¹²Kessler, op. cit., p. 32.

control of subdivisions as tools of implementation. The introduction of the principles of incorporating a planning area including the urbanized area instead of just the physical environs of the municipality is noteworthy for this period thirty-four years ago.

School Service Areas

The Plan indicated that it was assumed that small children should not be required to go more than one-half mile in well built up neighborhoods to attend school.¹³ The one-half mile service area is generally accepted now as the theoretical school service area radius and establishes the theoretical standards for neighborhood boundaries.

COMPARISON OF THE PLAN TO SPECIFIC CONTEMPORARY PLANS

In order to further evaluate the Kessler Plan in light of more contemporary plans, a sampling of comprehensive plans of the post World War II era has been made. Five comprehensive plans have been selected for comparative purposes. The five represent works of consultants performing the planning studies on a contract basis; planning staffs performing the planning studies with the aid of

¹³Ibid., p. 47.

consultant advice; and staffs performing the planning studies without a consultant advice, depending on the resources of the staff and director alone. They represent the thinking of Harland Bartholemew and Associates, Scott Bagby, Ladislas Segoe and Associates, J. Hazlet Bell, and Corwin R. Mocine. They represent plans prepared for cities of similar or smaller sizes than El Paso, as well as one prepared for Dayton, Ohio. Dayton, of similar size, has a predicted 1960 population of 281,000 persons, similar to the 1955 figure predicted in the Kessler Plan for El Paso (300,000 persons) and the actual 1959 population estimate for El Paso (291,000 persons). As there are many similarities in these latter plans in comparison to the Kessler Plan, only significant differences in planning content and philosophy are noted in comparing the two.

The Dayton Plan¹⁴

The Dayton Plan was prepared with a transmittal date of November, 1954. It was prepared for the Dayton City Planning Board by Harland Bartholemew and Associates of St. Louis, Missouri. The report is prepared covering the

¹⁴Harland Bartholemew and Associates, City Planners, Comprehensive Plan Dayton Urban Area, A Report to the City Plan Board, Dayton, Ohio (Saint Louis, Missouri: Harland Bartholemew and Associates, 1954).

Dayton urban area which includes not only the City of Dayton, Ohio (1952 population 254,959 persons), but also the City of Oakwood, Ohio, and the City of Fairborn, Ohio (1952 populations of 10,493 persons and 9,759 persons respectively), and also townships and portions of townships designated by the consultants to be a part of the Dayton urban area (total 1952 population of 408,520 persons).

The Dayton Plan and the Kessler Plan contain similar basic elements although they are separated in the space of time by twenty-nine years. Both contain elements concerning the geographical and location characteristics, historical background, and general economy.

While both plans made specific studies in thoroughfare planning, transit and railroad facilities, parks, school sites and public services such as water supply, sanitary and storm sewers and storm drainage, the Dayton Plan is much more thorough in its approach to transportation in that it recognizes the importance of truck transportation and air transportation, two modes of traffic not overly important in the transportation of goods and persons in the 1925 period of the Kessler Plan.¹⁵ The development of plans concerning the location of air facilities, truck terminals, inter-city and intra-city truck routes, were not problems of the Kessler

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 46-49.

Plan time, due to the fact that rail facilities handled the primary inter-city movement of both goods and persons. The Kessler Plan did recognize the future necessity of air facilities, but not on the scale that we now think of as commonplace. Both plans give thorough and specific studies to rail facilities, including recommendations for removal of certain rail lines, erection of grade separation facilities, and grade relocation facilities in the downtown area.

The Dayton Plan contains studies concerning location of existing fire stations and proposed location of future fire stations, as well as proposals for abandonment of certain stations.¹⁶ It also contains studies concerning disposal of wastes and garbage.¹⁷ These are areas of municipal function not covered specifically in the Kessler Plan published twenty-seven years prior to the Dayton Plan.

A large share of the Dayton Plan is devoted to land use and zoning.¹⁸ These are areas which differ considerably in their scope from their counterparts in the Kessler Plan. Zoning was in the elementary stage even in 1925, though many cities had adopted this form of regulation by that time. It was certainly not the complex method of regulation that is now common or was common even at the time of the Dayton Plan.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 80-81.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 14-28.

Public control of private property was still a source of controversy and was largely a job of salesmanship in 1925. Sixty-two municipalities were zoned in 1924 and only three hundred twenty municipalities in the United States had adopted zoning at that time. The legal status of zoning was not well established nor were the prerequisites well established for the comprehensiveness or thoroughness necessary to form the basis for this public control of private land.

The Kessler Plan indicated that although no specific legislation was in Texas legislature books concerning zoning, the basis for this use of the police power was in general statutes concerning the exercise of the police power for any great public need.¹⁹ The power of cities in Texas to regulate by districts, as in fire districts, where different types of construction were permitted or prohibited and to regulate the location of certain industries, sanitariums, etc., would come under the classification of a public need. This left the legality of zoning in Texas dependent upon the court's opinion as to reasonableness and necessity. A simple zoning ordinance and zoning plan was prepared with four districts: residence, business, industrial and heavy industries. No land use plan was prepared nor was any detailed land use data collected. The zoning map was prepared on a "rule-of-thumb" basis.²⁰

¹⁹Kessler, op. cit., p. 59.

²⁰Ibid., p. 60.

Specific study of existing land use is made in the Dayton study complete with calculated data concerning land use compared with population, lot area per family, percentage of zoned area used by the zoned uses, etc., as well as proposed future land use requirements.²¹ The test of reasonableness and necessity appears to be much greater in light of court decisions than were the tests in the public control of private land in the time of the Kessler Plan. This probably marks the transition from the pioneering days of Kessler times to the modern complex society of today in relationship to the requirements necessary for a community to have a comprehensive basis for zoning.

While the Kessler Plan had interspersed recommendations for thoroughfares, the civic center, etc., a proposed plan for the downtown area was not segregated for special study as in the Dayton Plan. The Dayton study goes very carefully into circulation and parking in the central business district.²² The impact of the automobile most certainly has brought about the reorientation of transportation in the downtown area. In 1925, the time of the Kessler Plan, mass transportation was the mode of transportation for the majority

²¹Harland Bartholemew and Associates, op. cit., pp. 14-23.

²²Ibid., pp. 63-72.

of persons coming to the central business district, while the automobile was reserved for "joy riding" rather than as a primary means of transportation. This pleasure use of the automobile is specifically mentioned in the Kessler Plan in the statement:

The marvelous increase in the use of the automobile is revolutionizing the pleasure-seeking habits of the people. Nearly every family has a car, and riding for pleasure is the principal outdoor sport of the day.²³

While no specific parking study was made as a part of the Kessler Plan, nevertheless homage was paid to the problem with the statement:

More car parking space is an imperative need which will grow steadily greater. Any street widenings in future business districts and on main thoroughfares will be profitable to the abutting property and to the community, for, other things being approximately equal, the shopper will seek the stores where parking facilities are best.²⁴

Today offstreet parking facilities for new business districts have become an accepted fact. No longer is parking on the major thoroughfares sufficient. Likewise, no longer is the public transportation providing transit for the majority of persons working or shopping in the central business district. Thus new urban problems dealing with the automobile have developed in the twenty-seven years between

²³Kessler, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁴Ibid., p. 322.

the Kessler and Dayton studies which require a more thorough survey of parking needs and facilities to be made than would have been necessary at the time of the Kessler Plan. This additional study, with emphasis on parking and traffic circulation, is present as a part of the Dayton Plan.

The Kessler Plan was very thorough in its treatment of major thoroughfares and parkways.²⁵ Emphasis was placed on this phase of the urban plan, most likely due to the background of the author in landscape architecture. Boulevards and parkways were the vogue of the day, a "leftover" of the city beautiful movement. These thoroughfares were designed and destined, according to the Plan, to facilitate the principal outdoor sport of the day, which was riding for pleasure. The Plan was specific in its many recommendations for street widenings, parkway strips, etc.

In a like manner the Dayton Plan is specific in its application of a thoroughfare program.²⁶ It, however, provides a group of arterial standards for application throughout the City of Dayton. In a manner similar to the Kessler Plan, it proposes a radial or belt system of roadways for Dayton. The primary difference between the two is the design and intent of the facility. While the Kessler Plan proposes

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 19-27.

²⁶ Harland Bartholemew and Associates, op. cit., pp. 29-37.

these thoroughfares for moderate speed pleasure driving, the Dayton Plan proposes them for a higher speed traffic moving facility designed primarily for its traffic moving qualities rather than its esthetic qualities.

The Berkeley Plan²⁷

The Berkeley Plan may be studied through two documents; a preliminary master plan published in 1953²⁸ and the adopted master plan published in 1955.²⁹ The latter is, for all practical purposes, the Master Plan, and was adopted as such. However, some of the standards adopted in the Master Plan are more thoroughly explained and graphically presented in the Preliminary Master Plan. The Berkeley Plan concerns only the incorporated City of Berkeley, California. The 1950 census rated Berkeley as having a population of 113,805 persons. The 1960 population projection prepared by the Berkeley Department of City Planning is 120,000 persons.

²⁷A combination of a preliminary plan published in 1953 and a plan published and adopted in 1955.

²⁸City Planning Commission, Berkeley, California, Preliminary Master Plan for Berkeley 1953, (Berkeley, California: City Planning Commission, 1953).

²⁹Berkeley Planning Commission, Berkeley Master Plan 1955, (Berkeley, California: Berkeley Planning Commission, 1955).

It can then be noted that the growth patterns of Berkeley and of El Paso do not appear to be similar. Significant, however, is the fact that this Plan had been completed in 1955. Early planning experiences in Berkeley and El Paso are similar in that both have purchased the service of early-day consultants. The College of California (now the University of California) Plan prepared as early as 1865 was a work of Frederick Law Olmstead and his plans for the college included parks and parkways extending to the Bay and to Oakland. Werner Hogeman, a famous Austrian planner, was hired by a group to prepare a plan for Oakland and Berkeley in 1914.³⁰ From these early beginnings Berkeley established planning and governmental precedents such as establishing one of the first zoning ordinances in the country and early use of the city manager form of government.³¹

While El Paso is a complete trading center serving a large trade area, thus initiating traffic from without to within its environs, Berkeley is only part of a much larger trade area with Oakland and San Francisco forming the nucleus of the trade area. Therefore there is an appreciable amount of traffic leaving the Berkeley environs to go

³⁰Ibid., p. 12.

³¹Ibid., p. 13.

to San Francisco for work, recreation, and normal economic activities. In this respect Berkeley and El Paso are quite different.

The Berkeley Plan and the El Paso Plan contain similar basic elements. The Berkeley Plan has inserted, however, a section on assumptions forming the basis of the Plan.³² The Kessler Plan includes the basic assumptions section by section, thus creating only a difference in structure rather than content between the two concerning this point. It is in the assumptions section of the Berkeley Plan that specific recognition of Berkeley's position in the San Francisco Bay area is made. The Berkeley Plan, similarly to the Kessler Plan, has in its first page a summary of the proposals further discussed within the Plan. A very thorough population study is made in the Berkeley Plan, in contrast to the "rule of thumb" forecasting made in the Kessler Plan. It must be considered, however, that population projecting and information gathering techniques have improved considerably in the thirty years separating the two plans. The Berkeley Plan, like the Dayton Plan, has a significant portion of the Plan report devoted to land use, with specific studies made concerning land use patterns. As indicated and discussed in the Dayton and Kessler Plans, comparison land use studies were

³² Ibid., pp. 15-16.

not an important part of the Plan. The integrity, ability to ascertain by observation the land use patterns, and the power to project future needs from this "rule of thumb" type of studying, apparently were the essential talents of the early day planning consultant. The Kessler Plan does not, however, appear to establish as closely defined land use controls as are now common practice.

The Berkeley Plan goes into the neighborhood concept of planning.³³ This neighborhood concept, wherein areas large enough in population to support an elementary school yet small enough in area to permit comfortable pedestrian movements, with the natural boundaries to said neighborhood being formed by arterials or natural boundaries, does not appear in the Kessler Plan, though school service areas are a part of the Kessler Plan. This is undoubtedly a result of more recent planning philosophy.

The Berkeley Plan calls attention to the principle of having ribbon commercial areas develop along major arterials³⁴ which appears to be one of the planning principles of some early planners, but which does not appear to be a tenet of the Kessler Plan for El Paso. Between the Five Point District and the central business district of El Paso the major east-west thoroughfares from Montana Street to Missouri

³³Ibid., pp. 34-36.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 37-38.

Street were all proposed in the Kessler Plan to be zoned commercial.³⁵ The same is true of Texas, Myrtle, and Alameda Streets south of the tracks. In most cases, however, these reflect more the overzealousness of the planner for the extension of commercial properties than his desire for the development of ribbon commercial districts. The commercial zones proposed in the Kessler Plan usually extend three to four blocks in depth rather than extending one-half block in depth from major thoroughfares as was the case in Berkeley and in other cities with commercial development along trolley lines and traffic streets.

Parking had not been the problem during the time preceding the Kessler Plan that it is today, and so it is normal to assume that no specific studies of parking needs and solutions would be made in the El Paso Plan. Parking is one of the major studies in the Berkeley Plan, and the Berkeley Planning Department has made a detailed analysis of parking in that city.³⁶

While the Kessler Plan makes a rather thorough series of recommendations concerning the need for additional arterial and street alignment corrections, the recommendations appear to be more on the basis of a personal projection of future needs, rather than on any scientific knowledge of

³⁵ See Figure VIII.

³⁶ City Planning Commission, Berkeley, California, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

traffic volume, etc. The Berkeley Plan goes into a very thorough analysis of traffic needs using traffic vehicle registration figures, origin and destination surveys, and other tools, not even thought of in 1925, which show the changes in technology that the further development of the automobile has occasioned.³⁷

While primary emphasis appears to be on the esthetic aspect of the park and recreation program for El Paso, it is conversely so on the use or recreation aspect in the Berkeley Plan. While recreation uses are by no means neglected in the Kessler Plan, small esthetic parks, parkways, and boulevards, with attention to monuments, fountains, etc., are given considerable attention in this Plan. Conversely, while parkways, boulevards, and small esthetic parks are not completely neglected in the Berkeley Plan, the emphasis on recreation is reflected when it refers to parks as being for "quiet recreation and as a visual and emotional relief from the congestion of urban surroundings."³⁸ Thus a basic change from the esthetic to the practical appears to be denoted in this change of basic planning philosophy thirty years in duration. While the city beautiful movement was still affecting plans in 1925, the change from the esthetic to the

³⁷ Berkeley Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

practical economics of city administration appears to have been a factor affecting such a change over this period of thirty years.

The Hopkins Plan³⁹

The Hopkins Plan was prepared by Ladislav Segoe and Associates, city planners in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the Zoning and Planning Commission of the City of Hopkins, Minnesota. The letter of transmittal to the Zoning and Planning Commission is dated June 21, 1954, some twenty-nine years after the transmittal of the Kessler Plan. The Hopkins, Minnesota, projected population for 1960 approximates 16,000 persons. It, like Berkeley, is a bedroom-type city with some industrial base but with a close commuting proximity of a few miles to Minneapolis. The Hopkins Plan is the first for the city and is the result of concern by the City Council and Chamber of Commerce over an increasing parking problem and traffic congestion.

As in the plans for Dayton and Berkeley, a very thorough population projection and analysis has been performed in the Hopkins Plan which shows the improved technology in the field of planning in the years intervening between these

³⁹ Ladislav Segoe and Associates, city planners, City Plan Hopkins, Minnesota, a report prepared for the Zoning and Planning Commission, Hopkins, Minnesota (Cincinnati 2, Ohio: Ladislav Segoe and Associates, 1954).

plans and the Kessler Plan.⁴⁰ As in the previous two contemporary plans studied, a thorough survey of land use was included in the Hopkins Plan.⁴¹ While the Dayton Plan goes very briefly into an economic base survey, similar but more extensive than the Kessler Plan, the Hopkins Plan goes into more detail to show the present and proposed economy of the area, with analysis and application to the Plan.⁴² This is another indication of the advance in urbiculture over the years since the Kessler Plan. It is doubtful that the methods of measuring business and economic activities within the community were developed at all during the time of the Kessler Plan, as there is no indication that there were any measurements available for the economic factors discussed in the Plan.

While one of the elements included in the Kessler, Dayton, and Berkeley Plans, the element of transit studies, is omitted in the Hopkins Plan, this is understandable because of the size of the city studied. Very careful consideration is given traffic and parking in the Hopkins Plan. This undoubtedly reflects the consultant's mandate from the City to study parking and congestion, the factors which prompted the

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 6-14.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 23-28.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 15-23.

study. Traffic counts for volume, destination, and turning movements of traffic were utilized, questionnaires were given to workers at the industrial establishments within the community, and results calculated from these questionnaires helped determine origin and destination data. Noteworthy also in the Hopkins Plan is the extensive use of questionnaires to obtain data for parking and traffic origin and destination analysis.⁴³ By using scientific methods of traffic study, recommendations were made concerning arterial systems and parking facilities. As noted in the previous plans, parking and traffic have become areas of scientific study within the plan rather than educated guesses as reflected in the Kessler Plan.⁴⁴

While the Dayton Plan is very thorough in its analysis of school sites, both present and proposed, the Hopkins Plan is more thorough in its analysis of the school district properties. Each site presently owned is analyzed as to size of grounds, size and condition of structure, and service area. Standards as to size of structure and property for each basic type of school plant are established. Areas for new sites are indicated.⁴⁵ The Kessler Plan did not go into detail concerning the exact location of sites, but rather

⁴³Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 36-62.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 63-78.

indicated certain areas that would need additional sites in the future. No time schedule or standard as to size was included as a part of the recommendations. The standard of one-half mile walking distance for elementary schools was included as a part of the Kessler Plan, which indicated that this basic distance which has since become one of the measurements for the neighborhood concept now generally accepted by planners, was basic thinking in the preparation of the Kessler Plan as far back as 1925.⁴⁶ The technology of school site planning has developed considerably through the intervening years from the Kessler Plan, but the one-half mile distance figure is still acceptable in modern planning.

The park and recreation recommendations of the Hopkins Plan are similar, though on a smaller scale, to those of the Dayton and Berkeley Plans, and differ from the Kessler Plan park proposals in a manner similar to the aforementioned plans.⁴⁷

One of the primary proposals in the Kessler Plan was a civic center.⁴⁸ This topic was not discussed in the Berkeley Plan and was lightly covered in the Dayton Plan. The public buildings portion of the Hopkins Plan is significant

⁴⁶Kessler, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁷Ladislas Segoe and Associates, city planners, op. cit., pp. 79-90.

⁴⁸Kessler, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

in that a very thorough study is made as to the site for a civic center and as to the needs for structures within this civic center. This is far more complex in its presentation than the Kessler Plan.⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that the Hopkins Plan and the Holland Plan discussed in the next segment of this paper contain, as a part of the comprehensive plan submitted, a public works or capital improvement program. The Hopkins Plan contains a very detailed priority system establishing a listed series of capital improvements.⁵⁰ Since the Holland and Hopkins Plans were prepared by consultants for communities without planning staffs, most likely the capital improvements priorities were included as part of the plan package for the purpose of providing a guide line for the lay members of the Planning Commissions for capital improvement recommendations for the twenty years following preparation of the Plan.

There may be two schools of thought concerning the completion of a plan package in this manner. One school may well profess the need for the consultant to show the implementing means for all his plan with a twenty-year maximum for the implementation, while the other school may profess that planning is a process rather than a product and that the

⁴⁹Ladislav Segoe and Associates, city planners, op. cit., pp. 105-117.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 118-125.

consultant does the community a disservice by presenting a twenty-year package. Each has its merit. Regardless of which school of thought is accepted, capital improvement programming is an effective tool for implementing the plan utilized by most large communities.

This well accepted tool of plan implementation, though not specifically mentioned in the Kessler Plan for El Paso, was proposed three years after completion of the Plan by a mayor's committee composed of the five Planning Commission members and five other citizens.⁵¹ The committee was known as the Robertson Committee, named after the chairman who was a member of the Planning Commission. A ten-year capital improvement program was presented to the voters of El Paso but failed to pass. This early effort at a capital improvement program was most likely an idea emanating from the Kessler Plan though not empirically evidenced in either the Kessler Plan or the Robertson Committee report as a recommendation of Mr. Kessler. The close proximity to the completion of the Plan and the fact that the engineer who worked with Mr. Kessler in preparing the Plan was the secretary and statistician of the Robertson Committee seem to point to the fact that this program was probably the result of one of Mr. Kessler's suggestions. As such, it would indicate the

⁵¹ Robertson, op. cit., p. 2.

presence of the concept of this plan implementation tool at the time of the Kessler Plan preparation.

The Holland Plan⁵²

The Holland Plan was prepared by Scott Bagby, city planning consultant of Grand Rapids, Michigan, for the City of Holland, Michigan. The letter of transmittal gives the date of presentation of the report to the Holland area residents and businessmen as April, 1953. The projected population for 1950 for the City of Holland is approximately 17,500. The city is an independent trade center for the surrounding suburban area. It started as a religious colony and was located as such rather than having lines of communication or natural resources serve as factors of location.

The composition of the Holland Plan is somewhat different from the composition of the other plans compared with the Kessler Plan. While the Kessler Plan and the others previously discussed are arranged more or less into separate chapters or categories such as population, land use, arterials, schools, etc., with all material, maps, data, etc. contained in its own chapter or category, the Holland Plan follows a somewhat different pattern. Mr. Bagby relies

⁵² Scott Bagby, An Area Master Plan for Holland, Michigan (Holland, Michigan: City of Holland, 1953)

strongly on the narrative form of presentation with simple graphic illustrations. The narrative is written in terms easily understood by the "butcher, baker, and candlestick maker" rather than in the more complex technical terms which planners and most persons associated with the formation of a plan ordinarily understand. Basically, the Holland Plan contains most of the elements of the other plans compared with the Kessler Plan.

The population survey of the Holland Plan is much more limited than those of the other plans compared herein with the Kessler Plan. It does make use of figures from the 1940 census. The predictions made within the Holland Plan are made in narrative form, as in the Kessler Plan, and do not reflect the intensity of study reflected in the other contemporary plans used for comparative purposes.⁵³ There is no attempt, in the Holland Plan, to analyze the economic base of the community other than to reflect its growth through census figures and a light analysis of historical development. In this respect the Holland Plan differs from the Kessler Plan as well as the other contemporary plans studied, in that it does not have a thorough economic base study. Land use is covered thoroughly in the Holland Plan, as in the other contemporary plans. The arrangement of text

⁵³Ibid., pp. 15-19.

and maps differs from these other modern plans, however. Regardless of the composition, land use and land use patterns in the contemporary plans differ tremendously in the degree of complexity from the treatment of land use in the Kessler Plan. Land use is not surveyed in the Kessler Plan but is covered generally by narrative. In other parts of the Plan the Holland Plan does not differ greatly from the Kessler Plan and other contemporary plans studied, other than in the degree of intensity of background study. The Holland Plan, similarly to the Hopkins Plan, has a great degree of emphasis on the public improvement programming phase of the Plan.

The Holland Plan also places great emphasis on the elimination of through traffic in the residential districts. Mr. Bagby concludes that the residential areas must have protection from through traffic and accessibility by adequate major streets.⁵⁴ Since the gridiron pattern does not give this protection, he proposes a simple rearrangement of curbs and pavements so as to require traffic at a regular intersection to make a right angle turn rather than to proceed in a forward manner using the street as an arterial or non-arterial shortcut. This proposal was tried and tested in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the spring of 1955, after five

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 46.

years of public relations to persuade people in a neighborhood to try it. The diversions were constructed by local improvement districts. After almost a year of the operation of this trial, residents who tried it were well pleased and found it to be a sound and practical approach to the neighborhood traffic problem.⁵⁵ This practical approach to problems is significant in this contemporary plan as it is similar to the practical approach to problems which Mr. Kessler presented in the El Paso Plan. Not only in the narrative arrangement of the plan, but also in its common touch to planning problems are the Holland and El Paso Plans similar, even though separated by twenty-eight years of technological improvement in the field of urban planning.

The Tacoma Plan⁵⁶

The Tacoma Plan was prepared by the Tacoma Planning Department with J. Haslett Bell acting as planning consultant. The outline of the Tacoma Plan indicates that the plan was to be prepared in a series of eleven reports, each a self-contained publication representing a portion of the plan. The total of the eleven would represent the entire

⁵⁵ Robert M. Yoder, "Revolt of the Homeowners," The Saturday Evening Post, March 24, 1956, p. 44.

⁵⁶ A series of eleven publications each covering separate elements of a master plan.

plan. These reports were broken into areas of study similar to chapters or portions of the other contemporary plans. The first was published in 1947 with others coming out in from five to fifteen month intervals. The 1960 projected population for Tacoma, as noted in the plan publication entitled "Site - History - Population" is indicated as being between 159,000 persons and 150,660 persons, with the accepted projection being 156,154 persons.⁵⁷

Of the contemporary plans studied, the Tacoma Plan has the most thorough study of population, indicating the use of tools for population predictions not available in the 1920 census, as well as the improved techniques of demography which have developed in the intervening time between the Kessler Plan and the Tacoma Plan.

In a similar manner to the population survey, the portion of the Tacoma Plan which covers the economic base of the community is well-documented.⁵⁸ It does not, however, attempt to analyze or project the figures collected but rather gives a broad introductory statement as to the future economic capabilities of Tacoma based on the facts collected.

⁵⁷City Planning Commission, Tacoma, Washington, Site - History - Population (Tacoma, Washington: City Planning Commission, 1948), pp. 38-45.

⁵⁸City Planning Commission, Tacoma, Washington, What Tacoma Has to Offer (Tacoma, Washington: City Planning Commission, 1948).

Although not as articulate in its presentation of facts, the Kessler Plan does give a broader analysis and prediction of the facts collected than is evident in the Tacoma Plan.

The streets portion of the Tacoma Plan and the Kessler Plan are very similar in the fact that specific street recommendations are made, even to the width of pavement, rounding of curbs, etc.⁵⁹ In the extensive Tacoma Plan freeways are recommended. While the freeway was unknown during the time of the Kessler Plan, the boulevard and parkway were not uncommon. It is interesting to note that the Kessler Plan proposed construction of two grade separations on one of the boulevards which contained few cross streets, "Making a fast traffic route of incalculable benefit to the great residence section north and east of Five Points,"⁶⁰ thus fostering an early beginning of what we now regard as freeway standards.

The Tacoma Plan uses an analysis of motor vehicle registration as the basis for the street needs of the community.⁶¹ No figures of then present or predicted traffic volume were used in the Kessler Plan. Most likely the methods of obtaining them were not common during the time of the El Paso Plan. The Tacoma Plan, as in the majority of the other

⁵⁹City Planning Commission, Tacoma, Washington, Streets (Tacoma, Washington: City Planning Commission, 1950).

⁶⁰Kessler, op. cit., p. 34.

⁶¹City Planning Commission, Tacoma, Washington, Streets, op. cit., pp. 6-10.

contemporary plans studied as a part of this paper, establishes arterial standards with a classification of thoroughfares. The Kessler Plan had a very limited classification system. The classification and establishment of street standards appears to be more complex in the contemporary development of the planning processes. The Tacoma Plan, like its fellow contemporary plans, includes a detailed study on parking. As explained before, parking is a problem that has developed with the increased use of the auto and decreased use of mass transit. While the former was predicted in the Kessler Plan, the latter is the reverse of the Kessler prediction. Regardless of the mistake in its predictions, undoubtedly the increase of auto traffic has brought about an increase in technology to observe the increase of traffic and parking problems and to bring about at least partial solutions for these problems.

The Tacoma Plan, like the Berkeley Plan, includes a well-rounded park and recreation plan⁶² including parkways, passive recreation areas, etc., marking, as in Berkeley and the other contemporary plans, the change from the esthetic to the practical. The neighborhood concept is applied to parks and recreation as well as to schools in the Tacoma Plan.

⁶²City Planning Commission, Tacoma, Washington, Parks - Play Areas - Schools (Tacoma, Washington: City Planning Commission, 1952).

Neighborhoods were not so specifically designated in the Kessler Plan for El Paso. The Kessler Plan did recognize the one-half mile service area for schools which is now commonly recognized, and did recognize the need for play areas in conjunction with the schools. Mr. Kessler called these small neighborhood play areas in connection with the schools community centers instead of neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks in the El Paso Plan served what would now be considered in present day planning thought as a community of several neighborhoods and which would be considered a community park, in our present day planning vocabulary. The Tacoma Plan establishes standards for its various park and recreation uses as well as analyzing population figures as a basis for various park and recreation needs. It further summarizes the inventory sites, facilities, and equipment then presently existing within the community. In almost every respect the Tacoma Plan has a much more thorough treatment of parks, play areas, and schools than was evidenced in the Kessler Plan for El Paso.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The philosophy of the Kessler Plan compared to general present day concepts indicates that many of the currently accepted planning policies were current at the time of the

Plan and were included in the Plan. The Kessler policies and concepts on urban renewal, though not so termed at the time of the Plan; joint school-park facilities; platting standards; regional planning; and school service areas are as current today as at the time of the Plan. They indicate the remarkable planning logic of thirty-four years ago. The street width standards, though increasing in width through the intervening period of time, were indicative of the thoughtful inclusion of street standards as a part of the Plan as early as 1925. The general concept proposed in the Plan of abandoning unnecessary streets is a current one. The use for the abandoned streets proposed in the Plan, which suggested that they be used for parks and playgrounds, is a concept not currently accepted because of the economic implications of maintenance and operation.

The change in economic conditions, labor supply and wage demands have caused the Kessler proposals of City maintenance of parking strips and small parks and playgrounds to become impractical.

The specific comparison of the Kessler Plan of El Paso to the comprehensive plans of Dayton, Ohio; Berkeley, California; Hopkins, Minnesota; Holland, Michigan; and Tacoma, Washington, indicate the following points of conclusion:

1. The basic contents, with the exception of the land use survey and plans, are in both the Kessler Plan and its contemporaries.
2. The basic underlying reasons for the planning process in the Kessler Plan is land economics and esthetics, while its contemporaries use a sounder statistical basis with less emphasis on land use values and esthetics.
3. The urban problems covered in the planning process have increased. With the increase of problem areas, technology has developed for the analysis to suggest efforts for solution of the problems, a notable example being the increased use of the automobile and increased traffic and parking analysis methods.
4. The processes for general urban analysis have increased with the additional years of time between the Kessler Plan and its contemporaries, a notable example being the increase of analysis tools in demography and the change in scope of succeeding censuses since the 1920 census.
5. The economic base studies of the Kessler Plan, as well as its contemporaries, still do not show an organized analysis but rather depend on a survey of current resources with an educated guess of future resources.
6. The contemporary plans rely more on scientific investigation and analysis for future predictions and plans

and less on the integrity and ability of the planner to ascertain by a "rule of thumb" method essential in his qualifications during the time of the Kessler Plan.

7. The neighborhood concept was suggested in the Kessler Plan as in the contemporary plans, but was not defined as thoroughly as in the later plans.

8. The format of the majority of the contemporary plans, when compared to the Kessler Plan, differs from the Kessler Plan. The contemporary plans tend to use the text and to explain further the graphic presentations, figures, and charts, with each area of study self-contained. The Kessler Plan of El Paso relies more on the straight narrative approach with incidental graphic presentations to amplify the text.

9. The establishment and publication of standards such as arterial standards, school service area standards, acre of school grounds/student standards, park area/1000 persons standards, etc., are more frequent and common to the contemporary plans.

10. The increased use of the automobile and the decreased use of mass transit has changed many frames of reference from the time of the Kessler Plan to the time of the contemporary plans studied.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

The following general conclusions are drawn from a historical appraisal of the Kessler Plan:

1. A study by historical observation indicates that the Kessler Plan was adequate in most of the physical areas. Two notable exceptions were:

- a) The public transportation facility proposals, and
- b) The zoning recommendations.

2. The twenty-eight year tenure of Mr. Walter Stockwell, who helped prepare the original Plan, played a major part in guiding the implementation of the Plan.

3. The inadequacies of the Kessler Plan can generally be classified as a result of:

- a) The lack of scientific investigation in the preparation of certain predictions;

- b) The increase in technology in urban studies such as population, land use, traffic, etc., subsequent to completion of the Plan;

- c) The changes in transportation habits and media subsequent to the adoption of the Plan; and

d) The wartime expansion of military facilities in the community.

4. The early proposals for urban renewal, limited access highways, and highway and railroad grade separations were evident as early as 1925, when the Kessler Plan was prepared for El Paso. Thus, they are not necessarily contemporary thoughts originated by today's planner. The degree of development of these proposals as early as 1925 is notable.

5. The predictions for future needs of the community were remarkable in their accuracy in spite of the lack of scientific investigation evident in the Plan.

6. The two major external forces which left their imprint on the Plan were:

- a) The depression of the early 1930 years, and
- b) The return of the country and the El Paso area to a war economy.

7. The depression, while being a disadvantage in many ways, was a blessing to El Paso in that it:

- a) Allowed the City and County to use W.P.A. labor and funds to implement proposals of the Plan, thereby accomplishing some projects prior to their scheduled need; and
- b) Returned tax lots to City ownership, thereby helping the City obtain additional park sites in some underdeveloped areas.

8. The return to a war economy forced the following changes upon the community:

a) An increase in the size of military facilities which brought about a change in the ecological distribution of population in the City originally proposed in the Plan, and brought about certain changes in the development of the physical facilities of the community;

b) An increase in the size of military operations to the point that the government expenditures portion of the community's economic base has become the leading economy; and

c) An increase of population which followed the increase in size and permanency of military facilities.

9. The acceptance of the Plan is apparent from observing the accomplishment of the Plan proposals.

10. The cost of non-acceptance of the Plan is indicated in two specific expenditures which would not have been necessary if the proposals of the Plan had been followed within the time schedule proposed in the Plan. The two costly expenditures did not provide a solution, but were less desirable stopgap measures which were not as adequate as the Plan proposals.

11. The Kessler Plan was identical in general content to the contemporary plans studied, with the exception of land use plans and land use surveys, even though plan formats have been changed through the intervening years.

12. The planning philosophies accepted by today's planners as current planning philosophies were present in many cases within the Kessler Plan.

13. The scientific investigation and the use of urban research methods such as traffic volume measurements, population characteristics studies, land use figures, etc., have replaced the majority of the "rule of thumb" observation methods evident in the Kessler Plan. Thus the contemporary plans rely on scientific investigation and analysis for predictions and plans, rather than upon the integrity and ability of the planner to ascertain future patterns and needs by observation.

14. The contemporary plans reflect more of a dedication to practicality, while the Kessler Plan was dedicated to esthetics and land economics. The Kessler Plan was more involved in "townscape" than traffic volume.

A few positive suggestions drawn from these conclusions include:

1. The planner of today should "make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood . . . make big plans: aim high in hope and work."¹ If the practical solution is greater than the community can accomplish, break

¹Statement by David H. Burnham in The Christian Science Monitor, January 16, 1927.

the solution down into steps that are palatable to the resources of the community, but give them a long range goal for which to strive.

2. The planner should utilize scientific investigation wherever possible for the preparation of predictions.

3. The planner should allow freedom in the textual presentation to extend the plan beyond current limits of transportation. He should plan optimistically for the future by observing present trends, and project them for the future, rather than to extend the limits of the present through future years.

4. The planner should allow for the impact of external forces such as wars and depressions within the textual presentation of the Plan.

5. The planner should look at zoning only as a means of implementing the plan. As such the zoning ordinance should be reviewed and changed periodically to adapt it to the changing development of the plan.

6. The plan should be reviewed periodically and reoriented to adapt results to newer and more scientific methods of urban study.

7. The planners should, as a group, consider further research to isolate and publicize the physical cost to a community of the failure to act upon the recommendations of a plan.

8. The planner should reorient his thinking concerning the projected time period for a comprehensive plan. Thirty years may have appeared adequate in 1925. The twenty-year period of today may well be inadequate in ten years due to increasing technology within the physical and social sciences. In twenty years these sciences may be increasing in technology to the point that only a ten-year projected time period for a comprehensive plan may be adequate.

9. The planner should carefully observe the cyclical trends about him. As the pendulum of planning thinking has swung from the esthetic to the practical and from the use of mass transportation to the use of individual automobiles in the past thirty years, it may well swing back in the direction of the esthetic and the use of mass transportation in the next thirty years as a result of problems occurring from reaching the opposite end of the cycle. As a result, today's plan in respect to these two items may be as invalid thirty years from now as the Kessler Plan is today in this respect.

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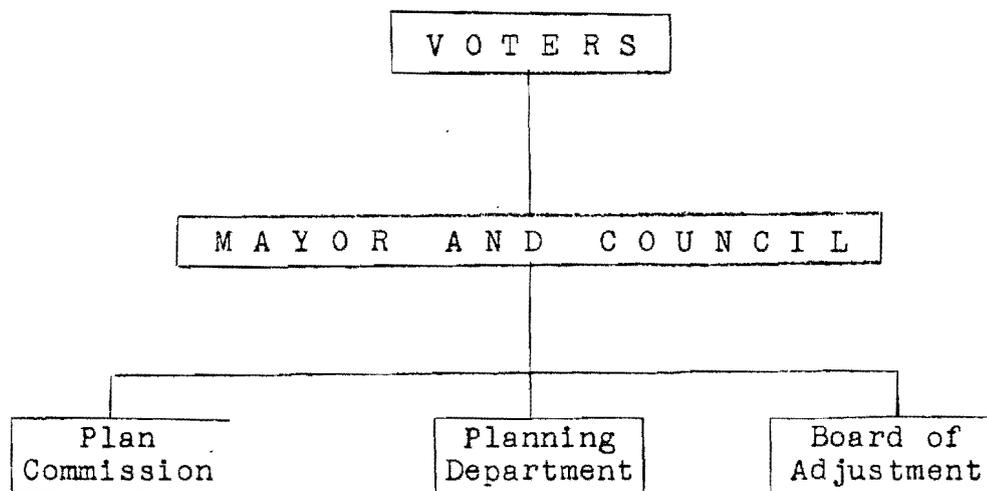
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APPENDIX A

PRESENT EL PASO PLANNING ORGANIZATION¹



PLANNING COMMISSION

Policy Formation Pertaining to Community Development

1. Represents the public and interprets public opinion in regard to city planning.
2. Responsible for assisting city government in explaining public policy to the citizens.
3. Advises city council when requested by the council.
4. Initiates recommendations to city council.

¹Annualress Report 1957, op. cit., pp. 7-9.

5. Annually recommends revision of the 6-year Capital Improvement Program.

6. Performs public hearing function in considering modification of the zoning map and administers procedures for subdivisions. (Recommendations may be appealed to the city council)

7. Advises and assists planning department in the preparation and maintenance of the comprehensive or master plan.

8. In general advises the planning department.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Interprets the Law

1. Rules on application of the law when there is a disagreement between the building official or planning department and the applicant as to the true meaning and application of the zoning ordinance. (Appeal from action of the board is directly to the courts)

2. In cases where the strict application of the general rule of the zoning ordinance is impossible or would result in extreme hardship because of physical factors associated with the particular property not generally present or the location of existing buildings, etc., may issue a variance permit provided such is in the spirit of the ordinance. (Appeal from action of the board is directly to the courts)

3. In specifically enumerated cases may issue conditional use permits for uses which are not generally permitted in a particular zone when it is found the conditions are present under which the legislative body (Council) intended the use be permitted. (Appeal from action of the board is directly to the courts)

4. May recommend architectural approval to the city council when it is found that the proposed structure will not be unduly out of character with other structures in the zone or adjacent zones.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

1. An advisory, coordinating and research agency serving the Mayor and Council as well as other departments of the city.

2. Acts as the secretariat of the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.

3. Assists in the administration of the zoning ordinance and platting regulations.

4. Coordinates and assists in preparation of the 6-year Capital Improvement Budget.

5. Responsible for the staff work connected with the preparation and maintenance of a comprehensive plan.

APPENDIX B

DETAILED THOROUGHFARE PROPOSALS

INTER-CITY THOROUGHFARES

U. S. Highway 80 East¹

At the time of the Kessler Plan this highway was routed eastward via Texas Street and Alameda Avenue. This was the only major thoroughfare serving the Lower Rio Grande Valley. North Loop Road was, at the time of the Plan, only a narrow farm-to-market road serving the agricultural areas of this Lower Valley. The plan recommended the designation of a thoroughfare plan for the Lower Valley, This was to be the guide for platting east of the City limits. The Plan further recommended that Alameda Avenue be widened from Boone Avenue to Val Verde Street, moving the trolleys to the center of the street, and that a wide thoroughfare be built on both sides of the trolley line from Val Verde Street to Sambrano Street. At the time of the Plan El Paso County was building an 80-foot thoroughfare from Sambrano Street to the Ascarate District

¹See Figure IX following Appendix C for map showing thoroughfares.

along the interurban line. The opening of Pera Street as a thoroughfare from Magoffin Street to Washington Park was recommended.

For traffic destined for the Lower Valley north of the tracks, the Kessler Plan proposed a thoroughfare developed along Missouri, Madera, Manzana, Stephenson Streets, and Womble Road. The Plan stated that the immediate construction of such a thoroughfare was not imperative for the then immediate future but that the right-of-way should be developed as practical. This new route would necessitate the opening of Missouri Street from Cotton Street to Piedras Street, the opening of Madera Street westward to Missouri Street, the construction of a new street through Concordia Cemetery connecting Madera Street and Manzana Street, the construction of a new street segment connecting Manzana and Stephenson Streets, and the construction and widening of Stephenson Street to the Fort Bliss Spur Road. It was recommended that Stephenson Street east of Crockett Avenue be 100 feet in width to accommodate a future trolley line. It was further recommended that Womble Road be constructed with a 100-foot right-of-way from the end of Trowbridge Street to North Loop Road near its intersection with the Fort Bliss Spur Road.

The Plan further recommended the construction of a

Riverside Drive along the Rio Grande River bank and the construction of an unnamed thoroughfare in the location of the presently constructed Delta Drive.²

By 1935 the Rio Grande River course had been straightened and levees built. The bottleneck at the Ascarate District was no longer present, with the acquisition by the County of the lands now developed for Ascarate Park. The Lower Rio Grande Valley plan, the preparation of which the Kessler Plan proposed, was completed and accepted in 1935. It proposed the extension of Delta Drive through the Lower Valley to Ysleta.

In 1942 a proposal was made to extend Delta Drive across Cordova Island to connect with 2nd Street, thus making a through route from the Depot to Ascarate which would be independent of Alameda and Texas Streets and the U. S. Highway 80 East traffic.³

In 1943 a review of the 1925 Kessler Plan indicated that Alameda Avenue had been widened as proposed in the Plan. The Pera Street-Magoffin Avenue thoroughfare had not been constructed, however.⁴

In 1944 the Texas State Highway Department prepared a Preliminary Street and Highway Plan for El Paso and Vicinity

²Kessler, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

³Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 5-9.

⁴Annual Progress Report 1942, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

This plan was to be the guide for post-war highway construction in the area. This plan proposed a new route for U. S. Highway 80 East, leaving its then present route four miles east of Ascarate following the levee road to Smelertown.⁵ Until the new route was constructed a routing followed its then current routing to Magoffin, crossing over Cotton Street to Overland Street and along Overland Street to a viaduct carrying the route over the Santa Fe Railroad yards to Doniphan Drive. The plan was hastily prepared to obtain data for pending post-war Federal legislation. The Planning Commission noted:⁶

While the prospect of Federal funds is tempting, we should be over alert so that no hurried plans we adopted will be contrary to the well-considered schemes of the City for grade separation and traffic streets.

The plan for highways which is determined upon now will effect the shape of the City for generations to come and the viewpoint should be broad and no avoidable mistakes should be made, but costs, even if not directly on the City, cannot be disregarded.⁷

The Planning Commission, after studying the proposal of the highway department, concluded that the U. S. Highway 80 East proposal crossing Cordova Island was impractical unless or until the Cordova Island crossing could be obtained by international agreement. The Commission recommended the

⁵City Plan Commission, El Paso, Texas, Annual Progress Report 1944, (El Paso, Texas: City Plan Commission, 1944), pp. 1-5.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 2.

adoption of the Overland Street route proposed with the change of the east portion of the routing to include an overpass over the Franklin Canal and the railroad at the International Brick Company. This would provide a new road constructed along the north side of the Cordova Island boundary to the south shore of the Franklin Canal at Washington Park, along the south shoulder of the canal to the Hawkins Way-Alameda Avenue junction. It was noted by the Commission that such a routing would have a limited access character by virtue of the canal along one side of it and the international boundary along the other side in two different portions of the route. It was concluded that such a route would give fast access to town from the airport, coliseum, the industrial area at North Loop Road, and Ascarate Park.

The Commission proposed the name of this route to be the Overland Express Highway and recommended that the City promote the project in every way possible.⁸ By 1946 the Overland Express Highway right-of-way was being purchased. In 1947 there was a decision to reroute the Overland Highway to miss Overland Street all together. Plans were prepared to widen 1st and 2nd Streets for this highway and to have this route connect with the Overland Express Highway at the Cordova Island boundary.

⁸Ibid., pp. 1-5.

Instead of having the viaduct connect the new right-of-way in a northwesterly direction with Overland Street, it would connect in a southwesterly direction with 1st Street. 1st and 2nd Streets would be connected with a diagonal thoroughfare along the south boundary of the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks. By moving the viaduct to 1st Street the large church and the Tays Housing Project would not be destroyed or damaged by the project.⁹ 2nd Street would be widened.

This alternate plan was proposed to avoid having through traffic traverse downtown streets as would have been the case on Overland Street. 2nd Street would be far enough from the center of the central business district to act as a bypass but close enough to take traffic destined for the central business district to a point of distribution near it.¹⁰

By 1948 the 2nd Street portion of U. S. Highway 80 East was widened and constructed from Santa Fe Street to Cotton Street. The route had been redesignated as Paisano Drive. In this year also contracts were let for construction of Paisano Drive from Cotton Street to its intersection with Alameda Avenue and Hawkins Way. Controversy arose over the

⁹See Figure VI for location of these streets and the Tays Housing Project.

¹⁰Annual Progress Report 1947, op. cit., p. 3.

construction of a grade separation at Alameda Avenue. Owners of adjacent property claimed large consequential damage in a belief that their property values would be injured. The Planning Commission, along with civic organizations, went on record approving the construction of the separation.¹¹ The Commission went on record as being of the opinion that "damages, if any, were greatly over estimated, and that the separation will be valuable in promoting safety and facilitating the flow of traffic at this important junction."¹²

Plans for the western segment of Paisano Drive were prepared to continue the route from Santa Fe Street.

By 1949 the Commission noted the reduction of traffic congestion on Texas Street and Alameda Avenue as a result of the new Paisano Drive construction.¹³

The Commission noted, concerning the completed portion of Paisano Drive, the limited access features of the completed portion of this facility, and made the following policy statement concerning zoning along Paisano Drive:

The Drive in this portion is largely through an area not zoned for business but there is a constant pressure for changes in the zoning which would permit the commercialization of the road with a loss of some of its advantages. The present owners abutting on the highway

¹¹ Annual Progress Report 1948, op. cit., p. 1.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

were well-compensated for all the land that was taken, and have not been asked to pay, by assessments, for any of the improvement work. Their property as 'Residential' will have an increase in value because of the improved accessibility provided by the highway and there is no injustice in denying to them special advantages which would be a detriment to the general public interest in the highway. A million dollars for right-of-way purchases by the City and over three million dollars for construction costs by the State will be the ultimate investment in Paisano Drive. The Commission feels such an investment to provide a safe and fast road into and through El Paso should be protected. It therefore recommends again that commercial development along the highway be discouraged by retaining the present zoning and by retaining and increasing the City's property holdings along the drive. There is an economic fallacy in the argument often used that exceptions to good planning and zoning may be justified in order to get property on the tax rolls where it will contribute to the support of the City. The taxpaying ability of a community depends on many factors affecting the general prosperity, but investors are usually ready to make improvements for which there is demand at a profit. As long as competitive sites are available, if the improvement is not made in one place because of zoning, it will be made in another, where zoning permits, and if it is not made at all there will be more business for the taxpaying enterprises which are already established.¹⁴

In 1949 also the Commission made recommendations for widening North Loop Road and Womble Road. It was recommended that the right-of-way on North Loop Road be increased in width from fifty feet to eighty feet.¹⁵

Although the 1925 plan recommended the construction of Womble Road on a 100-foot right-of-way, the construction prior to 1943 was made on an 80-foot right-of-way ignoring

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 7.

the recommendations of the Plan. By 1949 the necessity for a wider right-of-way had become apparent and the Commission recommended to the City Council the original proposal of the Kessler Plan for a 100-foot right-of-way. The recommended additional right-of-way from Howze Street to Hawkins Way was purchased as a result of the recommendation.¹⁶

In 1950, with the Bataan Trainway project in the downtown area nearly completed, additional grade separations were studied. A grade separation over the Texas and Pacific Railroad right-of-way and Paisano Drive at Cotton Street was recommended and a grade separation for North Loop Road was again recommended.¹⁷

By 1952 contracts had been let on the western portion of Paisano Drive connecting it from Santa Fe Street to Doniphan Drive and West Main Street. The congestion on U. S. Highway 80 East from the eastern terminus of Paisano Drive to Ysleta had become apparent and focused attention on the need for further thoroughfares in the Lower Valley. The Commission proposed that the Riverside Drive originally proposed in the Kessler Plan be constructed along the Rio Grande from Hammett Boulevard to Ysleta. The river would give it a limited access character similar to Paisano Drive without

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 8.

the usual right-of-way expense. The opening of Delta Drive to Ascarate Park was also suggested. The end of this year saw the completion of Paisano Drive.¹⁸

In 1953 the first urban expressway project for El Paso was proposed by the State Highway Department. A complete report on a highway plan for El Paso was prepared by a highway coordinating committee including City, County, and Chamber of Commerce officials. The route for such a project was purchased by El Paso County from the County line to the then present City limits. The proposed route paralleled North Loop Road approximately one mile north of it. It crossed Womble Road just east of Hawkins Way and ended at Stephenson Street and Hawkins Way. The proposed route through town followed the original proposals of the 1925 Kessler Plan for the Missouri-Madera-Manzana-Stephenson thoroughfare. The expressway project was the major proposal of the highway plan completed this year. Other projects in the same plan included the widening of U. S. Highway 80 East from Ascarate to Ysleta and from Ysleta to Fabens, a grade separation for Alameda Avenue and North Loop Road, the widening of Womble Road from Montana Street to North Loop Road, the construction of Delta Drive continuing through the Lower Valley from Ascarate, and

¹⁸Annual Progress Report 1952, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

the construction of the Riverside Drive.¹⁹

To date, U. S. Highway 80 East has been widened to four lanes from Paisano Drive-Hawkins Way to Fabens²⁰ with the exception of a four-block portion in the Ysleta business district. Delta Drive has been constructed from Hammett Boulevard to Alameda Avenue at Ascarate Park. The portions of Alameda Avenue between Texas Street and North Loop Road are adequate for four moving lanes of traffic and turning lanes as a result of the removal of the trolley and inter-urban lines which were planted in a center parkway arrangement as proposed in the Kessler Plan. The Pera-Magoffin thoroughfare has not been constructed. With Paisano Drive and a one-way street pattern changing the traffic flow and needs of that area, it is improbable that it will take place.

The Missouri-Madera-Manzana-Stephenson route will be developed as the new urban expressway is developed through El Paso. The right-of-way along this route was not purchased as proposed in the Plan, and will be more costly today than thirty years ago when originally proposed. However, the development of these streets for business purposes as a result of the increased traffic of a thoroughfare would probably have made this route impossible for the expressway had it been

¹⁹Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

²⁰See Figure II to locate Fabens and Ysleta.

developed prior to this date. Womble Road has finally been constructed on a 100-foot right-of-way as proposed in the Plan. The right-of-way was purchased during the past few years at an expense that would not have been necessary if the Plan had been followed and an early purchase of the needed right-of-way had been made. Paisano Drive has been completed and is carrying through traffic around the downtown core.

The programming of funds for 1959-1965 includes the construction of Delta Drive from Ascarate Park to Ysleta,²¹ and the further widening of pavement on North Loop Road to make it a four-lane thoroughfare.²²

U. S. Highway 80 West (Mesa Road)

At the time of the preparation of the Kessler Plan this highway was under construction traversing the western slopes of Mount Franklin. While the Plan focused primary attention on the road that is now known as U. S. Highway 80 Alternate or Doniphan Drive, no recommendations were made concerning any future expansion of the Mesa Road route. This could be a natural reaction in the fact that Mesa Road was new and under construction. The Plan did, however, call for

²¹ Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 33.

²² Ibid., p. 38.

a symmetrical expansion of the City which would focus additional attention on the Mesa route.²³

By 1942 the symmetrical development had begun to occur and the Planning Commission began to look at the other traffic routes going northwesterly. The widening of Stanton Street, parallel to and one block east of Mesa Avenue, was recommended for that portion of Stanton Street between Blacker and Cincinnati Streets. Also, the extension of Stanton Street north of Mississippi Street to connect with North Kansas Street as proposed in 1939 was reviewed and recommended.²⁴

By 1948 the Mission Hills area had begun to develop. The Commission recommended as a measure of relief for a growing congestion on Mesa Avenue that not only a diagonal thoroughfare from Stanton Street into Kansas Street be constructed but that a connection from Stanton Street to Mesa Avenue be built. A new plan for the northern terminus of Stanton Street was prepared and it was recommended further that the City purchase all of Blocks 225 and 229 of the Alexander Addition west of Mesa Avenue while it was vacant. The purchase of this land would make it possible for the City to build a grade separation carrying traffic on Baltimore Street under Mesa Avenue. This would allow for better dispersion

²³Kessler, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

²⁴Annual Progress Report 1942, op. cit., p. 5.

of traffic from the Sun Bowl parking areas.²⁵

In 1951, with one-way streets under discussion, the Commission recommended the opening and extension of Oregon Street with a diagonal connection to Mesa Avenue north of Baltimore Street. This would permit an easy transition for Oregon Street and Mesa Avenue as a one-way traffic couplet.²⁶

In 1953 the highway plan projects prepared by the Highway Coordinating Committee indicated a need for widening and straightening Mesa Road from Baltimore Street to the Cross-roads.²⁷

To date, U. S. Highway 80 West (Mesa Road) has been widened from Baltimore Street to Brentwood Avenue with a median strip and turning lanes in the center. Stanton Street has been widened and connects with North Kansas Street at Mississippi Street, as proposed by the Planning Commission. No connection with Mesa Avenue has been built, nor has an underpass for Baltimore Street been constructed. Oregon Street does not extend past Baltimore Street. The new additions of Coronado Hills and Crestmont have increased the traffic flow on Mesa Road and the present construction of the new country club on this route indicates the possibility of further

²⁵ Annual Progress Report 1948, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

²⁶ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

²⁷ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 2.

congestion along it. The widening of Mesa Road to a four-lane divided thoroughfare from Brentwood Street to Crossroads was voted as a bond issue item in 1958 and programmed for 1959-1960 construction.

U. S. Highway 80A West (Doniphan Drive)

During the preparation of the Kessler Plan this highway was the main westbound highway leaving the City. It actually traverses a northerly direction to Las Cruces, New Mexico, before turning westward again. At the Crossroads it is met presently by the Mesa Road and both routes continue along Doniphan Drive.²⁸ The Kessler Plan described this route as follows:

To the upper valley West Main, West Missouri, and West Rio Grande Streets may be followed, converging at the viaduct over three railroads and paralleling the Santa Fe Railroad through the Mesella Valley. This road shares the narrow pass with three railroads, a trolley line, and the river, and must always carry heavy traffic. It is narrow and dangerous in places and should be widened in the near future, as improvements along the road will make this increasingly difficult if the acquisition of the necessary property is long delayed. At the west end of the Viaduct there is a steep grade which limits the loads which can be hauled in to the city from the north. Horses frequently drop from over-exertion in attempting this pull and have to be killed. To avoid this grade and to make an alternative route into the lower part of the city there is proposed a road following the river bank to a point west of the Union Station and then crossing the canal and the Santa Fe tracks to South Davis Street. This would necessitate a grade crossing at the head of

²⁸Kessler, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

the Santa Fe yards, but these are not very active tracks and such a crossing offers the practical way into the business section on a level grade. This river road might be continued to Ninth Street.²⁹

In addition to these recommendations, the Plan more specifically recommended that this route be widened to the Courchesne Bridge.

By 1943 the roadway to the Courchesne Bridge had been widened by the County and it was hard to visualize the old narrow road. Horses pulling heavy loads had ceased to be a problem, but nevertheless the depot road had been constructed and even the portion to 9th Street had been constructed and placed in use.³⁰

The construction of Paisano Drive brought renewed interest in improving this route. The Paisano Drive routing included the construction of a four-lane thoroughfare connecting the portion of Doniphan Drive from the West Main Viaduct to the 2nd Street portion of Paisano Drive. This included construction of a viaduct over the rail yards west of the Union Station. It also included reconstruction of the West Main Viaduct in such a manner as to carry southbound traffic turning left, above and over the Doniphan Drive main traffic.

The urban expressway program presented by the State Highway Department picked the Doniphan Drive routing for the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

³⁰ Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

general location of the westbound U. S. Highway 80 urban expressway in 1953. Proposed, along with the freeway routing, were these projects of U. S. Highway 80A.

1. Widening to four lanes of that portion of Doniphan Drive from the cement plant to Courchesne School.

2. Widening to four lanes of that portion of Doniphan Drive from the Courchesne School to the Crossroads.

3. Widening to four lanes of that portion of Doniphan Drive from the Crossroads to the New Mexico state line.

4. Extension of Main Street Viaduct to Yandell Boulevard.³¹

To date the latter two proposals have been fulfilled and a portion of the highway north of the cement plant has been constructed to urban expressway standards.

The portion of the expressway from the New Mexico state line to the Mesa Road is presently under construction. A portion of the right-of-way for the expressway south of the Mesa Road has been purchased. A 1956 bond issue was voted by City residents to connect this expressway from its existing right-of-way to Doniphan Drive. A 1958 bond issue was voted to bring those portions of Doniphan Drive between the Main Street Viaduct and the cement plant to urban expressway standards.

³¹ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

The trolley line has been removed and the narrow pass shared by the rail line and highway now will be developed for an urban expressway. The depot road has developed into a four-lane thoroughfare carrying traffic over the rail yards. The Plan has been completely fulfilled with respect to this thoroughfare and even more thorough development was was pictured in 1925 is taking place.

U. S. Highway 54

The Plan proposed the route for the Alamagordo Highway to come from town on Montana Street, or any of the streets paralleling it, to Piedras Street, and thence on Pershing Drive to Dyer Street. It was further recommended that when the Altura Boulevard grade separation was completed, that this highway be rerouted under the railroad at that point and continue up Lackland Street to the Tomkins Road diagonal and thence back to Dyer Street. This recommendation was made to have traffic avoid the Dyer Street rail grade crossing.

A proposal was also made in the Plan that if the El Paso Southwestern Railroad line between Fort Bliss and the rail yards could be abandoned, that the right-of-way along the tracks from Dyer Street to Memorial Park be converted to a boulevard with traffic from Alamagordo entering the City via Grant Avenue and Rio Grande Street. It was pointed out

that such a route would have few cross streets and the grade separations at Copia Street and proposed at Altura Boulevard would be retained for a fast flow of traffic. The railroad grade crossing on Dyer Street was eliminated by a rail overcrossing as a part of the Federal works program of the depression years so the use of Lackland Street and the Altura Boulevard grade separation was not necessary.³² By 1942 the increased traffic to Fort Bliss caused the Planning Commission to recommend the widening of Pershing Drive from Stevens Street to Dyer Street. Since the project was proposed for the near future, property owners were notified so that new trees could be planted near the sidewalks and could have some growth when the existing parkway trees were removed.³³

In 1944 when the Texas State Highway Department presented its Preliminary Plan of Street Development for El Paso and Vicinity, they renewed the proposal originally made in the Kessler Plan for a thoroughfare along the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad right-of-way, with grade separations at Piedras Street, Copia Street, and Altura Boulevard. The Planning Commission, in reviewing the proposals of the Highway Department, was of the opinion that the portion of the highway plan from Cotton Street to the West Main Street Viaduct using

³² Kessler, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

³³ Annual Progress Report 1942, op. cit., p. 5.

Rio Grande Street, and West Yandell Boulevard, traversed a purely residential area and that the widening of the streets to a 90-foot right-of-way and the routing of heavy traffic over them would be detrimental to those areas. It was further stated that the Planning Commission was of the opinion that the need for their particular route was distant and that the portion of this highway project west of Cotton Street should be postponed until the need becomes more apparent.³⁴

In 1946 the widening of Pershing Drive was still a proposal of the Planning Commission.³⁵ By 1950 the Commission was proposing to widen Grant Avenue by six feet from Cotton Street to Piedras Street to take care of anticipated increased traffic upon completion of the Cotton Street overpass. It was felt that this would be one step toward the complete goal of having this thoroughfare become part of U. S. Highway 54.³⁶

By 1951 the Commission had established a 9-foot building line on the west side of Dyer Street and a 15-foot building line on the east side of Dyer Street. On the portions from the El Paso Southwestern Railroad underpass to Van Buren Street this was the case. North of Van Buren Street the right-of-way was one hundred feet. When a change of zoning to permit a

³⁴ Annual Progress Report 1944, op. cit., p. 4.

³⁵ Annual Progress Report 1946, op. cit., p. 2.

³⁶ Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 3.

business center with offstreet parking in front was permitted on the east side of Dyer Street between Van Buren Street and Monroe Street, it was arranged so that the 15-foot strip along the east side of Dyer Street was deeded to the City for widening this arterial. The Commission decided to make this the policy in future business zoning as it extends southward from Monroe Street.³⁷

In 1953 the Highway Coordinating Committee representing the City, County, and Chamber of Commerce prepared a master highway plan for El Paso. Proposed in this plan for U. S. Highway 54 was the widening of Dyer Street to four lanes, and the construction of the thoroughfare next to the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks with the widening of Grant Avenue, Rio Grande Street, and West Yandell Boulevard to the Main Street Viaduct.³⁸

To date the El Paso Southwestern Boulevard has not been constructed but Pershing Drive and Dyer Street have been widened from Stevens Street to Evalyn Street at the south side of the Logan Heights Cantonment.

The growth of the north east section of El Paso has

³⁷ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

³⁸ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 2.

required the construction of other arterials to relieve the local traffic load from U. S. Highway 54. These include the construction of a four-lane thoroughfare on Alabama Street from Grant Avenue and to Fred Wilson Road. Because of the increased traffic and growth of North East El Paso, the voters approved bond issue funds for the extension of Alabama Street to Atlas Drive. In platting areas from Atlas Drive north the City has required 120-foot right-of-way from subdividers to extend this thoroughfare. The City has further paid for the paving of all width in excess of forty feet of paving and placed the median strip in this 120 feet of right-of-way. Also included in the 1958 bond issue funds were moneys for construction of Railroad Drive along the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks north of Fred Wilson Road and McCombs Street to tie in with a state farm-to-market road being constructed in the northern portion of the County, and the widening of Sheridan Street. Sheridan Street, Alabama Street, and McCombs Street-Railroad Drive thus provide three alternate routes for North East El Paso local traffic to keep it off U. S. Highway 54.

Also included in the 1958 bond issue were funds for widening Dyer Street (U. S. Highway 54) to four lanes from Evalyn Street to the New Mexico state line.³⁹

³⁹Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit.,
pp. 30-40.

Although the North East El Paso area has grown in a somewhat unsymmetrical manner, not foreseen in the Plan, the conditions of the Plan along with the alternate routes appear to have been adequate.

U. S. Highway 62

The Kessler Plan indicated that the road to Hueco Tanks could be improved and extended to the Pecos Valley opening up to the commerce of El Paso a great undeveloped region, and making a highway leading into the plains country of West Texas. It was further indicated that such a road would lead to the then recently discovered Carlsbad Caverns and would help El Paso to capitalize on this natural attraction.⁴⁰

The Texas State Highway Department picked a slightly different route for this highway a few miles to the south of the Hueco Tanks. Its success in opening to the commerce of El Paso the Caverns, the Pecos Valley, and the West Texas plains exceeded even the expectations of Mr. Kessler.

This new highway, prophesied in the original Kessler Plan, now known as U. S. Highway 62, entered the City via a new right-of-way connecting with the end of Montana Street as indicated in the Plan and continued as an extension thereof.

⁴⁰Kessler, op. cit., p. 21.

The use of Montana Street with its poor articulation at Piedras Street and the joint use of Montana Street west of Piedras Street by U. S. Highway 54 created a point of congestion at this Five Points intersection presenting problems for this thoroughfare which brought about the proposal for construction of a new street connecting Hueco Street at Montana Street with Wyoming Street at Piedras Street. This would enable U. S. Highway 54 traffic to be diverted at Stevens Street to Hueco Street and thus to Wyoming and Montana Streets. The traffic to be diverted over this new thoroughfare would thus eliminate the poor articulation and congestion of Five Points. The Wyoming-Hueco plan was first proposed in 1928.⁴¹

By 1946 the traffic on U. S. Highway 62 plus the airport traffic had reached the point that recommendations were made for increasing the pavement width of Montana Street from Stevens Street to Radford Avenue.⁴²

By 1949 the proposed Wyoming-Hueco thoroughfare had not been constructed and the construction of expensive improvements and rising land prices had made building this thoroughfare too costly as proposed. A revised plan by the Planning Commission brought the Wyoming Street traffic around to a right-angle intersection with Piedras Street and tied it

⁴¹Robertson, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴²Annual Progress Report 1946, op. cit., p. 2.

in to White Oak Street. It was proposed that a new connection between White Oak Street east of Piedras Street and the Hueco-Montana Streets intersection be worked out.⁴³ By 1950, in order to provide for the traffic load increasing on Montana Street as residential subdivisions occurred along the right-of-way, it was proposed by the State Highway Department that the Montana Street right-of-way be one hundred twenty feet wide along these new subdivisions which would allow for a center parkway strip. With the construction of new housing subdivisions along Montana Street in the vicinity of the airport, the 120-foot width was observed. Since this land was sold by the City from former airport property, in addition to the 120-foot right-of-way an access road was constructed beside Montana Street limiting access points to the highway.⁴⁴

By 1953 the widening of Montana Street recommended by the Planning Commission in 1946 was finally taking place and had been executed as far as Radford Avenue. In 1953 it was proposed that the widening continue from Radford Avenue to the City limits.⁴⁵ To date this has developed as proposed; however, no connection bringing this highway into the City via Wyoming Street has been constructed. The introduction of one-way streets on Montana Street and Yandell Boulevard

⁴³Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴⁴Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴⁵Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 2.

as far as Piedras Street, the channelization of traffic on Piedras Street, and the articulation of Wyoming Street and Yandell Boulevard intersection at Piedras Street have eliminated some of the congestion in the Five Points district but it is still a major traffic problem.

Proposed in the 1959-60 funds of the capital improvement program at an estimated cost of \$516,000 is the extension and re-articulation of the intersection of Montana and Piedras Streets to help eliminate this major point of congestion in Five Points.⁴⁶

INTRA-CITY THOROUGHFARES

Missouri-Madera-Stephenson Streets

The Kessler Plan recommended that the Missouri-Madera-Stephenson Streets route north of the railroad tracks be opened for traffic which was destined for the Lower Valley. This involved opening Missouri Street from Cotton Street across the railroad eastward to Piedras Street, extension of Madera Street westward from Piedras Street to its intersection with Missouri Street, construction of a new street connecting Madera Street with Manzana Street, a new street connecting Manzana and Stephenson Streets, widening of

⁴⁶ Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit.,
p. 37.

Stephenson Street and its extension to Womble Road.⁴⁷

In 1951 Missouri Street was opened and paved to Piedras Street and it was recommended by the Planning Commission that a right-angle intersection at Piedras Street join Missouri and Oro Streets in a manner similar to the re-articulation of Wyoming and White Oak Streets.⁴⁸

In 1953 this route originally proposed in the Kessler Plan was recommended as the route for the expressway construction from U. S. Highway 80 East.⁴⁹ Its adoption and purchase of right-of-way by El Paso County for this route from Stephenson Street and Hawkins Way east to the county line help assure the Missouri-Madera-Stephenson Streets route for freeway construction. To date this route is still proposed for freeway construction although the right-of-way has not been purchased.

St. Vrain-Ange Streets

The Kessler Plan proposed this thoroughfare for north-south communication between Cotton Street and Campbell Street. It was noted that St. Vrain Street was the last street to cross the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks from

⁴⁷Kessler, op. cit., p. 66.

⁴⁸Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁹Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 1.

the downtown area to Cotton Street. Ange Street was adjacent to the high school and could be extended to the new proposed Rim Road, thus creating a through north-south thoroughfare from Chihuhuita past the Rim Road. It was proposed that this thoroughfare cross the railroad yards with an overpass and that a re-orientation of the portion of Ange Street north of the high school be made in order to follow the contours of the land up to the Rim Road.⁵⁰ Although no specific construction of any part of this thoroughfare had occurred by 1943, the Planning Commission, in its re-study of the Kessler Plan that year, recommended that it should be remembered, as it was the only practical connection with the Rim between Stanton Street and Brown Streets.⁵¹

To date no further action has occurred on this thoroughfare.

Brown Street

The Plan indicated that Brown Street would become important as the natural entrance into a large undeveloped but usable area, in the Collins and Fisher Surveys. It was proposed that this street cross the railroad yards and join Cotton Street near San Antonio Street, and that a deep under-

⁵⁰ Kessler, op. cit., p. 67.

⁵¹ Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 7.

cut or tunnel take this thoroughfare under the Rim Road connecting it with Kern Place by way of Piedmont Avenue.⁵² Grading and surfacing of Brown Street to an intersection with Kerbey Street and Rim Road was done in 1935 as a depression relief work. To date no further improvements have been made since this 1935 relief work.⁵³ Proposed for use in the fiscal year 1959-60 are funds set aside to relocate Brown Street more in conformance with the original plans, but with an intersection at Rim Road rather than a tunnel or under-cut, thus providing a better arterial facility to connect Cliff Street and Detroit Street extensions with Kern Place.⁵⁴

Cotton Street

The Plan recognized Cotton Street as an important thoroughfare and indicated that nothing should be allowed to keep it from extending in a straight line across the yards of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. It specifically recommended that this thoroughfare be opened across all railroad yards eventually, that the jog at Grandview Avenue be eliminated, and that the portion below the Texas and Pacific Railroad yards be widened.⁵⁵

⁵² Kessler, loc. cit.

⁵³ Annual Progress Report 1935, op. cit., p. 6:

⁵⁴ Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁵ Kessler, loc. cit.

The Cotton Street overpass over the Southern Pacific Railroad yards was included as a part of the trainway project and by 1951 this overpass was completed.⁵⁶ In 1949 the Planning Commission reiterated the original plan proposal of a grade separation across the Texas and Pacific Railroad yards. It was pointed out that an overhead structure over these tracks could also carry traffic over Paisano Drive with an interchange at Paisano Drive. Paisano Drive was not originally proposed in the Kessler Plan.⁵⁷ In 1953 this latter overpass was included as a project in the highway plan prepared by the Highway Coordinating Committee which represented the City, County, and Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁸ To date, no further action has been taken for such a structure, although it is still included in the current planning of the City Planning Department.

Piedras Street

The Plan indicated that this street should be a major thoroughfare from the International Boundary to the McKelligan Canyon Road. It predicted that ultimately a bridge to Juarez

⁵⁶ Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵⁷ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 6.

⁵⁸ Annual Progress Report 1953, op. cit., p. 2.

would be built at the foot of this street. It specifically recommended the elimination of the two railroad grade crossings on Piedras Street.⁵⁹ In 1949 the grade crossing at the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and Piedras Street was placed first on priority for grade separation.⁶⁰ To date no progress has been made in obtaining either grade separation. The connection of this street with McKelligan Canyon Road has been accomplished though no further discussion has been held concerning an international bridge of the south end. The growth of the Five Points business district along with the switch of primary transportation from mass transit to the automobile created additional problems at the Five Points portion of Piedras Street. The more recent trend by the traffic department of the City has been to avoid forcing traffic into the Five Points District. In order to alleviate the Five Points traffic problem new emphasis has been placed on Alabama Street three blocks west of Piedras Street to funnel traffic north of Five Points into town via Arizona and Grant Streets.

In 1950 the increasing north-end traffic prompted the Planning Commission to request that the paving width on Alabama Street from Fort Boulevard to San Jose Street be

⁵⁹ Kessler, loc. cit.

⁶⁰ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 5.

increased to at least forty feet. Alabama Street, as a supplement to Piedras Street, was designated as the major arterial to serve the western part of the North East El Paso area.⁶¹ In 1957 the widening of Alabama Street from Grant Avenue to Pierce Street was accomplished. In 1959-60 the portion of Alabama Street from Pierce Street to Fred Wilson Road is programmed for accomplishment with moneys from a 1956 bond issue.⁶² 1958 bond issue funds are proposed to extend this thoroughfare to Hondo Pass Drive in the 1960-61 budget year.⁶³ Although Alabama Street is only three blocks west of Piedras Street, it is near enough to Piedras Street to take a portion of traffic off Piedras Street. The heavy concentration of growth in the North East El Paso section which was not anticipated in the Plan, however, is the prime cause for the new arterial on Alabama Street.

Copia Street

The Plan noted that Copia Street should be destined to be a major thoroughfare by virtue of the fact that it would connect Riverside Drive on the south with the Baptist Sanitarium on the north, with the Alta Vista business district,

⁶¹Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶²Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 31.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 30-31.

Memorial Park, Morningside Park, and also the William Beaumont Army Hospital. The Plan specifically recommended correction of bad articulation at Jackson Street and Hueco Street. It suggested that the drainage ditch in a portion of it eventually be covered and that the right-of-way be widened from seventy feet to one hundred feet from Nashville Street to Fort Boulevard for the purpose of providing for a double-track trolley.⁶⁴ The widening project was proposed by the Robertson Committee in 1928 to be accomplished with \$5,000 to be expended in 1930.⁶⁵

In 1931 the City Council proposed extending Henderson Street southward from Nashville Street to Copia Street in order to divert northbound traffic from Piedras Street. It was indicated at that time that the use of Henderson Street for automobile traffic would be easier than Copia Street north of Nashville Street because of more favorable topography and the absence of the trolley track. The Planning Commission agreed to this slight deviation from the original Plan, indicating that the further development of Copia Street in accordance with the Plan could still be made when such development became desirable.⁶⁶ In its review of the Plan in 1943

⁶⁴ Kessler, loc. cit.

⁶⁵ Robertson, op. cit., p. 18.

⁶⁶ Annual Progress Report 1931, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

the Planning Commission indicated that this new connection from Copia Street to Henderson Street between Frankfort Street and Nashville Street made this thoroughfare to the north a more efficient way than that proposed in the Plan, but the importance of the street was not underestimated in the Plan.⁶⁷

By 1949 traffic on Copia Street had reached proportions that made the Planning Commission develop a specific recommendation concerning the removal of the grade crossing on the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks in order that the heavy traffic on that street might not be endangered and delayed.⁶⁸ In 1952 a link of this thoroughfare was constructed which made its southern terminus Paisano Drive and increased the importance of this street for through traffic.

To date Copia Street from Paisano Drive to Van Buren Street is a major north-south arterial with relatively few commercial areas along its route from Pershing Drive to Van Buren Street. No construction has taken place north of Van Buren Street. Permission has never been obtained to locate this route through the William Beaumont Army Hospital. The Baptist Sanitarium mentioned in the original Plan no longer exists and is now a part of Fort Bliss. Since the construction of this thoroughfare over the Henderson Street routing

⁶⁷ Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 8.

⁶⁸ Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 5.

in 1931 no further construction has been contemplated on the portion of Copia Street north of Nashville Street. In 1958 the Henderson Street name designation was removed from Frankfort Avenue north and the entire paved street has become Copia Street, with the street names appropriately changed. The portion of Copia Street one block west which was proposed for improvement in the Plan has had its name changed to Justice Street.

To date traffic journeying north from Van Buren Street has made a jog along Van Buren Street traveling east one block from Copia Street to Byron Street and thence north to Hayes Avenue, Beaumont Hospital, and Fort Bliss. The extension of Copia Street from Van Buren Street to Hayes Avenue is proposed for capital expenditure in 1960. Although slightly changed in location, this arterial has met the needs and has been necessary as predicted in the Kessler Plan.

Crockett Boulevard

This thoroughfare connecting Altura Boulevard and Pershing Drive on the north with Washington Park on the south was proposed to travel over Boone Street to the Concordia cemetery, connecting at that point with Crockett Street and running to Hastings Street. It was pointed out that this was the only thoroughfare that could go through between

Stevens Street and Marr Street because of the Concordia and Evergreen Cemeteries. Hastings Street was indicated in the Plan as being part of the Outer Circle of boulevards around El Paso and was therefore the northern terminus of Crockett Street. Specific recommendations for this route included opening a crossing across the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, widening this street from Manzana Street to Alameda Avenue for a new trolley line, and widening this street from Manzana to Alamagordo Street to seventy feet.⁶⁹

In 1943 when the Planning Commission reviewed the Plan it was noted that Marr Street had been blocked from being constructed by the enlargement of the Evergreen Cemetery and that Crockett Street had been improved gradually to the point that it needed only paving and a minor alteration which required removal of an adobe shack at the southeast corner of the Concordia Cemetery to make it a useful thoroughfare.⁷⁰ It was noted in 1944 that if this thoroughfare were developed north of Hastings Street to Dyer Street and improved from Hastings Street to Trowbridge Street, it would be a valuable addition to the thoroughfare plan, diverting traffic desiring to go from Dyer Street to Womble Road off the congested segment of Pershing Drive.⁷¹ In 1948

⁶⁹Kessler, op. cit., p. 65.

⁷⁰Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷¹Annual Progress Report 1944, op. cit., p. 5.

this thoroughfare was projected as one which would be valuable for a connection between U. S. Highway 54 and Paisano Drive (U. S. Highway 80), bypassing congested areas, and thus should properly be a project of the State Highway Department.⁷²

It was proposed by the Planning Commission in 1949 that construction on this thoroughfare take place as soon as possible, becoming a part of a city-county highway system supplementary to the state system if necessary. It was further recommended that a grade separation be planned for the crossing of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.⁷³ To date no specific paving or construction has taken place on the thoroughfare; however, the construction of this thoroughfare is programmed for funds in 1962. At that time it will be constructed from Delta Drive to the Dyer Street underpass.⁷⁴

Marr Street

The Plan proposed that Marr Street be opened through the Evergreen Cemetery to connect with Tobin Place, which should then be widened to the proposed Riverside Drive. It

⁷²Annual Progress Report 1948, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

⁷³Annual Progress Report 1949, op. cit., p. 3.

⁷⁴Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

was noted that this was the best location for a north-south thoroughfare between Washington Park and Val Verde Street. It was further noted that at the time of the Plan such a street opening would interfere with no graves in the Evergreen Cemetery, but that interments could soon make it difficult or impossible to get a street through on this location.⁷⁵ It was noted by the Planning Commission in 1943 that the difficulty of getting the street through the cemetery had increased as was forecast. To date Radford Street, one block east of Marr Street, has developed as an arterial serving the area north of the cemetery and indicating, certainly, a need for a thoroughfare in this location, and verifying the prediction of need.⁷⁶

Concepcion Boulevard

The Plan indicated that this thoroughfare would facilitate traffic from the south end of Fort Bliss to the river.⁷⁷ Fort Bliss grew easterly during the period from this Plan to the present date, and no longer will this thoroughfare handle the traffic anticipated. However, the Howze Street entrance to the Fort would be much more readily used and would relieve traffic congestion in Chelsea Drive had the Plan been followed.

⁷⁵Kessler, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷⁶Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁷Kessler, op. cit., p. 66.

Unfortunately the Planning Commission allowed a plat to be accepted between Montana Street and Stephenson Street which blocked this thoroughfare from being accomplished. As a result, through traffic now must use Reynolds Boulevard (Val Verde Street) one block west of Concepcion Street between the river and Hastings Street, and then jog one block right to Howze Street to go to Fort Bliss. The need for a thoroughfare is indicated by the usage of Reynolds Boulevard. Increased traffic on Chelsea Drive, a path of least resistance, may account for part of the traffic which would ordinarily be handled by this thoroughfare had it been developed according to the Plan.

Porter Road (Chelsea Drive)

The Plan projected this thoroughfare from the Rio Grande River to Alhambra Heights, a subdivision which was located in what is now part of Fort Bliss.⁷⁸ With the enlargement of the Fort, this street has become the main south entrance to the Fort. By 1950 traffic had increased in this thoroughfare to the extent that it was necessary for the Planning Commission to recommend the acquisition of additional right-of-way to widen it.⁷⁹ In 1951 some of the additional

⁷⁸Kessler, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷⁹Annual Progress Report 1950, op. cit., p. 9.

right-of-way had been acquired. It was noted that the intersections of Chelsea Drive with Womble Road and with Montana Street were very badly congested at rush hours. It was estimated that since this was a major connector from Fort Bliss to Paisano Drive, increased activity at the Fort could make this thoroughfare critical for action to move traffic more freely.⁸⁰ Chelsea Drive has been widened to accommodate four-lane traffic from Womble Road to Hawkins Way at Chelsea Drive's southern terminus. A new grade separation over the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks is proposed on Hawkins Way for 1960 construction and a newly integrated intersection of Chelsea Drive and Hawkins Way should occur from this project.⁸¹

Collinsworth Boulevard

This thoroughfare was proposed in the Plan to be a part of the outer boulevard circle. It was to be constructed from the proposed Riverside Drive to Roosevelt Park in Alhambra Heights.⁸² The enlargement of Fort Bliss prevented this thoroughfare from really coming into being. Also, the resulting street development along Womble Road prevents the practical construction of such a thoroughfare to date. Clark

⁸⁰Annual Progress Report 1951, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸¹Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 23.

⁸²Kessler, op. cit., p. 66.

Road two blocks east of Collingsworth Road has developed into a north-south thoroughfare ending at the freeway. Clark Road undoubtedly absorbs some of the traffic which would have traversed Collinsworth Boulevard had it been developed. The use of Clark Road as an arterial indicates that Mr. Kessler's judgment in proposing an arterial at Collingsworth Road was not unsound.

First Avenue (Ascarate Street)

The Plan projected a thoroughfare paralleling the Fort Bliss spur track from Collinsworth Boulevard to Alameda Avenue.⁸³ To date no such thoroughfare has been constructed, although the southern portion of such a thoroughfare in exactly the same location in relation to the spur line is proposed for 1960 construction, to connect Alameda Avenue and the freeway.⁸⁴ Again, the wisdom of judgment in location of arterial roads is indicated, showing the adequacy of the plans for the predicted growth.

McKelligan Canyon Road

This thoroughfare was proposed for construction in the Plan from Mountain Drive on the east side of Mount

⁸³Ibid., p. 67.

⁸⁴Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit., p. 35.

Franklin on Alabama Street prior to construction of East Mountain Drive, along the contours of the land, up through the floor of McKelligan Canyon to a point near the head of the canyon, and thence doubling back to follow the best location for suitable grade climbing to the pass above the canyon. This drive was then proposed to extend down the west side of the mountain to the Mesa Road. The Plan pointed out that this drive would offer fine mountain scenery, many favorable picnic and camping sites, wonderful views from the pass, and access to the higher points of the mountain. A route specifically shown in the Plan had a maximum grade of five per cent and the Plan indicated that this would have a traffic value as a connection between the Fort Bliss district and the Upper Rio Grande Valley.⁸⁵

By 1943 the McKelligan Canyon Road as far as the head of the Canyon was a reality. The area in the Canyon had been developed into a county park with picnic sites and fine scenery as indicated in the Plan.⁸⁶

To date the increase in traffic from the west side of the City funnelling to the Fort Bliss area and to North East El Paso has caused the resumption of discussion concerning a pass across the mountains at this location. The

⁸⁵Kessler, op. cit., p. 25.

⁸⁶Annual Progress Report 1943, op. cit., p. 7.

increase of traffic on Scenic Drive indicates a need for a route further north. Discussion of highway officials indicates that the completion of the McKelligan Canyon Road will be programmed in the near future to provide better access to Fort Bliss and North East El Paso from the Upper Rio Grande Valley and Coronado Hills. This route was indicated in the Plan for such usage and it appears that the predictions for this route in this location were adequate.

Rim Road-Mountain Drive

This was indicated in the Plan to be the central feature of the boulevard system. The key portion was to be Rim Road with a scenic point above the high school. The portion of Mountain Drive from Robinson Boulevard to Richmond Street was constructed prior to the completion of the Plan.⁸⁷ At the time of the Plan the area where Rim Road is now located was a place of "unpleasant sights and smells"⁸⁸ referring to a district of adobe shacks then known as Stormville. The sights and smells even caused Mr. Kessler to suggest Robinson Boulevard as an alternate connection to Mountain Drive until such time as this area could be corrected.

By 1928 the district had been replatted by the

⁸⁷Kessler, op. cit., p. 24.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 26.

owners with a street conforming to proposals of the Plan. The land south of this street, extending over the rim of the Mesa, was conveyed to the City for a consideration of \$34,100 to be used for park purposes. This also protected the view from adjoining properties.

The actual construction of the road took place in 1930. Through the coordination of the Rim Development Company in replatting the area along Rim Road, this project was carried out even better than was proposed in the Plan. Here private capital helped accomplish on a voluntary basis a major project of the Plan. Today the Rim Road is well-developed with fine homes instead of potential slums as a result of the accomplishment of this portion of the Plan.⁸⁹

The Rim Road projection of 1930 and the southern portion of the Mountain Drive constructed prior to the completion of the Plan, along with the portion of McKelligan Canyon Road discussed previously,⁹⁰ are the only segments of the Mountain Drive Circle proposed in the Plan which have been constructed. No plans for a segment of the East Mountain Drive, connecting the Richmond Street terminus of the present Mountain Drive with McKelligan Canyon Road, are being currently projected for construction. Likewise no

⁸⁹Robertson, op. cit., p. 16.

⁹⁰See page 230 of this Appendix.

plans for the West Mountain Drive segment from the western terminus of the Mountain Drive to the proposed McKelligan Canyon Road have been projected. The Plan indicated that the Mountain Drive should connect with Altura Boulevard for part of the boulevard system. However, it still ends at Richmond Street, one block south of Altura Boulevard. With the emphasis of traffic signals east of Alabama Street, and with the underpass located on Altura Boulevard, indications are that this should be the major arterial at this location. By forcing traffic on to Richmond Street from Mountain Drive, crosstown traffic must take devious routes to move from Richmond Street to Altura Boulevard. This indicates the wise judgment indicated in the Plan which took the traffic from the Mountain Drive and distributed it on Altura Boulevard.

Mason Street

This street, now better known as Fred Wilson Road, was shown in the Plan as a thoroughfare leading toward Hueco Tanks. At the time of the Plan this street also served the north edge of Fort Bliss, the public golf course, the City waterworks, and the north portion of Alhambra Heights. The expansion of Fort Bliss saw the end of public use of the golf course, when it was converted for the army special services division. The construction of Biggs Air Force Base

with base housing on the former Alhambra Heights subdivision saw the end of Alhambra Heights. This road was never developed to Hueco Tanks as proposed in the Plan, but instead ended at the main entrance to Biggs Air Force Base. As a result of these changes the road was maintained as a public way with the expansion of Fort Bliss. It, along with the Airport Road, developed as the only route which the public could traverse through these vast military installations from North East El Paso to the municipal airport on the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Heavy usage of these arterials was the result. In 1958 the congestion developing on this arterial as well as Airport Road, along with the location of this route as the last remaining route connecting these two parts of town through the military installations, prompted the people to vote bonds to cover an expenditure of \$484,000 to construct Fred Wilson Road as a four-lane divided arterial thoroughfare.⁹¹

Though not for the identical reason posed by the Plan, this thoroughfare has developed primarily because of its natural arterial location. It would appear, therefore, that the Plan was adequate in proposing that this street be a thoroughfare.

⁹¹Capital Improvement Program 1959-1965, op. cit.,
p. 30.

The Circle Boulevard Systems

The Plan indicated:

The marvelous increase in the use of the automobile is revolutionizing the pleasure-seeking habits of the people. Nearly every family has a car, and riding for pleasure is the principal outdoor sport of the day. This condition is likely to continue and to increase and the great demand is for some place to go. Our paved roads are crowded every Sunday and holiday with people riding aimlessly up and down the road furnishing only a smooth surface on which to travel but offering no particular objective at the end.⁹²

In order to give this traffic an end, Mr. Kessler proposed a system of boulevards and parkways connecting the parks and points of interest within the community. There were two portions of this boulevard-parkway system which were in a circular pattern so as to bring the driver back to his point of origin on the trip. These were known as the Inner and Outer Circles. The Inner Circle was a series of thoroughfares with less distance involved than the Outer Circle, tying together the Rim Road, the Mountain Drive with a scenic vista point, Newman Park, and Memorial Park.⁹³

The Outer Circle diverged from the Inner Circle at Myles Street and Altura Boulevard, and took in additional boulevards, the Austin Terrace District, and Washington Park.⁹⁴

⁹²Kessler, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

⁹³Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁴Ibid.

The Inner and Outer Circles used mostly existing streets which connected the parks and points of interest. To date little has been accomplished to develop the various parks and points of interest. With the exception of the development of Rim Road and the southern portion of Mountain Drive, and the construction of a grade separation at the El Paso Southwestern Railroad tracks to bring Altura Boulevard to a connection with Pershing Drive, no construction has been accomplished to further the two circles as a part of the boulevard system. There is not, even to date, any marking or development of scenic routes within El Paso. It appears that funds for a scenic route-way have been put more readily to use for facilitating traffic on thoroughfares, whose sole purpose is to speed traffic to its appointed destination, rather than for providing scenic drives.

APPENDIX C

GRADE SEPARATION PROPOSALS¹

Under the Kessler proposal for grade separation the following thoroughfares would require grade separations:

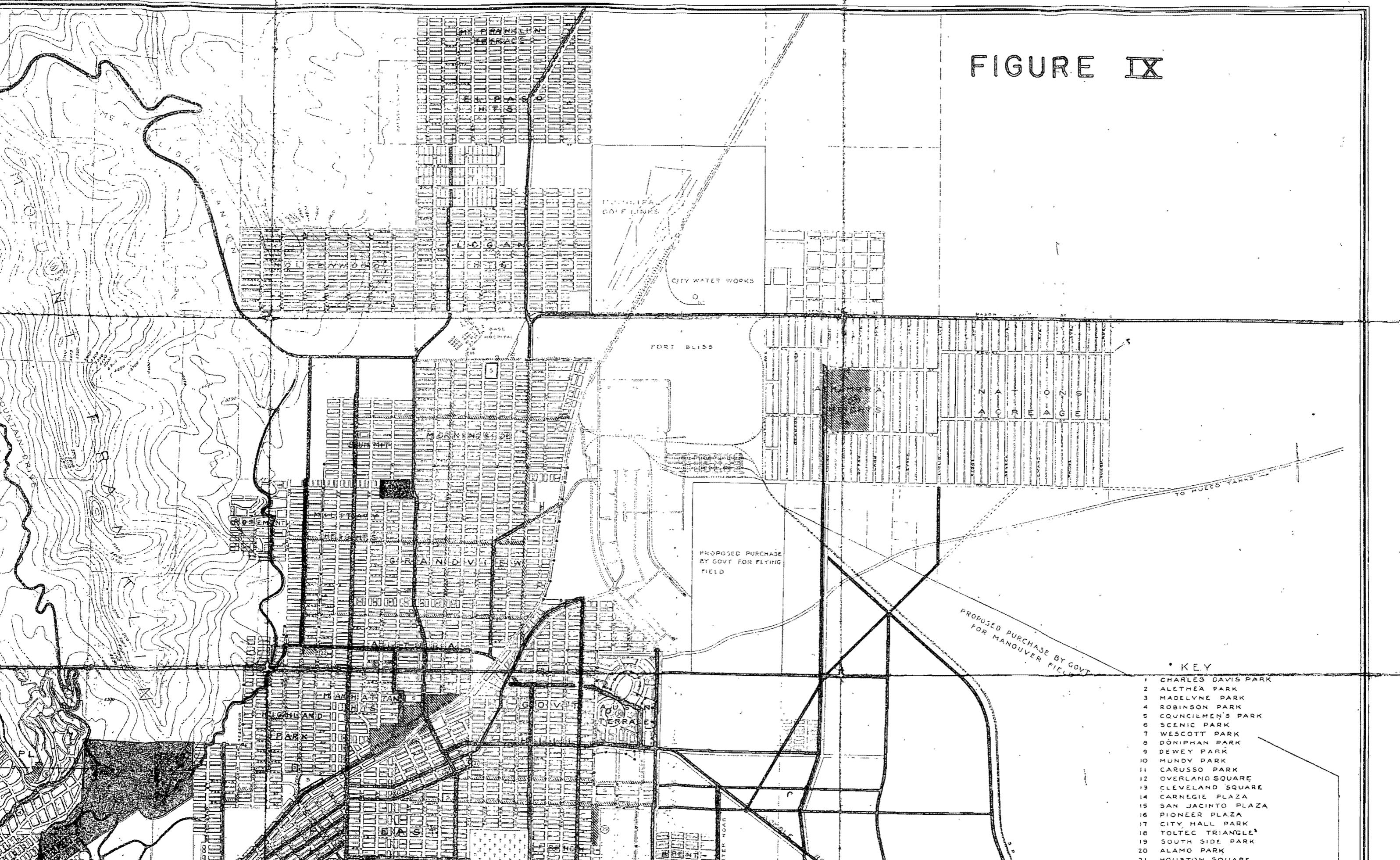
1. Downtown trainway which would eliminate the crossing of tracks in the alley between Main and Franklin Streets and on Main Street for North Santa Fe Street, North El Paso Street, North Oregon Street, North Mesa Avenue, North Kansas Street, and North Campbell Street.
2. Ange Street over the Southern Pacific Railroad yards.
3. Brown Street across the Southern Pacific Railroad yards.
4. Cotton Street across the Southern Pacific Railroad yards.
5. Piedras Street across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
6. Copia Street across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
7. Crockett Street across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.

¹Kessler, op. cit., pp. 32-34.

8. Marr Street across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
9. Concepcion across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
10. Chelsea Drive (Porter Road) across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
11. Collinsworth Road across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
12. Ascarate Street across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
13. North Loop Road across Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
14. Unnamed road by Fort Bliss spur over the Texas and New Orleans Railroad tracks.
15. Texas Street across the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.
16. Myrtle Avenue across the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.
17. Magoffin Avenue across the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.
18. Cotton Street across the Texas and Pacific Railroad yards.
19. South St. Vrain Street across the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks.

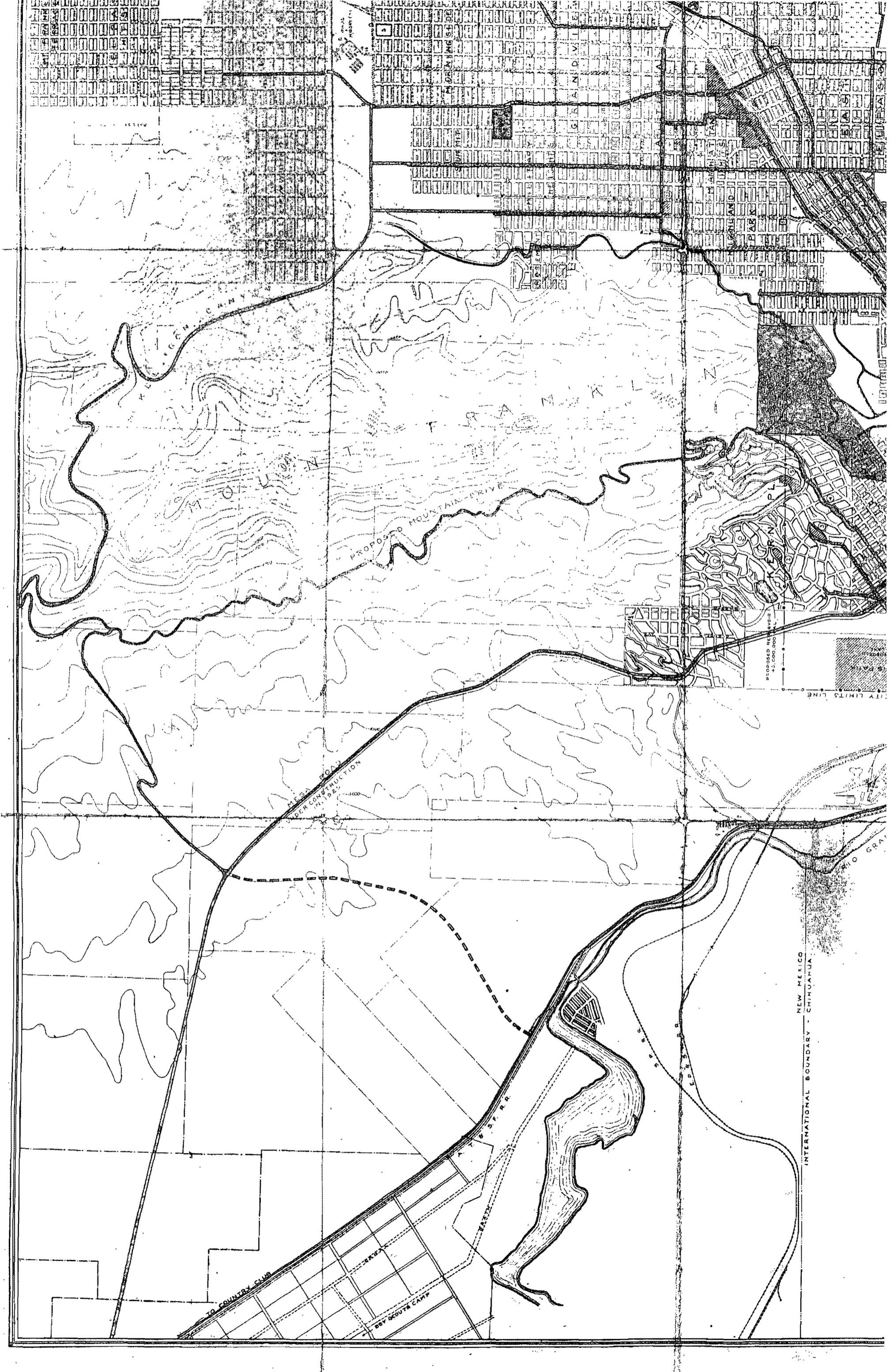
20. Texas Street across the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks.
21. Myrtle Avenue across the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks.
22. Magoffin Avenue across the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks.
23. Montana Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
24. Yandell Boulevard across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
25. Wyoming Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
26. Missouri Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
27. Piedras Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
28. Copia Street across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
29. Altura Boulevard across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
30. Fred Wilson Road across the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad tracks.
31. Davis Park Drive across the combined Upper Valley trackage.

FIGURE IX



• KEY

- 1 CHARLES DAVIS PARK
- 2 ALETHEA PARK
- 3 MADELYNE PARK
- 4 ROBINSON PARK
- 5 COUNCILMEN'S PARK
- 6 SCENIC PARK
- 7 WESCOTT PARK
- 8 DONIPHAN PARK
- 9 DEWEY PARK
- 10 MUNDY PARK
- 11 CARUSSO PARK
- 12 OVERLAND SQUARE
- 13 CLEVELAND SQUARE
- 14 CARNEGIE PLAZA
- 15 SAN JACINTO PLAZA
- 16 PIONEER PLAZA
- 17 CITY HALL PARK
- 18 TOLTEC TRIANGLE
- 19 SOUTH SIDE PARK
- 20 ALAMO PARK
- 21 HOUSTON SQUARE



CITY PLAN EL PASO - TEXAS

HIGHWAYS - BOULEVARDS
PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS

PREPARED FOR
THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
H.P. JACKSON, MAYOR
ALDERMEN
W.K. RAMSEY MILTON TRACY
A.B. POE J.B. BRADY

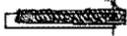
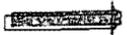
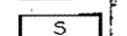
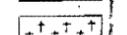
AND
THE CITY PLAN COMMISSION
H.O. SLATER, CHAIRMAN
H.L. BIRNEY W.E. ROBERTSON
RICHARD F. BURGESS R.E. SHERMAN

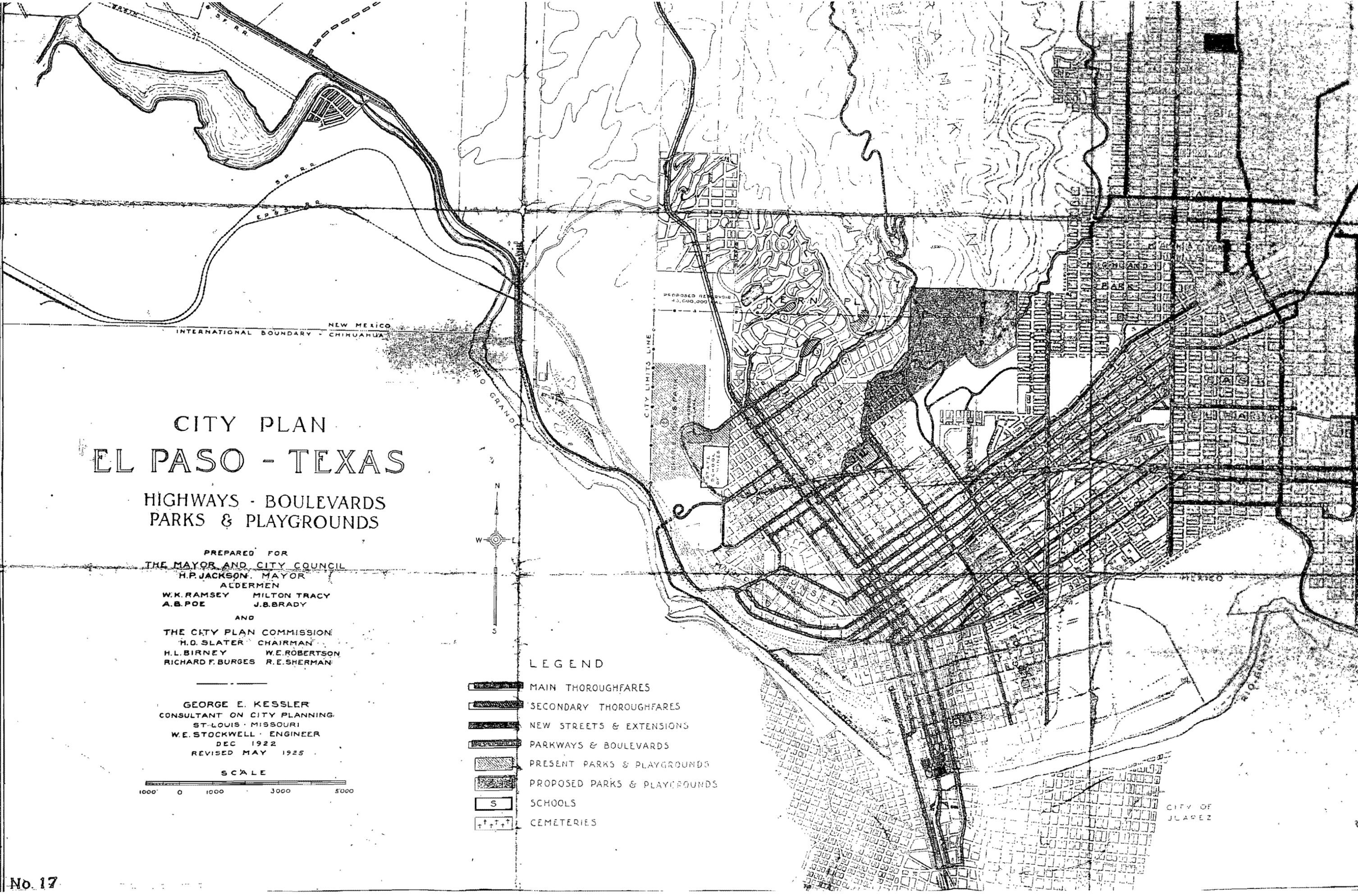
GEORGE E. KESSLER
CONSULTANT ON CITY PLANNING,
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
W.E. STOCKWELL, ENGINEER
DEC 1922
REVISED MAY 1925

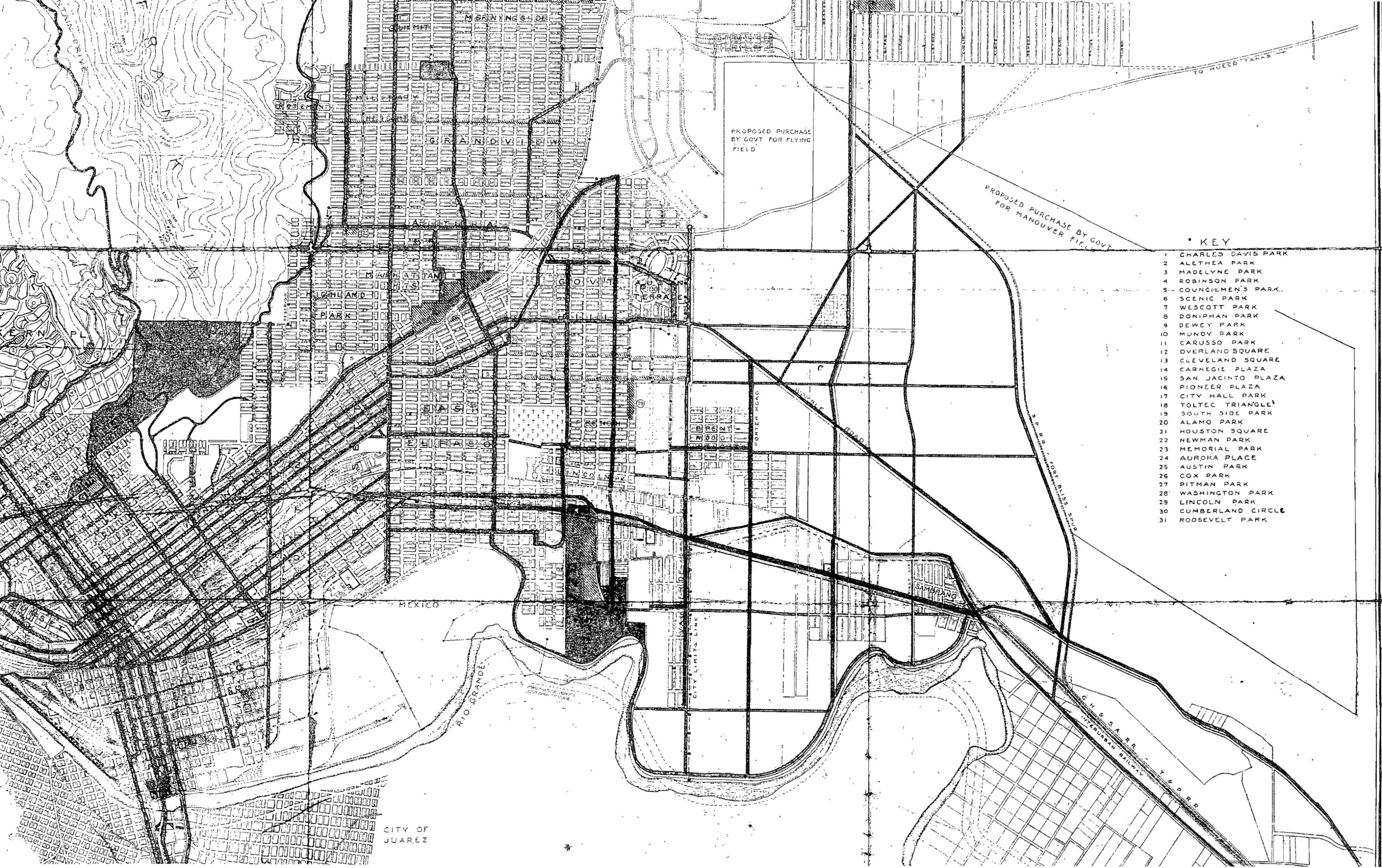
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LEGEND

-  MAIN THOROUGHFARES
-  SECONDARY THOROUGHFARES
-  NEW STREETS & EXTENSIONS
-  PARKWAYS & BOULEVARDS
-  PRESENT PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
-  PROPOSED PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
-  SCHOOLS
-  CEMETERIES





PROPOSED PURCHASE BY GOVT FOR FLYING FIELD

PROPOSED PURCHASE BY GOVT FOR MANOUVER FIELD

KEY

- 1 CHARLES DAVIS PARK
- 2 ALETHEA PARK
- 3 MADELYNE PARK
- 4 ROBINSON PARK
- 5 COUNCIEMEN'S PARK
- 6 SCENIC PARK
- 7 WESCOTT PARK
- 8 DONIPHAN PARK
- 9 DEWEY PARK
- 10 MUNDY PARK
- 11 CARUSSO PARK
- 12 OVERLAND SQUARE
- 13 CLEVELAND SQUARE
- 14 CARNEGIE PLAZA
- 15 SAN JACINTO PLAZA
- 16 PIONEER PLAZA
- 17 CITY HALL PARK
- 18 TOLTEC TRIANGLE
- 19 SOUTH SIDE PARK
- 20 ALAMO PARK
- 21 HOUSTON SQUARE
- 22 NEWMAN PARK
- 23 MEMORIAL PARK
- 24 AURORA PLACE
- 25 AUSTIN PARK
- 26 COX PARK
- 27 PITMAN PARK
- 28 WASHINGTON PARK
- 29 LINCOLN PARK
- 30 CUMBERLAND CIRCLE
- 31 ROOSEVELT PARK

CITY OF JUAREZ

MEXICO

RIO GRANDE

CITY LIMITS LINE

PORTER ROAD

ROAD

S.P.P. - FORT BLISS S.P.P.

G.H. & S.A. R.R. - INTERURBAN RAILWAY

T.P.P.P.

TO HUECO TANKS