THE MERCHANTS CLUB
CLOSED MEETING OCTOBER 19, 1906.

Confidential copy No. ——— For Mr. ———

To the members of The Merchants Club:—

Your Executive Committee have called this meeting in order to report progress on two projects to which your Committee have given considerable attention. For several years The Merchants Club, through its Educational Committee, has kept in close touch with school affairs in Chicago. Recognizing that in the New Charter Convention shortly to be held, a new school law would be recommended, your Executive Committee determined to make the attempt to get incorporated into the New Charter a law favorable to a sound business administration of public schools. Realizing the difficulties in the way of getting such a law, your Committee selected with great care a public school Committee which it felt could accomplish a difficult task — Messrs. John H. Moreon, Chairman, Charles H. Wacker, B. E. Sunny, Frederic W. Upham and Clayton Mark. The services of Mr. Samuel Alschuler were retained, and the Committee made a careful study of the existing laws in other cities and prepared a Bill to be submitted to the sub-committee on education of the Charter Convention.

During the summer Mr. Moreon, being in Europe, and the pressure of work increasing as the Charter Convention approached, Mr. T. W. Robinson, at the request of Mr. Moreon and your Executive Committee, consented to act as Chairman, and Mr. John E. Wilder was added to the Committee.

As the result of their efforts, the result to date is as follows:

The Law which the Sub-committee of The Charter Convention on public education has recommended to the Charter Convention is, excepting in one or two particulars practically the recommendation of our Committee. When the Charter Convention meets opposition to the present report of the Sub-committee on Education may develop. It is hoped, however, as a result
it may be objected that the project calls for a considerable expenditure of money for a mere picture. But it is proposed to make the picture worth the money. The best experts in this country and in Europe will be consulted, and in her Plan Chicago will possess what she had in the World's fair, something to be proud of.

It may be objected that our energies had better be concentrated on securing some definite betterment like the North and South connecting boulevard. To this the answer is that the comprehensive Plan for the whole will stimulate interest in just such desirable details and hasten their accomplishment. It is more logical to secure a Plan for the whole city and make sure that all detailed projects harmonize than to improve piecemeal and then later find that one improvement conflicts with another and must be removed.

Furthermore, Chicago's energies will not be exhausted when she has raised $50,000 for this Plan.

It may be objected that such a Plan is impracticable because it may indicate some street changes, and property lines must not be disturbed. No sound Plan is likely to be radical and these difficulties have not been found insuperable in older and larger cities in Europe. There are practical ways of meeting these difficulties. In Buda Pesth, for instance, when a property owner is asked to conform to the civic plan his taxes are remitted for a certain period of time as a compensation.

Your Executive Committee feel that a Plan is logical and desirable; that this is the moment to secure it; that it promises well both for the city and for The Merchants Club, and they recommend that you instruct them to proceed with the matter along the lines indicated above.
On this basis the mere lapse of time will, in ten years, without expense to the community, give an outer park of 170 acres. In other words, in the life and development of a great city what is impracticable today becomes entirely practicable tomorrow.

The public is interested in the subject. It is for no sentimental reason that the editors of Collier's and Harper's and the Outlook and the Century devote page after page to the San Francisco Plans, the Washington Plans, and other plans. The public is demanding an orderly and beautiful development of cities. It is a part of the great constructive impulse of this prosperous time. Twenty years ago it would have been deemed wasteful instead of good business for a department store to provide airy, comfortable show rooms finished in mahogany and carpeted with the richest materials; to provide rest rooms and grill rooms decorated by Tiffany. Or for banks to house themselves in handsome structures of classical design. Now our business men know that these things pay, and the people are commencing to realize that beauty and order in civic development pays the merchants of Paris and will pay Chicago in dollars and cents.

In Mr. Burnham Chicago possesses a great civic asset. If his Plans are developed under the auspices of this Club and are owned by this Club, The Merchants Club, by one stroke, gains leadership in the next great civic enterprise.

The best accomplishments of The Merchants Club, like those of an individual, are continuous rather than spasmodic. This project afford opportunity for continuous activities on the part of Merchants Club committees in the years to come. A connecting boulevard between the North and South sides; a civic center on the West Side; a diagonal boulevard across the city. These are but possible details of a big, comprehensive plan for the adoption of which present or future committees on The Merchants Club can work if they so choose.
What is the gain to the City of Chicago in having such a plan and what is the gain to The Merchants Club in undertaking this project?

The enormous growth of Chicago means more than the mere multiplication of office buildings, factories and residences. It means that new citizens are pouring into Chicago at an unprecedented rate. Probably 50% of the business men of Chicago, large and small, were not, for instance, residents at the time of the World's Fair in 1893. Many of them are unfamiliar with the years of depression which followed; many of them are young and optimistic and do not for a moment believe that we shall forever have the poorest traction service, the smokiest atmosphere or the dirtiest streets. On the contrary, this vast body of newcomers have heard too much of the difficulties confronting Chicago. They have had too few concrete, constructive propositions laid before them to appeal to their imagination and hope and to increase their civic pride and loyalty. It is believed that a big imaginative Plan, well rendered, will arouse interest and hope among this vast new population. It is believed, moreover, that it is just as logical to have a comprehensive and beautiful plan for a city as it is to have one for a store or a warehouse or a residence.

At The Merchants Club dinner February 14, 1903, when Mr. Burnham pointed out the possibility of an outer park and lagoon off the Lake Front, when the shore lines of the city, as marked by Act of Congress, should have been filled in, a hard-headed business man remarked — "That is all a dream. We are wasting our time to be considering what the city may be doing fifty years from now." That was less than four years ago. By the end of 1906 the lake front will be filled in so far as Grant Park is concerned, and the dredging companies, the Sub-Way and others will be asking the city where they may have the privilege of dumping earth and other refuse.

Mr. L. A. Walton, President of the South Park Board, in his last reports estimates that on the present basis there is material enough offered to fill an area 17 acres in extent to the depth of 20 feet every year.
appoint one of their number whom, together with the Governor (ex-officio) and
the Mayor (ex-officio), we can from time to time consult as the Plan develops,
and who will co-operate with us later in getting the Plan carried out.

In the brief time at our disposal we have laid the matter
tentatively before Officers of The Commercial Club and The Chicago Commercial
Association and also before Governor Deneen, and in every case there has
been a most cordial willingness to co-operate with us.

What your Executive Committee recommends at this meeting is that
the Club shall here record its approval of this Project on the understanding
that such approval commits every member to give his enthusiastic support
and co-operation to the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Mr. Wilson, even
to the extent of serving on that Committee if he so requests. To secure the
Plans at all and to publish them requires at least $25,000. To properly
finance the Project requires $50,000. That sum should come from the public,
including, of course, ourselves.

Our plan of financing is as follows: First - to secure guarantors
sufficient to underwrite the minimum requirement of $25,000, so that work
may proceed. Second - to solicit $50,000 in contributions from individuals
and friends in such manner as the Chairman of the Finance Committee shall
determine. As soon as $25,000 has been raised from any source, the
guarantors shall be relieved from liability, excepting, of course, for such
personal subscription as they may make. In case of a deficit in the
$25,000 Fund, the Finance Committee shall divide the deficit pro-rata among
the guarantors.

Your Committee desire it to be distinctly understood that they
have not committed The Merchants Club to raising this sum, or any sum, nor
are subscriptions asked for at this meeting, or any vote authorizing any
payment out of the Club treasury.
asked whether he would undertake the preparation of such a plan. Our visit was well-timed, for we learned that, having completed his work in connection with the plans at Washington and Manila and San Francisco, Mr. Burnham was prepared to do for his own city what we hoped might be the greatest achievement of his life. He expressed his readiness to prepare such a plan under the auspices of The Merchants Club without making any personal charge for his own services in the matter, the expenses involved in the enterprise being those occasioned by the employment of assistants, engineers, draftsmen, consultants and others.

After considering the matter carefully for many weeks, your Executive Committee finally unanimously adopted a Resolution, from which I will read the following extracts:

"The Executive Committee of The Merchants Club desire to have prepared for the City of Chicago and its environs a comprehensive and logical plan, indicating those lines of convenience and beauty along which the city should develop in the decades to come.

And as the eminent success of similar plans prepared by Mr. Daniel H. Burnham and his associates for Washington, D. C., San Francisco and Manila assures us that it would be to the lasting advantage of this community if the proposed plan for Chicago were developed under his direction,

And this Committee, on inquiry, learn that Mr. Burnham is willing to prepare such a plan for The Merchants Club without any personal charge or remuneration whatever for his services, it is moved that this Committee in behalf of The Merchants Club request Mr. Burnham to take charge of the preparation of such a plan for the City of Chicago, selecting his own conferees and assistants in the work, the final report on said plan to be made to and become the property of The Merchants Club. Furthermore, that this Committee on behalf of The Merchants Club shall endeavor to raise a fund to be expended under the direction of this Committee in payment of the necessary expenses."

If this project is approved by you today, it is proposed to enlarge the Merchants Club Committee to five members. Your Committee will request the Commercial Club, the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, the Park Boards, the School Board, the Art Institute, the American Institute of Architects, the Western Society of Engineers, the Chicago Commercial Association, and such other associations as may be designated by The Merchants Club, each to
of the hard work which is being done that there will finally be incorporated into the Charter a law of such a nature that a sound business administration of this great corporation, the public school system of Chicago with its $11,000,000 of annual expenditure will be assured. At the December dinner public school administration will be discussed by Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, and others.

It should be distinctly understood by members of The Merchants Club that, notwithstanding anything that may have been said in the newspapers, your Committee is taking no part whatever and will take no part in any of the factional fights or discussions now agitating the present School Board. With the present school organization we have nothing to do. Our efforts have been confined and will be confined to securing in the New Charter such provisions as have been mentioned above. Whatever the outcome, too much cannot be said in praise of the untiring efforts of the Public School Committee.

In considering the various projects which have been submitted to your Executive Committee as offering suitable activities for this Club, your Committee have tried to bear in mind the purposes for which the Club was organized, and in every case have asked the question: Is the plan practicable; is it fundamental and desirable, and can it be carried through to a successful conclusion?

Among other projects there was suggested that of securing for the City of Chicago a great comprehensive plan similar to the plans which have been developed of recent years for the United States Government for the cities of Washington and Manila and also for the City of San Francisco. This suggestion has received the continuous consideration of your Executive Committee since early in May.

Mr. Daniel H. Burnham was approached by a Sub-committee in July and