

RG60 Department of Planning (1932-present)

History

A survey project conducted by Thomas H. Poppleton from 1817 to 1822 was Baltimore's first formal planning activity. Poppleton prepared a map showing the location of existing and future streets, and this so-called "Poppleton's Plat" guided the physical development of Baltimore for several decades. In 1893, a Topographical Survey Commission began to survey the city with emphasis on the areas annexed in 1888. Many of the public improvements carried out in the annex were based on the commission's surveys. The Burnt District Commission (RG17), formed in 1904 after the major fire of that year, carried out the most extensive planning work to that point in Baltimore.

The immediate predecessor to the present municipal planning body was the Commission on City Plan, established in 1910. Chief among the Commission's duties was the development of plans for streets and other public improvements. After a flurry of activity, the commission's work ceased in 1925 when its duties, along with those of the city surveyor and Topographical Survey Commission, were merged into a Bureau of Plans and Surveys within the newly created Department of Public Works (RG47). In 1932, the municipality reactivated the Commission on City Plan, which in 1936 became the Department of Planning, headed by a Planning Commission.

As presently constituted, the Planning Department is responsible for preparing physical development plans, operating a capital development program, and reviewing land subdivision proposals.

Records Summary

Much of the materials that make up the planning department records at the archives are associated with activities of the agency since 1974. Material dating prior to 1974 is located at the University of Baltimore's Baltimore Regional Institutional Studies Center (BRISC). Within this constraint, however, the material covers most aspects of the department's work. Topics treated are urban renewal, transportation, industrial and residential development, neighborhood revitalization, recreation and parks, schools, land use, and all varieties of public improvement. Record forms include correspondence, minutes, newspaper clippings, maps, drawings, reports, and publications.

Series

1. General Administrative Files. 1974-present. 47.35 cu. ft. (99 boxes). File folder listing. Arranged alphabetically by topic.
2. Reader Files. 1974-79. 5 cu. ft. (5 boxes). Arranged chronologically.