

BY LAURA JANOTA

Faculty members D. Bradford Hunt and Jon DeVries were separated by only six floors in the University's Gage Building, but they never met and didn't know they shared a common interest in city of Chicago planning until they were introduced by an alumnus.

Hunt, whose office in the Evelyn T. Stone College of Professional Studies is on the second floor, and DeVries, whose Heller College of Business office at the time was on eight, would occasionally nod or say hello in passing.

However, they weren't formally introduced until Robert Lau, a 2005 graduate of Roosevelt's MBA in Real Estate program, invited them to lunch one day in the spring of 2011. "I always felt like Brad (Hunt) and Jon (DeVries) could hit it off," Lau said. "I just never stopped to think that getting them together would lead to such a monumental collaboration."

That collaboration is a new book titled *Planning Chicago*, which *Crain's Chicago Business* has described as "provocative" and at least one critic has called an "impossible" feat.

Released in April, it tells the story of modern planning in Chicago, beginning in 1957 with Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's establishment of a Department of City Planning, through today when, according to Hunt and DeVries, planning has become a little bit of a footnote that's been folded into the city's Department of Housing and Economic Development.

Covering all scales of planning, from comprehensive big-picture strategies and designs to very specialized and localized initiatives, the book looks at what's gone on in places like the city's central district, its neighborhoods and industrial zones. While comprehensive, thoughtful planning, largely sketched out between 1966 and 1974, helped Chicago earn a ranking in 2012 as a global city, "not all is well in Chicago" today, the two write in the book's opening chapter.

Hunt, a social science and history professor who today is dean of Roosevelt's Evelyn T. Stone College of Professional Studies and vice provost for adult and experiential learning, and DeVries, director of the University's Marshall Bennett Institute of Real Estate, argue in the book that Chicago



planning reached its zenith in the late Sixties to early Seventies and has been in decline ever since.

"Planning in Chicago is in retreat in the current era...The city that once embraced Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's "1909 Plan of Chicago" no longer plans confidently," they contend.

The idea for the book came from the 40,000-member American Planning Association (APA), which each year publishes a book about the city hosting the annual APA conference. In 2013, the conference was held in Chicago. Timothy Mennel, formerly an editor with APA, was put in

charge of finding an author or authors to write *Planning Chicago*. "We needed someone with a background in history, but we didn't want another book about Daniel Burnham," recalled Mennel, who today is an editor with University of Chicago Press.

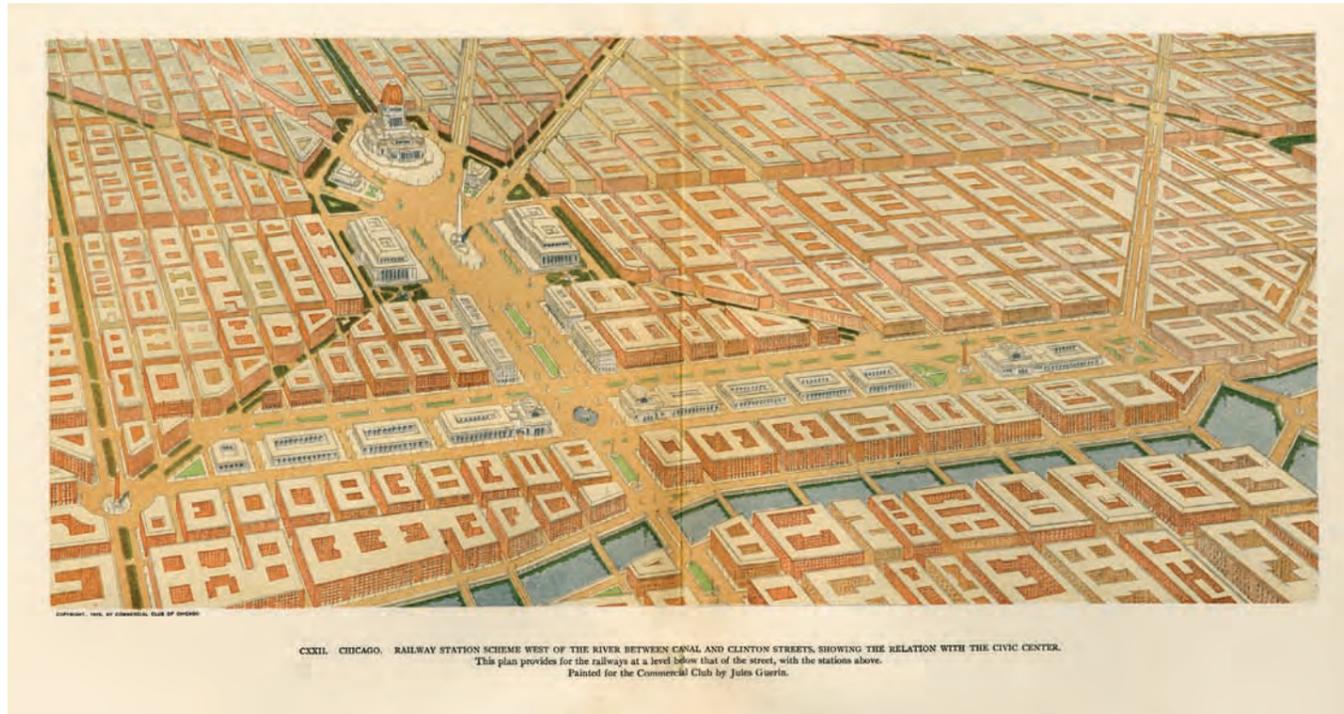
In 2009, Hunt's first book, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*, had just come out. Upon reading it, Mennel decided Hunt would be a good fit. "I remember thinking 'Here's someone who understands Chicago's archives but who is also a young enough scholar to take a topic like Chicago planning in a new direction,'" he said.

"It was obvious that Brad Hunt knew housing," Mennel added. "It occurred to me that he might be able to stretch what he knew to encompass all that's involved in modern Chicago planning."

Lau, one of the first graduates of Roosevelt's master's in real estate program and an architect with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, also had taken an interest in Hunt's public housing book. He saw it as a springboard for an article analyzing successes and failures of the Chicago Housing Authority's 10-year-old Plan for Transformation and proposed the idea to Hunt, whom he'd never met.

Opposite: Jon DeVries (left) and D. Bradford Hunt on Chicago's Michigan Avenue bridge.





THE ORIGINAL PLAN Dozens of plans, covering all aspects of modern-day Chicago, were collected and researched for the book *Planning Chicago*.

“He had reached out about my work with housing and I thought he had a good idea,” said Hunt, who collaborated with the Roosevelt alumnus on the article that Lau presented at the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitats conference in Dubai in 2010. “I remember while we were working on the article and even after that he would come by my office and kept on saying ‘You should go upstairs and meet Jon DeVries.’”

The alumnus, who kept in touch with DeVries after graduating, also regularly attended Fogelson Forums sponsored by the Marshall Bennett Institute of Real Estate, where topics of interest to the region’s real estate leaders are explored. “I remember he (Lau) came to my office a lot of times,” said DeVries. “He kept telling me ‘You’ve got to get Brad (Hunt) up here and get him involved in the Fogelson Forums.’”

Then, at a lunch that Lau arranged for the two in the spring of 2011, that flash of recognition – or what some might call an epiphany – struck both men. “I recalled Brad talking about the project and me thinking ‘We are losing contact with a whole generation of planning,’” said DeVries, who has 40 years of experience in Chicago real estate, economic development and planning.

A veteran consultant on the city’s Central Area, Lake Calumet and industrial plans, to name just a few, DeVries began ticking off some of the names of Chicago planners whose views needed documenting. “He (DeVries) told me ‘If you’re going to do this kind of book, you really need to start meeting people. It hadn’t dawned on me until then that there was this kind of resource right here at Roosevelt and in the same building as me.’”

(Note: DeVries, the Heller College and its real estate institute moved to the 12th floor of the University’s Wabash Building in 2012.)

Soon after their luncheon, the two began a series of 23 separate interviews, also securing writing commitments from nine planners who did short, spotlight pieces to help flesh out some of the book’s major themes.

“There’s been this amazing transformation in Chicago, from railroads and stockyards into a global city,” said Norman Elkin, a planning coordinator in Chicago’s Department of City Planning from 1957-61 and the first to share his views. “We’ve been so successful that we’ve lost sight of the importance of stepping back and saying ‘Where are we going with all of this?’”

“The book provides that perspective,” he said. “It puts the problems and challenges we face on the table and it stimulates ideas – and with a new mayor in office, the timing couldn’t be better.”

A major theme of *Planning Chicago* is that politics matters: “Chicago’s unique governance environment – featuring parochial aldermen, strong mayors and numerous tax increment finance districts – has frustrated comprehensive planning,” the book suggests.

The authors explore the planning vision of the late Mayor Harold Washington, a Roosevelt University alumnus who tried to move in a new direction to provide resources to neighborhoods and not just the central city.

They examine former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley’s preference for individual projects over comprehensive planning – a tactic that gave the mayor ownership over city development. And they discuss Chicago’s unique “aldermanic privilege,” giving city council members tremendous power over development and zoning in their wards.

“I wasn’t very conversant with the political side of the planning equation, but this book provided a welcome background for much

”This book should be mandatory reading for any planner working in the City of Chicago, whether they’re in government, academia, non-profit community development, or the private sector.”

TIMOTHY M ANGELL (AMAZON.COM REVIEW)

that has transpired,” said Larry Okrent, who provided many of the aerial shots and graphics contained in the book.

“What I like about the authors and the book is their willingness to have a frank discussion on what is working and not working,” added Eileen Figel, a former Chicago deputy planning commissioner.

Quoted in the book on the impact of aldermanic privilege, Figel credits Hunt and DeVries for providing constructive criticism. “It’s not a book that bashes anyone,” she said. “It shows us how and why we have a proud planning legacy and it recognizes that we can’t say that now. We’re not living up to our legacy.”

Since the book’s publication, Hunt and DeVries have been meeting with civic organizations, community leaders, planners, politicians and anyone who will listen. “We need to move forward with a well-thought-out future for our city and it’s going to take comprehensive planning,”

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BOOK DEBUT The American Planning Association’s 2013 conference in Chicago was the launching pad for *Planning Chicago*.

said Hunt. “People all over town need to get excited so that planning can once again become central to our decision-making,” added DeVries.

Getting key leaders involved will be crucial, according to Lee Bey, architectural contributor with WBEZ-Radio and former director of the Chicago Central Area Committee, who was interviewed and took photos for the book. “Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, the city council’s planning and development committee members, as well as private builders and planners must read and understand this book,” he said.

The road ahead for the monumental project was covered in depth this fall by Hunt and DeVries during the University’s annual Herb and Eileen Franks Seminar on Politics.

“There was no single ‘Aha!’ moment of discovery in our work on this project, but there was a key moment,” confided Hunt. “That was when Jon (DeVries) became my collaborator and mentor. It made everything possible.”

New book takes off in college classrooms

PLANNING CHICAGO could be coming soon to college classrooms across the Chicago metropolitan region.

Ann Keating, a professor of history at North Central College in Naperville, is eyeing the book for an interdisciplinary course she teaches on the city of Chicago. “I think it does a nice job of putting Chicago’s planning history in a wider, and even global context,” she said.

Rachel Weber, associate professor in urban planning and policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is considering the book for a future course on urban planning. “It’s true we have lost our comprehensive planning focus and that’s a good message to be hammering away at with my students,” said Weber, who believes the book will be particularly useful for those who don’t know a lot about Chicago.

Describing the book as “crisp,” “fast-paced” and “truly enjoyable,” Joseph

Schwieterman, a professor in the School of Public Service at DePaul University in Chicago, also intends to use the book. “I will be recommending this book to my graduate students,” he states in a recent Amazon.com review.

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ANN KEATING
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE

At Roosevelt University, Sofia Dermisi, the Pasquinelli professor of real estate, believes *Planning Chicago* should be required reading for an honors class called Development in Chicago. Michael Bryson, associate professor of humanities and director of the University’s Sustainability Studies program, also predicts the book

could be a resource in the program’s Sprawl, Transportation and Planning class and/or the Policy, Law and Ethics class.

“What I tried to do was get my students to see the world in a different way,” said the book’s co-author D. Bradford Hunt, dean of the Evelyn T. Stone College of Professional Studies and associate professor of social science and history who used excerpts of *Planning Chicago* last semester in his History of Planning class.

“We looked at the rise of the idea that cities need to be planned and that environments need to be planned in order to be livable,” said Hunt, who had a cross-section of history and sustainability studies students in the class. “I presented planning as something that can be done from top down or bottom up – and this is where I brought the book in – to get across the point that we must swing the pendulum back in favor of comprehensive planning.”