Paris is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, yet few of its buildings rank among the world’s most extraordinary examples of architecture. The city’s overall look has, in fact, less to do with architecture than with the public realm framework that guided the nineteenth-century planners who rebuilt it into the city we know today. When a visitor thinks of Paris, he or she is likely to think of the public spaces of Paris, the public realm shared by all those who sojourn there for a week or stay for a lifetime. Paris is defined both visually and in its culture by many things: the tree-lined avenues; the sidewalk cafes where one can meet a friend or linger over the newspaper and a coffee; the shallow, sensuous curve of the Boulevard Saint-Germain; and the serene beauty of the parks, large and small, which both enhance their surroundings and are enhanced by them. It is this public realm that defines Paris.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Paris became Paris through a public realm approach to planning. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, the city’s leaders pursued a program of public investment in public property—in Paris’s streets and squares, its transportation systems, its infrastructure and public buildings, and its parks. Remarkably, they invested in each project not only because of its utility. Each investment was intended to shape the experience of daily life for the residents of Paris and to provide a framework for the changes that would take place over the next century and beyond. The Paris we know today is the product of those strategic public investments made by many different governments over nearly two centuries.

The metamorphosis of Paris truly began in 1848. In that year a revolution overthrew Louis-Philippe and the plutocracy known as the July Monarchy. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, nephew of the great Napoléon, returned from exile and was elected president of the new Second Republic. Three years later he overthrew that republic and proclaimed the Second Empire, which lasted until 1870.

Louis-Napoléon had spent the last years of his exile in England. He came back to Paris with admiration for many things English, not least of them the parks and squares of London. He would draw on those memories in the years of rebuilding to come.

The city to which Louis-Napoléon returned was vastly overcrowded and was experiencing a crisis in public services. In 1848 a little
over a million people lived inside the walls of the world's third-largest city, after London and Peking. Some of its 1848 landmarks remain prominent today: the Seine, Notre-Dame, the Champs-Élysées. But the Seine stank from the raw sewage flowing into it from open street gutters, and it flooded Paris ten times between 1800 and 1848. The towers of Notre-Dame originated in the country-side west of the city. It continued past the Arc de Triomphe (built between 1806 and 1836), through the wall of the Farmers-General (built between 1784 and 1791), and terminated at the Place de la Concorde (built before the French Revolution, between 1755 and 1775).

Paris in 1848 was divided into twelve densely packed districts, or arrondissements, which covered 13.3 square miles. The original twelve arrondissements included residences of the wealthy, retail shops, businesses and manufacturing establishments that were mostly small, and slums. Living conditions were dreadful. Many of the city streets were described at the time as "mere trenches, dirty, and always humid with infected water." People moved through them "foot in the gutter, nose in infection, and eye strike at each corner by the most revolting filth."  

Parisian businesses were already a vital part of France's economy, generating a quarter of the country's exports. Of their 350,000 employees, about one-third were involved in the production and distribution of garments and textiles, one-ninth in construction, one-tenth in metals, and another tenth in furniture. Many of these industries produced the luxury products for which France was famous: gold and silver, inlaid wood furniture, embroidered dresses, and hand-sewn flowers. More modern industries were growing up in Paris, too. But the city's narrow, congested streets could barely handle their traffic, not to mention the traffic generated by the other 100,0000 occupants of the city. Simply distributing food to these 1,050,000 residents was a problem. People arriving at any of the city's six railroad terminals made their way through a tangled, narrow maze of arteries used daily by thousands of delivery vehicles, hundreds of thousands of residents, workers, visitors, and 37,000 horses, whose droppings were supposed to be removed once a day.

Paris would soon be unable to sustain the flow of goods and services to the businesses that provided jobs for its population. It was now competing with cities like London, Liverpool, Manchester, and New York for global economic dominance, and while living conditions in those cities were not much better, local governments were making steady improvements.

While Napoléon III (the title Louis-Napoléon adopted in 1852, when he proclaimed the Second Empire) ruled France, an unprecedented amount of money was spent to create infrastructure and community facilities for Paris. These expenditures were intended to make it easier for Parisian industry to compete for customers and for its residents to live healthier, more pleasant lives. The strategy succeeded. The government created an entirely new water supply and distribution system, and sewer, park, and transportation networks that serviced all of Paris. Government investment triggered similarly massive spending by private businesses and the construction of more than 102,000 new buildings by property owners. The scope of change is astonishing when one realizes that a virtually new Paris was created in less than twenty-two years. It was achieved, however, at huge cost to many of the residents and businesses in the city: more than 117,000 households and 350,000 industrial and commercial jobs were relocated, and more than 27,000 buildings were demolished. Much historical memory was lost along with the filthy, convoluted streets of old Paris.

It is often said that the rebuilding of Paris was easy because it was backed by Louis-Napoléon. But in Paris, as in any public planning project, nothing was simple. The Second Empire was not an absolute monarchy, where the emperor ordered change and it was done. There were plenty of players in the planning game, and they all (Napoléon III included) had to play by its rules.

The Second Republic was described by Karl Marx as a "motley mix of crying contradictions: constitutionalists who conspire openly against the Constitution; revolutionists who are confessedly constitutional; a National Assembly that wants to be omnipotent and always wants to play by its rules."  

The TEAM THAT TRANSFORMED PARIS

Haussmann was a Protestant of Alsatian descent. He grew up in a middle-class family in Paris, where he attended the best schools and went on to study law. At the age of twenty-two he began his administrative career in Poitiers, working for two decades in a series of provincial subprefect and prefect positions. In 1853, Napoléon III and his minister of the interior, the extraordinary Duc de Persigny, chose him to be prefect of the Seine.
Haussmann used his family connections—
even a school chum who was the son of
King Louis-Philippe—to advance his career at
every opportunity, but it was evident from the
time of his first position, in Nîmes in southwestern
France, that he got things done. In Nîmes,
where the streets were unpaved, Haussmann
found ways to finance road improvements. By
the age of twenty-eight he had received the
Legion d'honneur for building more schools than
any other subprefect. In Saint-Girons he success­
fully terminated smuggling to and from
Spain. It did not hurt, of course, that Hauss­
mann's two grandfathers had been generals
under Napoleon I. That provided him with an
excellent Bonapartist pedigree and stood
him in good stead when Napoleon's nephew
became president in 1848 and emperor in 1852.

As prefect of the Seine, Haussmann was in
effect a regional chief executive officer. He was
responsible for the city and for the surround­
ning districts of Saint-Denis and Oceaux, and he
consequently supervised a huge staff that per­
formed a wide variety of functions. It collected
local taxes and customs duties, prepared budget­
s, and managed expenditures; it supervised railways and quarries, and maintained streets
and highways; it operated public markets, parks,
schools, hospitals, facilities for the elderly, the
insane, and orphans; and it designed, planned,
and managed the city's future. 11

Haussmann was an experienced public
administrator, and he understood that a great
national capital was dependent on this vast
bureaucracy to provide public services to a huge
and growing commercial and industrial city. Part
of his brilliance was to put his own stamp on
the bureaucracy that ran Paris. He reorganized
the Paris government into sixteen divisions plus
forty-five bureaus to implement the work these
administrative units managed. 12 So much needed
to be done that without clear lines of authority
there would have been no way to ensure effi­
cient, cost-effective operations or accountability
to the city's leadership. Equally important, he
found exceptional people to run these offices,
many of them professionals he had encoun­
tered during his years in the provinces. This
was another aspect of Haussmann's brilliance—
his swift recognition of talent, much of it unde­
rused. Among the most important members of
his team were Eugène Deschamps, Eugène Bel­
grand, Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand, horticul­
turalist Jean-Pierre Barrillet-Deschamps, and the
architects Victor Baltard, Jacques-Ignace Hirt­
torf, and Gabriel Davioud.

Eugène Deschamps (1812–1880) was an
architect and survey engineer who became key
to the planning of the city's streets, sidewalks,
and blocks of new buildings. Haussmann him­
self later said that "Deschamps was the Plan of
Paris." 13 When he first encountered Deschamps,
the latter was an obscure bureaucrat with the
title of survey registrar. This young archi­
tect worked with five surveyors in a lackluster
agency that proposed public works projects to
the repository of much confidential financial
information, and, based on his work, decisions
were made about payments of large amounts
of money. He was responsible for the rights-of­
way the government decided on, and he pro­
vided the information necessary for legislative
approvals and judicial reviews. Payments were
made for the negotiation of right-of-way
and condemnation awards. Tenant indem­
nification payments from the resale of sur­
plus property and expenditures for demolition
and road construction were based on his work.
Indiscretion could result in large-scale land
speculation and fraud, but Haussmann had cho­
sen his team well, and Deschamps was clean
as a whistle. He retired with a meager pension,
which Haussmann managed to improve, and he
died a poor but honorable man. 17

Haussmann first met the engineer Eugène Bel­
grand (1810–1878) in 1850, when he was still
prefect of Yonne. Haussmann was impressed
by a fountain Belgrand had designed, and he
engaged him in a conversation about the geol­
ogy and hydrology of the Pyrénées that con­
vinced him this was an engineer of extraordinary
talent. Thereafter he helped advance Belgrand's
career. When he became prefect of the Seine,
Haussmann brought Belgrand to work on his
first memorandum on the Paris water system. In
1855, when Haussmann persuaded the Munici­
pal Council to separate the water and sewer
department from the agency in charge of pub­
lic roads, he appointed Belgrand director of
water and sewers for Paris. 18 Belgrand planned,
designed, and managed construction of the
water and sewer systems for which Haussmann
was responsible.

The third and perhaps most important
member of Haussmann's team was Jean­
Charles-Adolphe Alphand (1817–1891), an engi­
neer and landscape architect whose official title
was chief engineer in the Services des Providence
et Plantations. Relative to the work of the other
people on Haussmann's team, Alphand's
probably did the most to alter the quality of life
of the Parisians and visitors. Haussmann had
worked with Alphand in Bordeaux and brought
him to Paris to supervise the transforma­tion

A contemporary cartoon caricaturing surveying methods
for the area around the zoo.
the Bois de Boulogne from a royal forest preserve into a verdant and popular public park. He later put him in charge of designing and building the city’s other parks, installing what we think of as distinctive Parisian street furniture, and planting the trees that everywhere soften the vistas of the city.

Haussmann sometimes had serious disagreements with his architects, but he knew how to bring out their best possible work. At the start of his prefecture, for example, Jacques Ignace Hittorf (1792–1867) showed him a plan for a 40-meter-wide, treeless Avenue Foch. Haussmann exclaimed, “The Emperor does not want that. . . . Triple it: 120 meters—add to your plan two [flanking] lawns . . . of 32 meters . . . which will allow me to plant groups of trees.”

He took a similar but more circuitous approach with the architect Victor Baltard (1805–1874) for the creation of the city’s public market (Les Halles). Construction of the first of eight market buildings had begun two years before Haussmann became prefect. It was halved the month he took office, however, because Napoléon III was dissatisfied with the masonry structure designed by Baltard, who happened to be a schoolmate of Haussmann. Baltard’s plan called for heavy masonry; it was not the simple, functional pavilion the emperor had expected. Napoléon III ordered Haussmann to obtain a design of “iron, iron, nothing but iron.”

A number of architects were therefore invited to submit designs. Meanwhile, Haussmann had Baltard redesign the market with a broad traffic artery bisecting the site. This would carry the heavy traffic going to and from Châtelet and the bridge across the Seine. After Baltard had redesigned the pavilions three times, Haussmann was finally satisfied. He presented the submissions of all the architects to Napoléon III, saving Baltard for last. When the emperor saw Baltard’s revised plan, he exclaimed: “That’s it! That’s absolutely it.”

Haussmann possessed a combination of administrative brilliance, the ability to spot talent, and an uncanny understanding of what Napoléon III wanted. The rebuilding of Paris required more than the emperor’s enthusiasm, however; it required understanding and cooperation from all the major players, in and out of government. This was particularly true of the new district that was to be created around the Central Market.

Haussmann wanted to be sure that everyone could see and understand the project’s impact. He therefore requested a scale model of the entire neighborhood: the metal pavilions, the surrounding streets, sidewalks, carts moving, produce, and pedestrians. Only when most of the relevant officials had approved what he had in mind did the prefect disclose that the plan was by the original architect, who had been dismissed.

The model of Les Halles reveals an impor-
I

THE PLANNING GAME

vices: a reliable supply of clean water and an

Paris

ard Saint-Germain.

d network of grand boulevards, like the Boule-
doubled in population between 1848 and

ing down the Boulevard Saint-Germain.

than the scene admired by a tourist walk-

effective system of waste removal. Its water

came from many sources, but they were not
easily accessible, and they were not related to

each other. People got their drinking water
from private water carriers, from 1,779 public
street fountains, 113 commercial fountains, and

69 wells, from pumps located along the Seine,
and from the Canal de l'Ourcq. Before Hauss-
mann most people did not get their water from
pipes or from delivery services. Private piping
systems supplied a mere 7,771 registered cus-
tomers, 160 of which were government enti-
ties and 223 of which were hospitals. Only one
house in five was connected to water pipes, usu-
ally through a tap in the yard. Indoor plumbing
was rare; a few houses had it, but pressure was
so low that water rarely rose above the first or
second floor.25

Haussmann's effort to provide Paris with a
dependable supply of clean water faced oppo-
sition from property owners who objected to
condemnation or who claimed that the
condemnation awards would be too low.

When Haussmann came to office, there
were different proposals under consideration
for providing the city with water. The one
Napoléon III wanted him to submit for approval
to the Municipal Council would have favored a
well-connected private company. Haussmann
argued him out of it, pointing out that "granting
a direct concession to a single private enter-
pise, without an open bidding process would cause
serious problems . . . [particularly because] this
would seem to favor an entity proposed by the
Emperor."26

With the help of Belgrand, Haussmann
issued the first of four memoranda to the
Municipal Council advocating his water sup-
ply proposals in 1854; he submitted the last in
1865, when his recommended approach was
finally accepted.27 A drought that year had
brought the level of the Seine below the intake
pumps, forced reduced use of water from the
Ourcq, and resulted in new outbreaks of chol-
era. The drought and its effects accelerated the
approval of his program.

The system Belgrand and Haussmann cre-
ated provided 64 million gallons of fresh water
day, primarily from the Dhuis River valley,
east of Paris, and from the Vanne River, south-
east of the city.28 Those two systems required
construction of vast complexes of aqueducts,
siphons, tunnels, bridges, and reservoirs. When
the water arrived in Paris, it was distributed
even though a system of conduits five times the
length of the system that existed in 1848. It was piped
to virtually every building in Paris; because it had
a natural pressure that forced water to a level
220 to 260 feet above sea level, water could rise
to the top floor of the six- and seven-story build-
ings that were being built throughout the city.29

Nevertheless, the system only brought water to
a building; it did not distribute the water inside
buildings. Even after the new system was in
place, half of the city's houses still lacked run-
ing water, and of those that had it, many did not
have plumbing above the ground floor.30

Just as it needed a dependable water supply
and distribution network, Paris needed a sewer
system. There were sewers under only 82 miles
of the city's 250 miles of streets when Hauss-
mann took office. Most properties had masonry
ditches or "less satisfactory" receptacles for
sewage. Each night, carts picked up their con-
tents and delivered the waste and refuse to La
Villette, in the northeast of the city. There it
was dumped into canal boats or delivered to
to pumps, both of which carried the sewage six
miles farther to a disposal plant. The waste

tant aspect of Haussmann's method. He did not
build isolated public works. Rather, he thought
of them as part of a public realm framework for
the continuing redevelopment of the entire city,
and he was fortunate that his conception was
shared by the minister of the interior, the Duc
de Persigny. This conception of the public realm
became the framework around which every-
thing would grow—and it gave Haussmann
leverage in capturing and guiding private invest-
ment.

ding water required a vast

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
A MODERN ECONOMY

The public realm includes a great deal more
than the scene admired by a tourist walking
down the Boulevard Saint-Germain. It
includes, as well, things that we do not see, but
that make possible the growth of the city. Paris
doubled in population between 1848 and 1870,
in part due to the annexation of the faubourgs,
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that was not collected ran down the streets in ditches and open gutters to the nearest sewer, if there was one. From streets or sewers the evil-smelling mass of household and business waste and human excreta flowed into the Seine. When the rainfall was particularly heavy, the overflow spilled into cellars, yards, and even into occupied sections of buildings.

When Haussmann left office, virtually every street in the old city had underground drains, leading to 310.7 miles (500 km) of storm sewers. The new sewer system discharged waste water into the Seine downstream from Paris, and river pollution was therefore no longer a problem within the city. The problem was solved, however, by shifting the pollution to communities below the capital.

PUBLIC THOROUGHFARES

Creating a system of streets and sidewalks for Paris was perhaps an even more awesome task than creating water and sewer systems, and the politics of the process was far more difficult. Piercing through a built-up city like Paris required purchasing properties with existing buildings and, if a negotiated sale was not possible, acquiring them by expropriation. Any property acquisition had to comply with legislation enacted in 1810, 1833, 1841, and 1852 that required approval by the appropriate arrondissement mayor and national ministries, the Court of Cassation, the National Audit Office, as well as the Council of State and the Paris Municipal Council.

According to laws approved by Napoléon I, the state could only expropriate property needed for a right-of-way if it provided fair compensation. Any challenge was subject to judicial review. Laws enacted by King Louis-Philippe required a public finding that the property was necessary to promote circulation (widening a street or correcting its alignment) or for construction of public buildings, military facilities, canals, or railroads. More important, it required legislative approval of the taking. Leftover property was a problem, because it might be awkward or impossible to build on the land that remained. Napoléon III dealt with this problem by issuing a decree in 1852 that broadened legal takings to include leftover and adjacent property needed for the healthy redevelopment of the surrounding district. It also formalized the process for approval and review.

It is hard to overemphasize the difficulties involved in obtaining the necessary approvals, securing financing, gaining possession of property, forcing residents and businesses to leave their locations, and demolishing structures to create handsome, well-paved thoroughfares.
became one of the main streets of the university district.24

Haussmann, however, was intent on tying the Left Bank to the rest of Paris and transforming it from a district of insular institutions into a well-functioning part of the national economy. He believed the 72-foot (22-m) width of the Rue des Écoles, which Napoléon III thought essential to his redevelopment program, was inadequate for the intense traffic that had to traverse the district. Furthermore, the street did not lead to major destinations outside the district. Haussmann proposed making the 98-foot-wide (30-m) Boulevard Saint-Germain the area’s primary artery. This would integrate the Latin Quarter with the arterial system in other sections of the city. Haussmann persevered until he convinced the emperor to give up the idea of making the Rue des Écoles an integral part of the administrative center of Paris. The arterial system also attracted support from constituencies interested in improving the movement of goods, providing access to and from the outskirts of the city, and reducing traffic congestion throughout Paris. Bringing these other players into the game was critical to implementing Haussmann’s agenda.

There is a common misconception that the thoroughfares created during the Second Empire were based on a printed plan; they were based on careful planning, rather than a document. Indeed, Napoléon III had drawn a map of some of the arteries that were eventually created. He shared the map with Haussmann when he appointed him prefect of the Seine. It was not entirely original, for it included streets that had been propo sed by others.25 That map became the starting point for a much more ambitious network of tree-lined boulevards, connecting railroad stations, bridges, city gates, parks, and other major destinations.

Thus, the Boulevard Saint-Germain became one link in a loop encircling the center of Paris, beginning at the Place de la Bastille on the Right Bank, continuing along the new Boulevard Henri IV, crossing the île Saint-Louis and the Pont de Sully, passing through the Left Bank to the Pont and Place de la Concorde on the Right Bank again, around the Grand Boulevards and back to the Place de la Bastille. Further, in order to connect the university district with neighborhoods to the south, Haussmann pierced the medieval fabric of the Left Bank with another regional artery, the Boulevard Saint-Michel. This north-south boulevard was an extension of the Boulevard de Sébastopol, which provided access north, through the Right Bank, to the northern gates of the city.

This combination of arteries shattered the insularity of the university district and made it an integral part of the administrative center of Paris. The arterial system also attracted support from constituencies interested in improving the movement of goods, providing access to and from the outskirts of the city, and reducing traffic congestion throughout Paris. Bringing these other players into the game was critical to implementing Haussmann’s agenda.

Local commentators believe that the wide, straight streets that Napoléon III and Haussmann cut through old Paris had a military rationale. They point out that “between 1827 and 1851, the streets and alleys of Paris had seen barricades thrown up on nine separate occasions” and argue that “wide unbroken lines of streets were the best means of controlling insurrectionary incidents.”26 Presumably, the army using cannons and rifles could mow down demonstrators. This rationale was certainly accepted by political leaders of the day. But it was only one among many reasons for what happened.

Road construction programs have often been advocated for military reasons. The American interstate highway system, for example, was authorized in 1956 and funded by the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, which was also approved for nonmilitary reasons. In the case of Paris, the anti-insurrection argument seems weak, because it is not clear why these same streets could not be used by demonstrators to shoot back at the soldiers. The army had heavy artillery and, thus, an advantage. In the heat of battle, however, the demonstrators could and did liberate cannons and use them.

In his comprehensive atlas of Haussmann’s Paris, Pierre Pinon provides five reasons for creating these broad avenues: (1) to traverse the city from north to south and east to west; (2) to connect major destinations, such as railroad stations, bridges, and important intersections; (3) to bypass central Paris; (4) to create monumental axes to major buildings, such as the Arc de Triomphe or the Opéra; and (5) to open up the eight arrondissements annexed in 1860 to real estate development.27 Other reasons include: extending existing arteries, widening heavily used streets, improving circulation within a neighborhood, and connecting to highways leading in and out of the city.

Many of the new avenues were part of the redevelopment of entire districts. Whether one believes that redevelopment of any particular section of Paris was intended to displace the poor or disperse potential insurrectionists; to create functioning districts for food distribution, government administration, retail shopping, or middle-class residence; or to establish
The design structure of Paris consists of the Grande Croisette and the series of boulevard loops that replaced former city walls.

One explanation for the boulevards that is often ignored is the creation of a design structure to provide residents and visitors alike with a method of orientation. There had been plenty of unrealized proposals for new streets. One in particular had substantial support: the “Grande Croisette” (Great Crossing), a prominent east-west thoroughfare passing through Paris, crossed by a similar north-south artery. It had been evolving since 1616 when Marie de Médicis extended a path that would become the Champs Élysées from the Tuileries Gardens into the open fields to the west. It was transformed by landscape architect André Le Nôtre into a tree-lined approach to the Tuileries in 1667, and extended in 1724 by Louis XV past what is now the Place Charles de Gaulle (aka l’Etoile). Napoleon I continued its trajectory, now in an eastward direction, when he authorized the creation of what is now the first part of the Rue de Rivoli in 1801. It would be nearly completed by Haussmann, who also created the north-south thoroughfare along what is now the Boulevard de Sébastopol, passing across the Île de la Cité and continuing southward along the Boulevard Saint-Michel.

The rest of the design structure is provided by three circumferential boulevards, all created by tearing down city walls. The first loop was created on the site of walls that had been built in the fourteenth century, extended in the seventeenth century, and then torn down by Louis XIV in 1670 to create the Grands Boulevards. These included the Boulevard des Capucines, the Boulevard des Italiens, and the other boulevards extending eastward to the Place de la Bastille. Haussmann’s contribution to the first ring was to add to it the Boulevard Saint-Germain on the Left Bank. Haussmann created the second ring by tearing down the Farmers General Wall (begun in 1785 by Louis XVI) to create the “outer” boulevards (including the Boulevards Montparnasse and Raspail on the Left Bank and the Boulevards des Courcelles and de Clichy on the Right Bank). The last ring is the “Peripherique” highway, completed in 1973 over the remains of the Thiers Wall, which was built in the 1840s and demolished between 1919 and 1929.

Most people experience Paris’s public realm without being aware of the Grande Croisette or the three encircling thoroughfares. During much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they were far more aware of Alphand’s distinctive street furniture, most of which has been replaced by contemporary fixtures. Only the advertising columns remain from the nineteenth century. The public realm of contemporary Paris is built around characteristic building heights and styles, cafes, tree-lined avenues.
A contemporary cartoon caricaturing the concierge on the ground floor, the upper classes on the next floor, and increasingly lower-class residences leading to the garrets at the top.

...--.._...
...
80 floor,
A contemporary cartoon caricaturing the concierge on the ground
walks, lined with retail stores in buildings whose heights are related to the width of the street.

Boulevard de Sébastopol (2007). The public realm that dominates Paris is created by traffic arteries flanked by wide sidewalks lined with retail stores in buildings whose heights are related to the width of the street.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Paris had soaring heights and setback requirements dating back a hundred years and more. They were conceived for a city with narrow streets, and once Haussmann and his team began to pierce wide avenues through the city, they needed new regulations. In 1859, Paris adopted a comprehensive building code that allowed building cornice heights to vary, depending on the width of the street. Cornice heights could now rise as high as 65 feet (20 m) on streets more than 65 feet in width. Roofs were set back from that point at a 45-degree angle.

The new building height was suitable for a world without elevators; people were not willing to carry furniture or groceries much higher. The new building height was suitable for a world without elevators; people were not willing to carry furniture or groceries much higher. Furthermore, the city was about to install a new water supply system, in which natural water pressure would reach about six stories above the sidewalk. This figure defined a natural limit for building heights, assuming that people would not want to pay to pump water higher than six stories. The ratio of street wall to street width also assured plenty of light and air at the pedestrian level. Building regulations were altered somewhat in 1884, 1893, and 1902, but the basic principles held sway until 1967, by which time the building profile for Paris had been established and historic-preservation laws were in place.

The vistas that one sees from street level are as important as the street walls to the unity, variety, and visual excitement of Paris. There are arteries, like the Rue de Rennes or the Boulevard de Sébastopol, that provide direct axes to visible destinations, such as railroad stations, but they are comparatively rare. In most cases topography, acquisition problems, political opposition, or some building that had to be retained kept Haussmann’s team from creating the uniform façades and endlessly straight arteries that were fashionable at the École des Beaux-Arts. Those unexpected shifts in right-of-way have saved Paris from becoming a city of perfect axial vistas framed by endlessly repetitive façades, and they have assured Parisians a public realm full of serendipitous delights just around the next bend or behind some monument.

While Haussmann was prefect, the government created 90 miles of new streets between 65 and 100 feet (19 and 30 m) in width, and 700 miles (1,127 km) of broad, paved sidewalks, which provided plenty of room for the cafes that opened throughout the city. As was the case with the boulevards, there had been cafes before Haussmann. The first one opened on the Left Bank in 1689, and by 1848 there were popular cafes along the fashionable Grands Boulevards on the Right Bank. One of the new boulevards spread through the city’s twenty arrondissements, cafes opened everywhere. They promoted a particularly Parisian pastime: lingering over a glass of wine, a café-filtre, or a beer while visiting with a friend, or just watching the world go by. Without Haussmann, there would have been many fewer cafes in Paris and, of course, without the boulevards and cafes, Oscar Hammerstein could never have described Paris at the start of World War II as a place where you could hear “the laughter of her heart in every street cafe…”

GREENING THE CITY

Before 1850 the only open spaces that the people of Paris could use for recreation were some of the château gardens opened to the public during the Revolution (e.g., Luxembourg and Tuileries), adjacent to public buildings (e.g., the esplanades attached to the Invalides and the École Militaire), and cemeteries. There were no public parks established and designed specifically for public recreation before the Second Empire.

In 1852, Napoléon III donated the Bois de Boulogne to the City of Paris. He wanted Haussmann to turn it into a public park that would rival the royal parks of London. At the time, it was neglected woodland, intersected by a number of formal, diagonal roads. Alphand and Haussmann spent five years transforming it into a rec-
Bois de Boulogne, Paris (1700s).


The lake in the Bois de Boulogne, like everything else in the park, was created to provide recreational opportunities for city residents.

Bois de Boulogne was a recreational destination for thousands of Parisians, eliminating all but a few of the diagonal roadways and replacing them with paved, curvilinear vehicular arteries and sidewalks. They regraded 438 acres (178 ha); installed water supply and drainage systems; planted more than 420,000 trees; excavated serpentine streams and lakes so they could be used for boating and skating; introduced smaller formal parks, like the Parc de Bagatelle with its spectacular rose garden; created the Jardin d'Acclimatation (a combination zoo and amusement park); and built the Longchamps Racetrack.

The gross project cost of what turned out to be a 2,090-acre (846 ha) park was 14.4 million francs, about two-thirds the cost of Haussmann's entire water system. The net cost to the City of Paris, however, was far lower. Haussmann thought of parks, boulevards, and all of his public works as investments that would spur real estate development. The surplus land was not needed because the Bois de Boulogne had gained value because of the transformation of the park. He sold this surplus land for 2.1 million francs to developers, who built tax-paying residential buildings. Another 2.1 million francs came from national appropriations for construction of the racetrack and from funds appropriated by imperial decrees. The cost to the city, therefore, was actually 3.5 million francs.

Haussmann believed, correctly, that if the government invested intelligently in grand avenues leading to the new Bois de Boulogne, it could induce the wealthiest Parisians to move to the nearby Sixteenth Arrondissement. Accordingly, the city created the 460-foot-wide (140 m) Avenue Foch, with large park islands on either side of the roadway, leading from the Arc de Triomphe to the Bois. It also created the 110-foot-wide (40-m) tree-lined Avenues Georges Mandel and Henri Martin, leading from the Trocadero to the Bois. These boulevards attracted many of the city's high-income residents to the western districts of the city, where they built fashionable mansions and apartment buildings.

The Bois de Boulogne was balanced on the less affluent eastern side of Paris by the Bois de Boulogne, Avenue Foch, and Avenue Georges Mandel.
Vincennes (2,458 acres [995 ha]). The Bois de Vincennes had also begun as a royal forest preserve and it, too, was donated by Napoléon III to the City of Paris. Haussmann’s team transformed the preserve into a public park at a cost of 23.7 million francs, of which 12 million came from the sale of surplus property. At a net cost of 11.7 million francs, the residents of Paris paid three times the cost of the Bois de Boulogne to create the Bois de Vincennes.

Haussmann conceived of these two regional facilities as part of a comprehensive park and boulevard system that would include three district parks: the Parc Monceau (20.3 acres [8.2 ha]), the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (62 acres [25 ha]), and the Parc de Montsouris (37 acres [15 ha]); and twenty-four small neighborhood parks, inspired by London squares and in fact referred to as “squares.”

The three district parks were conceived as part of the opening of whole new residential neighborhoods. The Parc Monceau, for example, was just west of territory needed for the Boulevard Malesherbes and south of territory needed for the Avenue de Villiers. Expropriated in the revolution of 1789, it was returned to the family by Louis-Philippe, the son of Philippe d’Orléans and the king of France from 1830 to 1848. The land reverted to the government, by agreement, in 1852. Haussmann purchased the rest of the property owned by the heirs of the estate in 1860, for 9.4 million francs. In the process he assembled a perfect site for the park, and he sold the land he did not use to the Pèreire brothers for 8.1 million francs. The public park that Alphand created remains one of the district’s most popular recreational destinations. It includes broad meadows where children play while adults lie in the sun, shaded paths that are favored for strolling and jogging, and a variety of decorative attractions, some of which are relics of the eighteenth-century garden.

It was created on property that had once been a garden on the estate of Philippe d’Orléans. Expropriated in the revolution of 1789, it was returned to the family by Louis-Philippe, the son of Philippe d’Orléans and the king of France from 1830 to 1848. The land reverted to the government, by agreement, in 1852. Haussmann purchased the rest of the property owned by the heirs of the estate in 1860, for 9.4 million francs. In the process he assembled a perfect site for the park, and he sold the land he did not use to the Pèreire brothers for 8.1 million francs. The public park that Alphand created remains one of the district’s most popular recreational destinations. It includes broad meadows where children play while adults lie in the sun, shaded paths that are favored for strolling and jogging, and a variety of decorative attractions, some of which are relics of the eighteenth-century garden.

The squares, which range in size from .25 to
Boulevard Malesherbes, Paris (2006). Trees are as important to the character of the public realm as the stores that attract shoppers.

6.5 acres (0.1-2.6 ha), were also frequently the result of surplus property acquisition; Alphand transformed this surplus land into small parks. Each square has been modified over the years to meet the changing demands of the people who live, work, and shop in the surrounding neighborhood. The Square Laborde (1 acre [3,831 m2]), for example, was created out of land that was not needed for the creation of the Boulevard Malesherbes and the Place Saint-Augustin.

Alphand transformed the new avenues created by Deschamps and Haussmann into tree-lined boulevards where ordinary Parisians enjoyed a stroll, much as the fashionable upper classes enjoyed a promenade on the Grands Boulevards. By 1873 he had supervised the planting of 102,154 street trees and the installation of 8,428 benches. The trees, like the parks, performed an important function, perhaps less understood at the time but vital to sustaining a livable environment. They made the air fresher and cooler, especially on traffic-congested streets. Few people today think about the air quality in Paris. But in the nineteenth century Paris, in which the air was assaulted by “fetid odors that emerged from the middle of alleys, where muddy gutters served as sewers that periodically conveyed epidemic diseases,” trees were essential to the creation of a livable city.

Although the first gaslights had been installed on the Champs-Élysées in 1828 and continued to be installed and maintained by the police department (outside Haussmann’s jurisdiction), Paris was ill lighted and often dangerous in 1848. Eleven years later, in 1859, Napoleon III transferred responsibility for street lighting to Haussmann, who, together with Alphand, installed lampposts and luminaires that improved service. The additional 15,000 streetlights he introduced may be one reason Paris is often called the city of light.

The importance of the benches cannot be underestimated in a city where whole families lived in a single room and toiled in overcrowded workshops that were broiling hot in the summer. Alphand also installed advertising columns, on which posters announce plays, art exhibitions, concerts, and all manner of coming events; kiosks, from which merchants sell newspapers and magazines; drinking fountains; litter bins; urinals; and small cafés in parks and squares. The advertising columns, based on a preexisting German design, have become emblematic of Paris and of France.

RECONSTRUCTING CENTRAL PARIS

Twenty-first-century city dwellers are accustomed to having schools, firehouses, and police stations in their neighborhoods. Paris in the mid nineteenth century lacked these community facilities, and Haussmann was determined to provide them throughout the city. The needs of the original twelve arrondissements were different from the needs of the areas being developed in the annexed outer sections of the city, but they all needed schools, libraries, recreational facilities, government offices, and markets. Every facility had to be approved by the Paris Municipal Council and the relevant arrondissement council. While Haussmann treated council approval as a formality, he could not ignore its members. So it was difficult for him to favor one member of the council over another. Nevertheless, rather than locating facilities on an equitable basis and distributing them evenly throughout the city, Haussmann tended to be opportunistic in selecting sites. He favored sites that were the most accessible, cost the least, and required the least disruption. Nevertheless, during his seventeen years in office, his administration built, enlarged, or restored eleven local government centers (little city halls), erected small local markets throughout the city, opened seventy schools, five theaters, seventeen religious structures (including...
two synagogues), and built nine scattered military barracks (which surely were intended to locate the military so it could provide protection against insurrection). Haussmann also built citywide facilities, including two hospitals and improvements to the Sorbonne, a livestock market at La Villette, and the 21-acre Central Market (Les Halles).

As important as it may have been to provide Paris with facilities similar to those being created at the same time in London and New York, Haussmann and his team went much further; they embarked on a program that completely rebuilt the city's historic core. If Paris was to become the capital of a modern industrial and commercial state, it needed a civil society with functioning national judicial, administrative, and university centers. Haussmann's conception went beyond simple area redevelopment. Haussmann thought of the reconstruction of the area around Châtelet and City Hall as part of a much more ambitious redevelopment, one that included virtually rebuilding the Île de la Cité and the section of Saint-Germain-des-Prés just across the Seine, as well as rebuilding the system of bridges that connected the Île de la Cité with the Right and Left banks. The purpose of all this rebuilding was to ensure that Paris could function as France's premier city.

Haussmann knew Saint-Germain-des-Prés well from his days as a student in the Latin Quarter. Consequently, he saw to it that the Boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain were streets wide enough to accommodate heavy vehicular traffic and also replaced narrow alleys, connecting the Latin Quarter with other parts of the city. The boulevards simplified circulation and the delivery of goods and services to the section of Paris occupied and used by university students. These wide arteries connected the district to the bridges across the Seine, to the major arteries being created on the Right Bank, to the administrative center of the city around Châtelet, and to the Central Market (Les Halles).

France, like England, the United States, and other major Western democracies, would be increasingly dependent on the rule of law and on well-educated leaders in every field of endeavor. Haussmann, therefore created spacious headquarters for the Ministry of Justice, the Commercial Court, and the police on the Île de la Cité. Urban designers like to ascribe the current layout of the Île de la Cité to the desire for broad open public squares that would set off major public buildings, like Notre-Dame and the Palais de Justice. That surely was a consideration. As Haussmann explained, "must have enough space around a monument to permit a visitor to grasp it in its entirety." But Haussmann, like most Parisians, also wanted to eradicate what he called the "ignoble district" that dominated central Paris. When he began redevelopment of the historic core of Paris, it had become a notorious "refuge or meeting place for... criminals... rejects of the Parisian population... ex-convicts, swindlers, thieves, and murderers." Haussmann and Napoleon III aimed to transform this slum into the political hub of "the world's leading city, a capital worthy of France." At the same time, Haussmann believed that the lawyers, doctors, public administrators, and business leaders who were necessary to the transformation would not frequent the Île de la Cité until it was made safe and until it became easy to move around the area on foot.

The establishment and expansion of the administrative-legal-educational core of Paris would have occurred without Haussmann. It had begun before he became prefect of the Seine, it continued to be improved through the twentieth century, and it is still being enhanced. But without Haussmann, or somebody of his skill and temperament, the redevelopment of central Paris would have taken more time and been far less extensive. His great contribution was in understanding that rebuilding the city's historic core would be crucial to the future of the city, that it could not be accomplished all at once, and that it had to be linked together by a series of major thoroughfares. Those new thoroughfares not only connected major administrative, judicial, and educational districts of the city with the city's new produce market, railroad stations, and bridges; they led to the gates of the city and on to the rest of France.

PLAYING THE GAME

Design played an important role in transforming Paris into the city we know, but it was the way Haussmann played the planning game that got the job done. Haussmann was fortunate that he and Napoleon III shared a set of assumptions and were not pulling in different directions. The leaders of the Second Republic and the Second Empire believed that intelligently conceived public works were investments that would add value to surrounding property, trigger private real estate development, and generate more than enough additional tax revenue to pay for the public works. The government was able to sell bonds by dedicating this additional cash flow to payment of the debt service on the bonds it was selling. This is similar to, but different from, what is commonly referred to today as tax increment financing; because tax revenues are not allocated exclusively to the district profiting from capital investment. In mid-nineteenth-century France, however, the idea of relating increases in property value to public investment, and the resulting increase in taxes to debt service payments on the bonds that paid for that investment was novel and, in the minds of many people, suspect.

The Second Empire financed three networks (réseaux) of street improvements by combining subsidies (approved by vote of the National Assembly and Senate) with bond issues (approved by vote of the Municipal Council). In each instance the Crédit Mobilier purchased a significant portion of the bond issue. The First Network was made up of arteries begun before 1858, some of which had been started before Haussmann came to office. It consisted of major parts of the Grande Cité and other streets that received approval and...
appropriations at the national level (although not enough to cover the costs). The Second Network involved both national and city appropriations (though also not enough to cover the costs) for specific streets, which received legislative approval in 1858. The Third Network, which was entirely city-financed, was only approved when legislators came to believe that it was necessary to provide for the territory annexed to the city in 1860. Despite this explicit rationale, Haussmann used some of the money for streets in the original twelve arrondissements.62

Haussmann was unhappy spending time to obtain the approval of local and national legislators, many of whom he loathed as much as he loathed lobbying them. Like him, many of them wanted a cleaner, better Paris, but they also expected attention from the government and special treatment for their favorite projects. Haussmann felt he had better things to do also expected attention from the government and special treatment for their favorite projects. They refused, and he complied with public officials whom he considered incompetent, disloyal, or misguided caused him increasing difficulties as time passed, as did his desire for self-aggrandizement. In 1860 he persuaded Napoleon III to propose adding to his responsibilities those city functions that he did not yet supervise. But he overplayed his hand by demanding the title "Minister of Paris." The emperor, who was politically more adept than his prefect, asked for approval from the other ministers. They refused, and he complied with their wishes.63 Five years later, when Napoleon III appointed a Municipal Council that included more of Haussmann's critics, the prefect opened himself (and the emperor) to major criticism by justifying his actions by discreetly informing the new council that their action was not always necessary because Paris was not "some ordinary community," but belonged "to the whole of France."64

The number and value of public works expenditures outside the scrutiny of the National Assembly, the Senate, and Municipal Council increased, so did the opposition. Eventually, Haussmann incurred enough off-the-books financial commitments that it became impossible to keep them from being disclosed. His reputation was further damaged by Jules Ferry, a Republican deputy and an avowed enemy of the imperial government, when he published The Fantastic Tales of Haussmann.
The pun on E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Tales ridiculed Haussmann’s work.

Ferry was incensed by Haussmann’s underestimates of cost as by his failure to disclose the extent of his program. “What! So many millions in the hands of a single man! But two billion [francs], that is equal to the entire budget of France, and Mr. Prefect, over fifteen years you have spent not less than two billion.” Ferry went on to assert that the First Network of streets was supposed to cost 180 million francs but actually cost 410 million, and that the Third Network had been estimated at 350 million to be spent over ten years, when 634 million were spent between 1864 and 1868.

Ferry probably overestimated the cost overruns, unexpected construction problems, and government indebtedness. But his work did serious damage to Haussmann’s reputation and triggered ongoing debate among legislators, as did gossip about his affair with a young dancer at the Opera; others accused him of profiting from his government position. Once Haussmann left office, however, it turned out that he did not have a pension and had to support himself from his wife’s dowry.

With Haussmann support waning, the opposition demanded that Napoléon III jettison the prefect. Napoléon III appointed Émile Ollivier, leader of the opposition and a longtime enemy of Haussmann, to head the government, and the emperor dismissed his prefect on January 6, 1870. Nine days later a popular humor magazine featured a bitter cartoon on its cover, showing Haussmann with a pretty woman (ostensibly representing Paris), and the prefect exclaiming, “It is possible, after I have loved you so, covered you with pears and diamonds, and made you, so ugly before, the most beautiful woman in the world, that you should spurn me . . . You ingrate!”

Boulevard des Italiens, Paris (late 1800s).

SUSTAINING THE NEW PARIS

Sixty years after Haussmann left office, F. Scott Fitzgerald described an American directing his taxi to the Avenue de l’Opéra, to hear “the cab horns . . . [that] were the trumpets of the Second Empire,” and watch clerks “closing the iron grill in front of Berriano’s Book Store.” Nobody in the Second Empire could have foreseen motorized taxi service or an American bookstore on the Avenue de l’Opéra. Yet the city that Haussmann’s team created easily accommodated both—and much else that appeared in the ensuing decades.

Surprisingly little has changed since Fitzgerald described the scene. Small children, teenagers, office workers, and the elderly still go to local parks, just as they continue to stroll and shop along tree-lined boulevards. Tourists and Parisians still sit at cafes on the city’s broad avenues watching the world go by, attend performances at the Opéra, and stay in hotels in the sections of the city that Haussmann and his team rebuilt.

The Paris that Haussmann and his team created has been sustained and nurtured by succeeding generations. In many ways it is even more impressive today because it supports a very different public realm, whose economic life and activities were unimaginable in the 1860s. That era’s array of public works could be expanded, extended, and adapted to the activities and desires of future generations at prices they could afford and were willing to pay. In words that will be eerily familiar to twenty-first-century environmentalists, their work met “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The new arteries are now used by motor vehicles and in many places have been retrofitted with special lanes for bicycles. Often they have been wide enough to accommodate the insertion of ramps leading to underground garages without interrupting the flow of traffic above.

The tree-lined avenues and boulevards have been popular with people of every social and economic class from the moment they were cre-
They have accommodated the changes in land use that accompanied a continually evolving economy. Even more impressive, the Paris created by the Second Empire proved capable of serving a much larger, much more decentralized twenty-first-century population and, still, all of France.

Nevertheless, the city is not exactly the same as it was in 1870, when the Second Empire ended. Subways, buses, trucks, and cars have replaced horses, carts, carriages, and horse-drawn omnibuses. Nor is Paris the same as it was in 1931 when F. Scott Fitzgerald described the Avenue de l’Opéra. Brentano’s Book Store and the taxi horns are still there, but there are now high-rise buildings on the skyline, along with television antennas.

The Seine is no longer used for dumping raw sewage. Because of the higher embankments built by the Second Empire and later governments, flooding is no longer a problem. As a result, the river has become a major attraction for millions of tourists who enjoy trips on more than one hundred excursion boats that ply the river, something that nobody in Haussmann’s day could have envisioned.75 Since 2002, each summer the city has operated “Paris-Plages,” a temporary beach created along the banks of the Seine, which by 2009 was attracting four million sunbathers annually.76 Few of the buildings that surrounded Notre-Dame in 1848 were still there at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Most of the Île de la Cité had been cleared for public squares, tree-lined boulevards, government buildings, and a hospital. The east-west axis of the Champs-Elysées has become part of a “Grande Croisée” extending from the high-rise office district at La Défense west of the city, for eight and one half miles to the Bois de Vincennes on the east. Its north-south arm begins in the north at two railroad stations (the Gare du Nord and the Gare de l’Est), continues along the Boulevard de Sébastopol, crosses the Seine, and goes down the Boulevard Saint-Michel into Montrouge, south of the city.

The most dramatic changes made to Paris by the Haussmann team were the transformation of a city of polluted air and water into one with a relatively healthy environment. They accomplished this by ripping out fetid slums (in the process causing considerable pain and economic distress to the residents) and replacing them with neighborhoods made up of five-to-seven-story apartment buildings along broad, tree-lined avenues; installing sewers and water distribution systems; and creating a remarkable network of public parks. When Haussmann left office, the city had one acre of parkland for every 3,350 inhabitants. The government has been adding parkland ever since. Paris may or may not be the greenest city in Europe, but it has more trees (478,000) than any other capital on the continent.77

The capital investment strategy pursued by governments of Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century certainly set the city on the road to an increasingly sustainable environment. It also enhanced public health and the personal well-being of its citizens. But perhaps its most important role was in providing a public realm framework that attracted private investment and around which real estate development thrived. Cities and suburbs throughout the world have a great deal to learn from planners who, while creating thoroughfares that provided for the movement of goods and services needed by a modern industrial and commercial society, carefully adjusted their dimensions, layout, and accouterments so that they served many other functions as well. Most important, their rejection of single-function planning and adoption of a public investment strategy that encouraged complementary real estate development provides a model that remains relevant for the twenty-first century.
Successful planning begins long before work on any specific plan starts, and continues long after that plan is published. There is no single correct method for the planning process. However, the process that resulted in the creation of the Plan of Chicago and the implementation of so many of its proposals contained all the elements of successful planning. They include: building a constituency for planning, creating an entity to do the planning, testing the validity of various government actions in order to establish the agenda set forth in the plan, creating an appealing and understandable image of the future, gaining public approval of the agenda, identifying the agencies that will implement the plan, obtaining the money needed to finance that agenda, and maintaining ongoing public support until that agenda has been implemented.

Every library is filled with documents presenting dreams of what might have been. Unlike most of them, the Plan of Chicago contained major proposals that were successfully implemented and that changed the face and character of the city. The success of the Plan resulted from a planning process that was classic in many respects but that was unique to its place and time in others. Growing out of the success of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, it took on a life of its own, and, therefore, the transformation of the city was in some respects quite different from the original plan.

In Chicago, as in most cities where planning has resulted in major change, the accompanying planning process was at least as important as the Plan itself. Together, the Plan and the process inspired remarkable public realm expenditures. During the ten years following publication of the Plan, its authors, the Chicago Plan Commission, its staff, and the proponents whom they inspired were able to convince voters to approve bonds in the sum of $61.5 million; legislators to approve $8.1 million in special assessments on properties affected by improvements to Michigan Avenue and Roosevelt Road; railway companies to spend $162.1 million, and the Forest Preserve to pay out $5.3 million to acquire and create parkland.1

Unlike Paris, Chicago had been built according to a rectilinear plan based on the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which established a nationwide grid of one-mile squares.2 From the time of Chicago’s incorporation as a village in 1833, the extension of its rectilinear street grid proceeded bit by bit. It anticipated the real estate development that also...