

See What I Mean?

A Guide to Visual Literacy

Ridiculously Obvious Principle #1

Generally speaking, people notice the big things on a page first.

What do you notice first?



Ridiculously Obvious Principle #2

Use color and shape to group similar things together.

Dog

Mouse

Cubs

Cat

Banana

Carrot

History

Broccoli

White Sox

Peach

Apple

Cardinals

Mathematics

Peas

Physics

Dog

Mouse

Cubs

Cat

Banana

Carrot

History

Broccoli

White Sox

Peach

Apple

Cardinals

Mathematics

Peas

Physics

Dog
Cat
Mouse

Banana
Peach
Apple

White Sox
Cubs
Cardinals

Broccoli
Carrot
Peas

History
Mathematics
Physics

Ridiculously Obvious Principle #3

You should place elements where they communicate most effectively.

People notice what is at the top of the page before

They notice what is at the bottom of the page.

People notice what is in the center

Before they notice

what are on the sides

Visual Rough Draft

- Before you put together your PowerPoint slides or posters, make a pencil sketch as a kind of rough draft.



Ridiculously Obvious Principle #4

Don't put too much text on each slide.

The Burnham Plan

- The plan included six major aspects:
- **Improvement of the lakefront.** Foremost among the plan's goals was reclaiming the lakefront for the public. "The Lakefront by right belongs to the people," wrote Burnham. "Not a foot of its shores should be appropriated to the exclusion of the people." The plan recommended expanding the parks along the [Lake Michigan](#) shoreline with landfill, which was done in the early 20th century. Of the city's 29 miles (47 km) of lakefront, all but four miles (six kilometers) are today public parkland. The plan also provided for extensive lakefront harbor facilities, which became unnecessary with the city's development of facilities in the [Lake Calumet](#) region.
- **A regional highway system.** The plan considered Chicago as the center of a region extending 75 miles (120 km) from the city center. At the dawn of the automobile age, the plan diagrammed both radial and circumferential highways for the region. However, the agencies who built and improved highways in the 1910s and 1920s do not appear to have been guided to build along the specific routes recommended in the plan.
- **Improvement of railway terminals.** The plan drew on technical studies previously done by others, including a plan for competing railroads to pool usage of tracks for greater efficiency in freight handling. In addition, the plan detailed the consolidation of Chicago's six intercity railroad passenger terminals into new complexes west of the Loop and south of Roosevelt Road. This, in turn, would allow the expansion of the business district southward. A new [Chicago Union Station](#) was finished in 1925, but no other stations were consolidated or relocated. In 1929, the South Branch of the [Chicago River](#) was rechanneled, between Polk and 18th Streets, to untangle railroad approaches as recommended by the plan.
- **New outer parks.** The movement to purchase and preserve the natural areas that became the [Cook County Forest Preserves](#) was well under way as the plan was being written. The plan includes those proposals and also calls for the expansion of the city's park and boulevard system, which had been first established in the 1870s.
- **Systematic arrangement of streets.** New wider arterials were prescribed to relieve traffic congestion in the fast-growing city, including a network of new diagonal streets. One of these was constructed, the extension of [Ogden Avenue](#); there are several other diagonal streets throughout the city. The plan's recommendations were followed, and the city widened Roosevelt Road and Michigan Avenue, and created Wacker Drive and Congress Parkway. In addition, some 108 miles (174 km) of arterial streets were widened between 1915 and 1931,¹⁴ spurred by the tremendous growth in automobile usage. Writing in 1908, Burnham saw the automobile as a recreational vehicle that would allow city dwellers to visit the countryside. He could not foresee how it would overwhelm and transform the city itself.
- **Civic and cultural centers.** The most iconic image of the plan is the new civic center proposed for the area around Congress and Halsted Streets. However, city officials who preferred the convenience of a Loop location never seriously pursued the proposal. At the east end of Congress Street, which would become the central axis of the reshaped city, Burnham proposed a cultural center in [Grant Park](#) consisting of the new [Field Museum](#) of Natural History and new homes for the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) and the Crerar Library. This proposal, however, placed Burnham and other civic leaders in conflict with a state supreme court decision forbidding any new buildings in Grant Park.

The Burnham Plan

- **Improvement of the lakefront.**
- **A regional highway system.**
- **Improvement of railway terminals.**
- **New outer parks.**
- **Systematic arrangement of streets**
- **Civic and cultural centers.**

Hint:

If you need notes, use the “Click to add notes function at the bottom of the slide template in PowerPoint.

You can then print the slide show in Notes Page view. Your notes will appear under each slide.

Ridiculously Obvious Principle #5

Use pictures to illustrate, not for decoration.

The Burnham Plan

- Improvement of the lakefront.
- A regional highway system.
- Improvement of railway terminals.
- New outer parks.
- Systematic arrangement of streets
- Civic and cultural centers.



LXIX. CHICAGO. DIAGRAM OF A SYSTEM OF FREIGHT HANDLING FOR LAND AND WATER TRANSPORTATION, TO BE WORKED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ONE ANOTHER.

(1) A central clearing and warehousing yard. (2) A north harbor at the mouth of the Chicago River. (3) A south harbor at the mouth of the Calumet River. (4) Underground freight lines interconnecting the city stations, the central yard, and the two harbors; these lines are shown in red; they do not represent exact locations of the routes.