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Committee on World's Fair Exhibit "The City", 1940

REPORT TO THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS
ON THE FILM "THE CITY"

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by

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President of the Board of Civic Films, Inc.

The film "The City" has had its first public showing since the last meeting of the Institute at Boston. It was viewed by 113,925 people at the New York World's Fair, 1939, and has been presented at twenty small theatres in the East.

The picture was financed by the Carnegie Corporation primarily with the idea that it would be presented first at the New York World's Fair. It was shown there at The Little Theatre in the Science and Education Building during the greater part of the summer. According to our understanding with the Fair, arrangements for exhibiting it elsewhere were postponed until the end of the summer. It was then decided that the picture should be distributed to the commercial theatres before being sent out to civic, educational, and technical organizations. The reason for this was twofold. In the first place, it was felt that a much larger number of people would be reached through the regular theatres and that the commercial value and attendance would suffer if the non-commercial distribution was started at the same time. Secondly, although the film was not produced for the purpose of making money, it was the opinion of our Board that there would be a better chance for the production and success of documentary films in the future if it were possible to realize at least a limited financial return on the commercial distribution of "The City".

Accordingly, on August 23, 1939, an agreement was made with World Pictures Corporation for the distribution of the film to commercial theatres here and abroad. During the past five months it has been shown in Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and elsewhere. Because of its nature and its length — it was neither a long nor a short picture — it was found advisable to show it first in the smaller theatres. These had the advantage of selective audiences. In a number of cities it was found possible to interest civic and technical organizations in helping to publicize the showings.

In order to open up the much broader field of the neighborhood theatres, it has been necessary to shorten the film from 44 to 31 minutes. The Board feels that the picture has been very much improved by judicious cutting which was done under the guidance of Lewis Mumford and members of the Board of Civic Films, Inc. It is now being rented to circuits of smaller theatres. Contracts have already been made for Philadelphia, Scranton, and other sections of Pennsylvania as well as Washington. A number of contracts will shortly be consummated in other parts of the country.

The financial return on bookings of the film up to January first amounted to over \$1,000. The greater part of these proceeds has been used to cover additional expense necessitated by the commercial distribution of the picture. In the future, excepting for small administrative expenses, it is proposed to put aside all receipts for the purpose of producing another picture or carrying on work of a similar nature.

The popularity of the film is evidenced by the favorable press notices in various cities where it has been exhibited, as well as by the many inquiries

we have received asking for its use for schools, civic organizations, and technical societies.

We have this week made arrangements for its non-commercial distribution. This will be taken care of by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, 11 West 53rd Street, New York City, to which all correspondence should be addressed. The charge for the use of the film will be no more than enough to cover expenses inasmuch as the Museum of Modern Art Film Library is a subsidized organization. Civic Films, Inc. will receive no proceeds from this educational work excepting when a print is rented for a long period.

Respectfully submitted,

CLARENCE S. STEIN