STREET DEVELOPMENT AROUND THE CAMPUS

In our planning, campus roads, parking and the streets around the campus were considered. At the south edge of the campus, the City had widened the roadway between the two sides of the hill on 11th Street and it had become a gravel road used by the public and more or less, by right-of-use, had informally been recognized by the City.

Lawrence Street

When the campus was first structured in 1924 in front of the campus there was a boulevard called Lawrence Street. On either side of the boulevard, there had been paved areas and in the middle there were islands, each one as long as a block and probably 20 to 24 feet wide. They were unkept and a problem because the City did nothing to maintain them.

I went to the City and said we would like to have these islands landscaped and we would be very happy to cooperate in any way. We got caught in a "war" between departments of the City government. The Water Department said it would not water the islands until the Park Department agreed to take care of them; the Park Department said it would not take care of them until the Water Department would give them water! Finally, after a year or two of political problems, I told our maintenance people to put the water in, landscape them, water them and maintain them, and this was done. So while the City owns the islands, we maintain them and water them at University expense.

Eighteenth Street

On the north side, Eighteenth Street was a rough street, with a high
center full of chuck holes. I called the people on Eighteenth Street together
for a dinner meeting and we discussed our problem. We wanted to have it
maintained and beautified so that it would not be unsightly. I recall
that the people said they would like to have a better road but they were not
necessarily interested in paying for it. The wife of one of the wealthiest men
in the City said, "If you want it, you pay for it!" But better heads prevailed
and we had plans drawn. There were three plans—a narrow street, a wider
street, and a still wider street with islands, such as those on Lawrence
Street. The people discussed it at some length at a second meeting, evaluated
the costs and decided on a wide street paved with asphalt, which is what is
there now. It was arrived at by neighborly consensus and everybody seemed
to appreciate it very much. Also, the curbs were put in at that time.

Union Avenue Development

When it came to Union Avenue, I went to the City again and said it
was a muddy, dirt road and that the University would like the City to improve
the street, landscape the boulevards and maintain them. As I mentioned
before, there were very large hills in the middle of Union Avenue, some of
them fifteen to twenty feet high, and I tried to get the City to move the dirt
and make the street level so it could be beautified and made into a boulevard.
The City people were very friendly but simply said they did not have the time
or the money to move the earth.

About three or four years later, one morning about five o'clock I
heard a very unusual noise on Union Avenue and I looked out and saw steam
shovels and trucks moving the dirt, just as rapidly as could be done. I
went over and talked to the foreman whom I knew and said, "Well, miracles do happen! What happened here?" He said, "A water main broke in the north end and unless we get an enormous amount of earth over there and very quickly, houses will start toppling into the ravine, and we can't have that." So it was the ill luck of a broken water main that cleared Union Avenue of the hills and made it possible for us to think in terms of landscaping it, as it is today.

Using the same technique that I had used on 18th Street, I called the people together for a dinner and told them about the possibility of landscaping Union Avenue. It soon became evident that we had two types of people on Union Avenue—we had the "blue-collar" people or the "dinner-bucket" people on the south end and we had the professional people—doctors and lawyers—on the north end. The professional people were very eager to have the landscaping done, particularly if the University planned to landscape the boulevard after that was finished. The south end people were very adamant and we had a man by the name of Miller who did everything he possibly could, both at that meeting and at the meeting later at the City Hall, to block the development of Union Avenue. Finally, when a vote was taken, it was about 80% in favor of developing Union Avenue as a boulevard, and 20% against. When this fact was presented to the City Council, we were allowed to go ahead and landscape it.

About that time, the Federal Government came in with a "land farm-to-market road" bill which allowed cities to receive some extra financing
for roads such as this. I never quite figured out how this could be a farm-to-market road and I never got involved in the City financing, but it came along at about the right time and allowed us to beautify Union Avenue. Again, we ran into the same situation with the City in that they would not maintain the boulevard or put water in, so the University put the water in and we have maintained the islands, although technically they are owned by the City.

**Kiwanis Club Helps Out**

We were very pleased, later on, when the Kiwanis Club decided that it would help landscape Union Avenue. Dr. Raymond Powell, a faculty member at the College, and Mr. Harold Tollefson, an alumnus and mayor of the City, were members of the Kiwanis and influential in this decision. Dr. Gordon Alcorn (for whom the arboretum is named at the University) selected the trees and each island has a different species of trees which is indigenous to this area. When we talked about it, Dr. Alcorn said that we always send away to some far-off place for some exotic trees and we ought to use some trees that are native to this area, so the trees on Union Avenue are native to this area.

When we first planted them, we had some problems because it was just the time when jeeps were first popular and on two or three occasions some jeep driver decided late at night that he would drive down the row of trees and see if he couldn't take them down. We had to replant the trees on some islands several times, but they are now large enough to survive any jeep that comes along--and they are very beautiful.