

Planning the Twentieth- Century American City

Edited by

MARY CORBIN SIES and

CHRISTOPHER SILVER

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In the mid-1980s planning history and urban history experienced a dynamic convergence. Heralded in 1985 by a special symposium in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, this creative fusion of interests and methodologies sparked a decade of study of the planning and shaping of America's urban places. From this exchange has come a more interdisciplinary approach to history and a more instrumental history itself. Scholars sharing and applying techniques, insights, and problematics from neighboring fields or disciplines have altered the basic definitions of planning and contributed to a greater understanding of both the planning process and its impact on specific neighborhoods, regions, or communities. Daniel Schaffer's edited volume *Two Centuries of American Planning*, published in 1988 by the Johns Hopkins University Press, presented the first intellectual products of the coalescence between urban and planning history. The present anthology showcases the more complex and contextually grounded research that has issued from this marriage.

Planning the Twentieth-Century American City should be of interest to a diverse audience: all those students, scholars, planners, and citizens concerned with the social, economic, and spatial dimensions of modern metropolitan America. It should provide useful food for thought for political, urban, planning, and architectural historians; urban geographers; urban studies scholars; historic preservationists; and urban policy makers. Above all, it is intended to meet the needs of planning students and practitioners. As a result, the discussions move well beyond the institutional framework of twentieth-century planning to the contexts in which the planning process unfolds in a given urban place. In other words, the studies here constitute a practical history of planning that can inform the decisions of practitioners and policy makers alike. The chapters that follow investigate planning systematically in order to understand it and how it has affected and sometimes failed the nation's cities in changing ways throughout the twentieth century.

One result of these inquiries is that the definition of planning has had to be expanded, for the authors have found that professional planning did not follow a straight and single path in its evolution, nor does it encompass only the activities of professional planners. Rather, planning includes a broad range of actors and actions that have historically shaped urban development. This realization, a positive consequence of the collaboration between urban and planning historians, is at the heart of this book. Thus the authors investigate a wide range of cities, planners, and intellectual and popular influences to find out how planning and development operated. They furnish several new case studies of the social, economic, bureaucratic, and political factors that influenced planning in a given locale. They also examine the effects of specific values, assumptions, and planning or urban policy discourses on the development of the twentieth-century built environment. In addition, several essays begin the long overdue task of assessing the impact of major twentieth-century planning initiatives on the nation's neighborhoods, downtowns, and metropolitan regions.

The twenty essays in this volume are organized into four parts, preceded by an introduction that surveys the historiography of planning history from its inception during the 1960s to the present time. These divisions group the chapters roughly chronologically and by themes. Each chapter opens with a brief introduction that summarizes its principal argument and the significance of its contribution, and sets the piece within its appropriate historiographical context. A concluding chapter brings the anthology up to the present time by focusing on the new American metropolis of the post-1970s era and delineating the planning assumptions that have guided its development.

The editors incurred a number of debts as they brought the essays in this anthology together. Four chapters of this volume are reprinted from other works through the kind permission of Sage Publications, Inc., which originally published "Home Building and Industrial Decentralization in Los Angeles: The Roots of the Postwar Urban Region," by Greg Hise, in the *Journal of Urban History* 19(2), Feb. 1993; Pennsylvania State University Press, which published Carl Abbott's "Five Downtown Strategies: Policy Discourse and Downtown Planning since 1945" in the *Journal of Policy History* 5(1), 1993; the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, which originally featured Thomas Hanchett's "Federal Incentives and the Growth of Local Planning, 1941-1948" in its volume 60(2), Spring 1994; and the University of California Press, Journals Division, which published "World War II and Urban California: City Planning and the Transformation Hypothesis," by Roger Lotchin, in the *Pacific Historical Review* 62(2), May 1993. We also wish to thank urban historian Mark H. Rose and planning historian Laurence C. Gerckens for reading the entire manuscript; their comments and criticisms enabled us to improve its quality tremendously. To our editor George F. Thompson, at the Center for American Places in Harrisonburg, Virginia, we offer sincere thanks for his patience and judicious good sense in guiding the book from its conception through the manuscript preparation and production processes.

 Preface and Acknowledgments

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We both wish to express our deep gratitude to Virginia "Jenny" Brandt and Cindy Ann Mills Baumgartner at VCU, who mastered the challenge of merging twenty manuscripts produced with nearly a dozen different softwares into a file suitable for production. Special thanks also go to Mary Beth Taliaferro from Academic Campus Computing Services for timely assistance to Jenny and Cindy when the machine refused to cooperate.

Both of us also owe a special debt to the members of two organizations largely responsible for pushing planning and urban history much closer together: the Society for American City and Regional Planning History and the Urban History Association.

INTRODUCTION

The History of Planning History

MARY CORBIN SIES
CHRISTOPHER SILVER

Planning history emerged as a recognized field of study only quite recently but since the 1960s has produced layer upon layer of knowledge about city and regional planners, designs, the planning process, its institutional loci, and its broader social, political, cultural, and intellectual contexts. Some of the contributions, like map overlays, provide a single perspective on a complex landscape. Others integrate information from several perspectives to provide startling new insights. Thus an appropriate place to begin this volume on the history of city planning in the United States is to review briefly that body of literature: it will show at a glance the many separate paths that planning ideas and experience and the histories written about them have taken.

As scholars have grappled with the challenge of mapping the history of planning thought and practice, they have changed their very definitions of the phenomena that qualify as planning activi-

ties. At different times, "planning" has meant the design of comprehensive plans and discrete urban spaces, or the creation of enabling legislation, or the conduct of social research, or the practice of a wide array of community development functions. At the same time, the cast of characters known as "planners" has expanded to include not only individuals belonging to the planning profession, narrowly defined, but all those public officials and private citizens, men and women, who create the urban landscape and shoulder the many responsibilities this entails, from zoning and transportation to settlement house work, subdivision development, and historic preservation.

Planning historians have also increased their purview and their understanding of the contextual circumstances—social, racial, cultural, economic, and political—that have influenced both planning and plan implementation in a given locality. This broadening has led many scholars to adopt interdisciplinary approaches to their work that are in tune with the complexities of planning and therefore have great potential for informing contemporary planning practice. Indeed, one of the purposes of this volume is to demonstrate that planning history has much to offer in the way of useful lessons for contemporary and future planners, policy makers, and residents of the nation's urban places. The rest of this chapter provides a roughly chronological review of planning history as it has pursued the dynamic interdisciplinary scholarship for which it is known today.

Planning Historians' Initial Concept of Planning

According to the first planning historians, the modern planning movement began at the turn of the twentieth century. Mel Scott, author of the first standard planning history text, *American City Planning since 1890* (1969), noted that as early as 1900 a wide array of intellectuals, social reformers, business leaders, professionals, and officials at all levels of government consciously embraced the idea of

"planning," in the belief that it was necessary to safeguard the country's social system. How that novel concept was to be defined, however, was hotly contested. Consequently, the modern planning movement had no coherent identity in the earliest years of the century. In 1917 the movement achieved formal recognition with the formation of the American City Planning Institute. Its fifty-two charter members, each of whom had at least two years of city planning experience, included fourteen landscape architects, thirteen engineers, five architects, four real estate figures, and a larger contingent of academics and civic reformers. All were intent upon advancing the practice of city planning, although it was still undefined and evolving in various directions. As Scott generously observed, "Collectively they provided the new institute with a richness of experience certain to contribute to a breadth of understanding of urban problems and opportunities. But the very diversity of their backgrounds also indicated that this would be a professional organization in which consensus might be difficult to achieve."¹

By the 1920s, most adherents of the nascent movement had decided that the central purpose of planning was to guide and manage efficiently the processes of metropolitan development. In both city and suburbs, planners focused their attention on the design or redesign of the physical landscape. A handful of intellectuals and social activists, like Walter Lippmann, Charles Zeublin, and Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, defined planning quite differently: they saw it as a process of establishing and implementing economic and social priorities at the national and even international levels.² Nevertheless, the mainstream of planning thought in the early twentieth century concentrated almost exclusively on the spatial dimensions of urbanization. Underlying this focus was a widely shared environmental determinism rooted in the reform tradition of the Progressive Era. Early-twentieth-century planners believed that through proper design of the metropolitan environment it would be possible to alleviate a wide range of social, economic, and political problems. Influencing the spatial city offered a common cause to those persons who advocated intervention in the

urban development process through planning, even though they may have supported distinctive types of spatial solutions with conflicting objectives and decidedly different consequences.

Planning History as Celebration of Planning's Pioneers

Many of the scholars who began to write the history of American city planning in the 1960s shared the reform ideals and accepted a good deal of the environmental determinism of the early twentieth-century planners. They focused their research on the "master planners," especially those whose ideas were firmly rooted in the Progressive reform tradition. Thus the first historical studies were biographical in nature, concentrating on the lives and times of a handful of leading practitioners and their plan making or plan conceptualizing, as demonstrated by the sketches of Henry Wright and John Nolen, two of "city planning's truly great men," that appeared in the November 1960 issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners (JAIP)*. Both articles, and the whole series of comparable sketches that followed, celebrated the reform ideals and design achievements of the pioneers of American city planning. Most of those planning pioneers had built their reputations on their work as consultants to civic groups and to a prominent urban elite. While serving in this capacity, they experimented with new urban forms and designed spatial alternatives to the much maligned industrial metropolis.³

The historical sketches published during the 1960s occasionally featured a British figure such as Ebenezer Howard or Sir Raymond Unwin, whose Garden City and new town concepts helped shape British reform efforts and eventually American planning.⁴ In its November 1972 issue, the *JAIP* launched a new historical biography series that became a regular feature. Over the next few years, the journal published carefully crafted biographical sketches of a select group of both theorists and practitioners: Patrick Geddes, the

urban theorist; Rexford Tugwell, America's greenbelt advocate; Benjamin Marsh, congestion fighter and organizer of the first national planning conclave in 1909; Charles Dyer Norton, promoter of the Regional Plan of New York; Harland Bartholomew, the prolific professional consultant and America's first public planner; Walter Burley Griffin, the expatriate planner of Canberra; Lewis Mumford, the holistic thinker; Benton MacKaye, the park planner; and E. A. Gutkind, the outsider.⁵ In 1978 *JAIP* finally acknowledged that the planning pioneers included women as well as men, a point that Eugenie L. Birch established in "Woman-Made America: The Case of Early Public Housing Policy."⁶

The journal commissioned articles on these particular individuals because planning historians judged their reform ideas seminal to the development of the best of the mainstream American planning movement. These discussions of pioneering planners and their reform ideals and design achievements were addressed primarily to members of a rather young profession seeking a clearer understanding of its founders and its ideological origins. Although narrowly framed and often one-dimensional, these early planning "histories" were important for their canonizing function. Dominating planning history for more than a decade, they laid the ideological groundwork for what later became "a systematic study of institutionalized planning."⁷

The American Planner: Biographies and Reflections (1983), edited by Donald Krueckeberg, reprinted some of the biographical essays from *JAIP* and supplemented the discontinued biographical series with additional sketches, expanding the definition of figures central to planning history in the process. He included a discussion of women in planning by Eugenie Birch and chapters on zoning experts Edward Bassett and Alfred Bettman; housing planners Edith Elmer Wood, Coleman Woodbury, and Charles Abrams; and planning consultant Ladislav Segoe. Krueckeberg's volume concentrated on planning figures whose careers spanned the first half of the twentieth century, a "special" period in which "a new profession devoted to the unified and comprehensive planning of cities and

regions [endeavored] to satisfy human needs with both beauty and efficiency."⁸ What made the early years of the American planning movement special, Michael Brooks recently agreed, was the crucial work of the first generations of planners who established "the underlying values of the profession"; they "reminded us of the critical responsibilities we bear for the well-being of all who reside in the communities we purport to serve."⁹

The American Planner canonized key figures who "played a direct role in the development of the planning profession" while broadening the range of recognized planning activities and acknowledging the plurality of professional interests among the planning pioneers. Krueckeberg offered his collection of biographies, published at the close of a period in which the planning profession had grown from several hundred persons after World War II to nearly 25,000 by 1980, for the explicit purpose of helping members of a more diverse profession (re)discover their shared ideals and training. Writing in direct response to the rapid growth and magnitude of change in the profession and the mood of shattered optimism characterizing urban life in the late twentieth century, Krueckeberg foresaw a coming period of redirection for the profession and held out the pioneer planners' ideals and experiences as a springboard for reflecting on what its nature might be. Planning history, as he approached it, would serve to "restore our memories, review our commitments, and to extend our sense of company."¹⁰

Planning History as the Chronicle of Institutionalized Planning

With Mel Scott's *American City Planning since 1890*, a massive commissioned history published in 1969 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the American Institute of Planners, planning history received its first systematic study of institutionalized planning. Defining planning as the "development of the planning function in modern government," Scott reified the conceptual

framework first developed by planning's historical biographers. Building on the initial portraits of the planning pioneers, he traced the origins of modern planning in the United States and its institutions to the reform ideals of the progressive movement. While cognizant of the many shortcomings of the planning movement over the ensuing years, Scott treated all practitioners as direct ideological descendants of those early reformers, or implied they should have been. Thus parts of *American City Planning* take on a heroic tone, the fundamental idea being that "entire cities and metropolitan regions can be developed and renewed by a continuous process of decision-making based on long-range planning."¹¹ Throughout the 653 pages of text, the author emphasized the evolution of master planning by providing extended discussions of Burnham's plans for Washington, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Chicago, and of plan making through the City Functional Era, the New Deal, and into the post-World War II period. In other words, the formulation and implementation of comprehensive plans in the nation's largest metropolitan areas formed the central plot in Scott's history, and he relied upon an impressive array of original plans and interviews with planners to flesh out the details of his narrative.

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of *American City Planning* in the historiography of planning history; it remained the standard text on the subject, a source of indoctrination and inspiration for students in schools of planning, well into the 1980s.¹² With his authoritative study, Scott greatly broadened the subject matter of planning history and gave it an important place in the history of the nation, arguing that "the planning function in society touches almost all interests, affects almost all aspects of our lives, and holds enormous potential for improving our institutions and our environment." Scott recognized that city planning was closely intertwined with "highly complex social, economic, and political forces," although his investigation of those forces was highly selective. As a commissioned work for the American Institute of Planners, *American City Planning* concentrated on showcasing many of the institute's most prominent figures. But Scott also included those "persons

outside the profession—financiers, industrialists, merchants, members of other professions, writers, professors of political science, economics, sociology, and law, legislators, mayors, governors, and presidents—[who] have influenced the development of planning perhaps as much as the recognized practitioners and their cohorts, the professors of city and regional planning in our universities.”¹³

American City Planning thus achieved two milestones in planning historiography: it greatly expanded historians’ definition of persons contributing to the planning process, and it synthesized an impressive if highly selected amount of data on institutionalized planning that would come to represent the standard account. What Scott left out of the work, however, was almost as significant as what he included. For his case studies of city planning, he relied exclusively on the major American metropolises, especially Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. Planning in small towns and cities, indeed in whole regions, received no mention at all. Except for a passage on the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission and a few brief comments on Dallas, Scott overlooked virtually the entire urban South and Southwest. Although he carefully examined efforts since the 1920s to initiate regional planning, he omitted the striking phenomenon of residential suburbanization from his survey.

The most serious intellectual shortcoming of *American City Planning*, however, was Scott’s failure to distance himself from the profession sufficiently to assess critically its fundamental values and motives; he was unable to penetrate the rhetoric of reform that planners drew upon to legitimize their actions. A related and telling deficiency was the lack of attention to the differential impacts of institutionalized planning on the diverse array of districts, neighborhoods, and communities in the modern metropolis. For example, Scott studiously avoided considering the racial implications of twentieth-century planning. Since the early 1970s numerous scholars have worked steadily to redress this oversight in the planning history literature. Christopher Silver and Marc Weiss have documented the racial basis of early zoning. Silver, Howard Gillette, and

others have pointed out the racial and ethnic exclusion objectives of Clarence Perry’s neighborhood unit plan and the community planning process that it spawned over the next four decades.¹⁴ In “Zoning and the American Dream,” Weiss has demonstrated that when the Supreme Court embraced zoning in the *Euclid v. Ambler* case in 1926, it was clearly concerned with issues of social segregation as well as issues of land use.¹⁵ In quite a range of studies, several historians have investigated the powerful impact that significant federal and local planning initiatives—like highways, housing, urban renewal, and downtown development—have had on urban minority communities.¹⁶

The Call to Expand the Scope of Planning History

Those scholars who studied the racial implications of planning decisions broadened the conceptual base of planning history considerably by explaining some of the contextual factors that shaped key planning decisions. Following their lead, planner/educator David A. Johnson and planning historian Daniel Schaffer organized a special symposium, published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (JAPA) in 1985, to define a new planning history. Entitled “Learning from the Past—The History of Planning,” the forum championed a more *instrumental* planning history, one more critical, more methodologically adventuresome, more cognizant of the external circumstances within which planners made and implemented their decisions and urban citizens responded to the outcome. In short, it was a planning history more useful to those engaged in planning practice. Noting the “multidisciplinary international movement” that planning history had become, Johnson and Schaffer asked symposium participants to address the question, “How usable is planning’s past to planning’s present—and future?” The discussions illustrated two premises: that “history is often an effective tool in formulating planning policy,” and “that the past—or at least selective segments of the past—is always with us in the here

and now." As Seymour Mandelbaum put it in his contribution, history is an "'intellectual battleground' where images of the past count not only because they serve as justification for current policies, but also because they help to set the agenda within which the debate takes place."¹⁷

While cautioning about the dangers of historicism, Johnson and Schaffer urged planning historians to relate their research to present-day practices in order to understand those of the past, and vice versa, and to move beyond the chronicle of institutional development that Scott's history provides. An effective historical analysis, they argued, can "uncover and understand those truly historic moments" when the choices of planners and policy makers "made a difference in the shape and functioning of cities and regions." Historians can best study those "critical junctures" systematically and on several levels at once: by analyzing the decision-making process, the issues raised, the contextual circumstances, and the underlying values shaping the planning profession and the institutions it has served.¹⁸

The promotion of urban deconcentration during the early twentieth century as a solution to various social ills caused by congestion and the lack of proper housing for the expanding urban population was just such a "critical juncture" in planning history. In the early 1980s scholars investigating deconcentration and the suburbanization process began producing more conceptually sophisticated histories of the kind Johnson and Schaffer advocated, for a time moving planning history from an urban to a suburban focus. The new suburban histories fell into two broad categories. One treated the history of suburban development from the perspective of its place within the larger geopolitical development of American cities.¹⁹ The second category—generally case studies—concentrated on the suburbs themselves and analyzed their designs and community-building processes from the inside out.²⁰

Studies from the first category—like Sam Bass Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs*, Kenneth T. Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier*, and Edel, Sclar, and Luria's *Shaky Palaces*—have clarified greatly the forces shaping urban and suburban growth: notably, regional population growth,

new transportation and production technologies, class conflict, and racial discrimination. Histories from the second category—Henry C. Binford's *The First Suburbs*, Robert Fishman's *Bourgeois Utopias*, and Michael H. Ebner's *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, for example—have brought to light important social, cultural, and ideological influences that guide local decisions on suburban form and lifestyle. At the same time, these works have expanded the historian's conception of the term "planning" itself. In the development of suburbia, "the term *planned* suburb does not imply necessarily that for each . . . community there existed a formal and written plan. Many . . . suburbs possessed no formal plan but were nonetheless products of deliberate and systematic decisions made on the part of an identifiable set of key citizens to guide design and development."²¹

Throughout the 1980s urban historians also produced an impressive array of books and articles documenting the critical role that planning decisions played in metropolitan development. Like their counterparts studying suburban history, urbanists challenged the very definition of "planning." Their research demonstrated that professional planners were not always doing the planning, and even when they were involved, the planning was characteristically piecemeal rather than comprehensive. Edward K. Muller and John F. Bauman suggested that scholars look beyond officialdom to understand fully how cities were planned in the twentieth century. The Olmsted firm, they pointed out, served the private "landscape needs of the urban-industrial elite" by introducing striking new community forms that have survived in the face of rapid change during the latter part of this century. Records in the Frederick Law Olmsted papers document the firm's pervasive influence on private subdivision planning throughout urban America.²² Mary Corbin Sies's research on planned, exclusive suburbs, as well as Ann Durkin Keating's *Building Chicago* and Weiss's *The Rise of the Community Builders*, published during the late 1980s, established the importance of private initiatives in planning history.²³

The growing involvement of urban and suburban historians in planning history helped bring about both the innovations in meth-

odology that Johnson and Schaffer called for and a more critical assessment of the role of the planner and planning. Seymour Mandelbaum noted that urban historians, in contrast to planners, were "not likely to accept a narrative of urban development that exaggerates the role of professionals, regardless of its salutary influence on the morale of novice planners." As long as planning historians focused their research on the creation of master plans, the actions of heroic planners, and the influence of official planning organizations on the urban development process, planning history would maintain only a "peripheral niche" in urban history.²⁴

Planning History Joins Urban History

Johnson and Schaffer's view—that planning history should concentrate less on eternal verities and more on contemporary practice—represented a wholesale shift in approach if not in purpose. *Two Centuries of American Planning* (1988), edited by Daniel Schaffer, signified the completion of this transformation; its contributors set forth more systematically than ever before the history of urban planning as an extension of urban history. In so doing, they suggested that planning history had to provide an understanding of the metropolitan structure that had evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries if it was to inform professional practice successfully. Thus Schaffer's anthology, prepared for the most part by leading urban historians, shifted planning history more squarely into urban history's purview.

Professional planning as defined in Krueckeberg's biographical or Scott's institutional accounts seemed all but forgotten. Instead, interest groups, private individuals, politics, and public policy initiatives spearheaded planned urban change. Of the scores of professional planners discussed in Scott's *American City Planning*, for example, only Frederick Law Olmsted and his stepson John C. received prominent treatment in Schaffer's compilation. Among its contributors, William H. Wilson discussed not only John Olmsted's planning of Seattle's park system but also the influence of various

planning movements on Olmsted's plans and the recasting of those plans through the political process so that they could be implemented. Wilson and other contributors replaced planning as an activity of independent actors with planning as a complex political process filled with compromises and incremental accomplishments.²⁵

The urban historians who contributed to *Two Centuries of American Planning* also cast a more critical eye on the planning process, as Mandelbaum had predicted they would. In his introduction, Schaffer linked the recent intellectual vitality of planning history to the contemporary crisis in the planning profession; practitioners were turning to their past for insights and answers. Noting the loss of public confidence the profession had suffered during the 1980s, Schaffer argued that planning had become a metaphor for the problems of government and the contradictions in American life. "Each metropolis exists as a visible reminder of the nation's economic successes and failures. In the process each reveals the limits of planning, and more significantly of government, either to guide our prosperity or to overcome our poverty."²⁶

Implicated in these contradictions, Schaffer suggested, were two centuries of a serious conflict in purpose at the heart of the planning profession. "At one level, it is concerned with economic growth—setting the stage for private development and individual prosperity. On another level, it focuses on issues of reform and equity . . . so as to ensure a greater level of equality rather than more vigorous competition." In strong contrast to planning historians writing in the 1960s and 1970s, who emphasized the profession's indebtedness to Progressive reform ideals, the contributors to Schaffer's volume argued that private economic development had become the dominant concern.²⁷ By promoting a more self-reflexive and instrumental planning history, they joined the many practitioners who in the late 1980s had begun calling for a new planning vision that would enable the nation to balance the desire for economic growth with the need for social equity.

In their widely ranging pursuit of a more usable past, the urban historians achieved another interpretive landmark: they

pushed the origins of modern planning well back into the nineteenth century, demonstrating convincingly that progressive reform ideas represented merely a new synthesis of well-established reform currents. At the same time, they continued to reconceptualize both the planning process and its cast of characters. In *The New Urban Landscape* (1986), David Schuyler demonstrated not only that Frederick Law Olmsted was practicing "comprehensive planning" in the mid-nineteenth century but that he and some of his contemporaries had developed a multifaceted vision of urban form—a vision that was not just an aesthetic but "involved a statement of political and social ideology." As David Hammack, one of Schaffer's authors, pointed out, real estate attorneys, developers, manufacturers, and merchants had all made important contributions to the planning and building of the actual urban landscape during the nineteenth century. "All of these men promoted comprehensive planning," Hammack wrote, "even though none was trained as a professional planner or claimed the title of landscape architect." Moreover, their "planning" had greater impact on the urban environment than did the impressive formal designs of gardens, parks, or streetscapes prepared by landscape architects like Olmsted, who were canonized as pioneer planners. Most of the latter's best plans were either never implemented or were realized only in piecemeal fashion, so they had little influence except on fellow design professionals.²⁸

In a pivotal essay in *Introduction to Planning History in the United States* (1983), edited by Donald Krueckeberg, Jon Peterson cited further evidence of urban planning's early origins. Peterson noted that the invention and widespread application of the water carriage sewer system during the mid-nineteenth century facilitated the building of a comprehensive urban infrastructure. Sanitary reformers of the time also promoted the sanitary survey, a primitive form of urban planning that "entailed the systematic mapping and recording of sanitary conditions on every parcel of land . . . [and] was among the first efforts to collect detailed data on an entire city for the purpose of formulating and implementing plans for the common good." The sanitary survey, in turn, fostered what Peterson

called "townsite consciousness," the practice of thinking through the major physical aspects of the city—circulation system, land uses, community facilities, utilities, and visual amenities—as part of one comprehensive plan. Sanitary surveys and townsite consciousness provided additional examples of planning before there were professional planners; they also indicated the broad and ambitious range of concerns that planning encompassed in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹

Planning History as Interdisciplinary History

Stanley K. Schultz pushed the origins of modern planning back even further in *Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800–1920* (1989), but his scholarship was more noteworthy for its broad-ranging perspectives—cultural, legal, technological, physical, social, and moral—which allowed him to produce a complex and richly textured interpretation. Drawing from sources generally overlooked in planning history research—literary tracts, legal tracts, articles and surveys produced by urban sanitarians, and records of city engineers—Schultz argued that the nineteenth century gave birth to a new urban culture based on new attitudes toward "the relationship between the physical environment and bodily, mental, and moral health." This culture embodied what were to become the fundamental premises of twentieth-century planning practice, especially the conceptualization of the ideal city form as a middle landscape that blended urban densities with a harmonious natural setting.

An important part of the evolving urban culture was a new legal landscape, one of the bulwarks of modern city planning. A new body of laws granted municipal corporations limited rights to take or to regulate private property for public benefit through eminent domain, police power, and, eventually, zoning. Another facet of the new urban culture was the moral environmentalism of sanitarians—Peterson's nascent planners—who stressed cleanliness,

beauty, and technological and scientific solutions to urban physical and social problems. According to Schultz, the expanding profession of municipal engineers contributed comprehensive planning schemes that combined all of these concerns, laying the foundation for modern municipal administration both before and after the initiation of formal city planning. Thus, progressive reform and the City Beautiful movement formed not the beginning, but the culmination of a century of planning thought and organizational development that established the basic structure of modern city planning.³⁰

Constructing Urban Culture showcased the broadened scope and interdisciplinary character of the scholarship produced by the marriage of urban and planning history during the mid-1980s. The explosion of multidisciplinary studies stimulated by that union was most evident in *American Urbanism: A Historiographic Review* (1987), a collection of bibliographic essays edited by Howard Gillette and Zane L. Miller. It contained fourteen essays that surveyed the urban and planning history literature from the multiple perspectives that typified the new scholarship on the city. Some were topical essays: Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh discussed race and ethnicity, Jon Teaford urban rule, and Leonard Wallock work and labor. Others were thematic essays: Alan Marcus treated cities as social systems, Joel A. Tarr and Josef W. Konvitz focused on the development of urban infrastructure, and Patricia Mooney Melvin looked at neighborhood-city relationships. The volume also contained disciplinary essays on urban culture by Howard Gillette, urban geography by Edward K. Muller, urban planning by Eugenie Birch, and urban architecture by Richard Longstreth.³¹ Subsequent review essays in a variety of academic journals reported on the multidisciplinary contributions of still other fields related to planning history: among these were "Reconsidering the Suburbs: An Exploration of Suburban Historiography," by Margaret S. Marsh (1988); "Real Estate History: An Overview and Research Agenda," by Marc A. Weiss (1989); and "Technology and the City," by Josef W. Konvitz, Mark H. Rose, and Joel A. Tarr (1990).³²

Many of the studies cited in these bibliographic essays provided a single new perspective, much like a transparent overlay, over the growing base of knowledge about planning history and metropolitan development and spatial patterns. The multidisciplinary nature and sheer volume of these overlays also tended sometimes to obscure the picture and threatened to eclipse urban and planning history as identifiable fields. In "Rethinking American Urban History: New Directions for the Posturban Era" (1990), Howard Gillette once again surveyed urban and planning history scholarship, warning of the dangers of fragmentation and insularity among urbanists: he called for greater synthesis, "more comparative studies, and . . . the interdisciplinary collaboration needed to advance the fuller perspective we all strive for."³³ Many of the more successful attempts to integrate the knowledge derived from interdisciplinary research have taken the form of penetrating case studies: Carl Abbott's work on Portland; Christopher Silver's *Twentieth-Century Richmond*; and Mary Corbin Sies's research on the planned, exclusive suburbs of Short Hills in New Jersey, St. Martin's in Philadelphia, Kenilworth in Illinois, and Lake of the Isles in Minneapolis.³⁴ The collaborative effort of literary specialist William Sharpe and social historian Leonard Wallock has produced a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship probing the ways in which cultural values and social assertions have framed and constrained various perceptions and experiences of the city.³⁵

Revisions: The Intellectual and Cultural Roots of American Planning

In fact, among the richest harvests to result from the interdisciplinary scholarship of the late 1980s are analyses of the cultural assumptions and intellectual roots of American city planning. The best of these works have generated careful and far-reaching revisionist interpretations of several planning pioneers and movements, most notably Frederick Law Olmsted, the City Beautiful

movement, and Ebenezer Howard and his Garden City scheme. In *The New Urban Landscape* (1986), David Schuyler shows that Olmsted's naturalistic landscape designing supplied modern city planning with a coherent scheme for ordering urban spaces. His analysis establishes firmly that several key modern urban design concepts predate the Progressive Era; Schuyler traces their origins back to the rural (and urban) cemetery movement of the 1830s, a subject that has drawn increasing attention from planning history scholars.³⁶

Rural cemeteries, according to Schuyler, integrated scenery, landscape design, architecture, sculpture, and ideology into a single spatial package that provided a model for a new *urban* form, "one that introduced nature as a means of countering the overcivilization of the city." Concurrently, landscape designers like Andrew Jackson Downing were being commissioned to plan public grounds that "would stand as an antidote to conditions of life within cities." Olmsted reconstituted these separate approaches to fabricating urban spaces into a comprehensive "process of creating a new, more openly built urban environment"; he did so not simply through the development of individual parks, but with entire spatial systems that included parks, parkways, and residential suburbs.³⁷ In other words, Olmsted defined and practiced a form of comprehensive planning that embodied the assumptions of the new urban culture and formed a crucial precedent for twentieth-century planning practice. In a similar study, Irving D. Fisher, writing in 1986, considered Olmsted the seminal urban theorist of the nineteenth century, who blended art and science "to produce a comprehensive plan for the metropolis."³⁸

In another interdisciplinary work of revision, urban historian William H. Wilson questioned the long-held view that the City Beautiful movement was an intellectually shallow attempt to impose European classicism on ugly American cities. Mel Scott, for example, dismissed the movement, arguing that "in most cities it had produced few noteworthy changes"; eventually it was transformed into "something more realistic and practical," by which he

meant the City Practical movement, the approach that in his view represented the more praiseworthy values of the mainstream of the twentieth-century planning profession.³⁹ In his prize-winning book, Wilson refuted Scott's claim that the City Beautiful was an elitist fad of the pre-World War I era, arguing instead that it was the logical extension and refinement of Olmsted Sr.'s legacy and of the new city culture that evolved during the nineteenth century.

The penetrating insights of Wilson's *The City Beautiful Movement* (1989) were a direct result of his multilayered, interdisciplinary research. He pointed out, first, that the City Beautiful was not just concerned with aesthetics; it "was a political movement" that forged "a politics of accommodation" between planning professionals, city officials, and enlightened citizens. City Beautiful proponents helped create planning, park, and beautification groups that in turn promoted urban planning and secured the necessary voter approval for public financing of expensive civic improvement efforts. Second, although the City Beautiful planners favored the neoclassical architectural tradition, their vision of an improved urban environment was centered on the tenets of "comprehensiveness, utility, and functionalism." It also included a heavy dose of Olmsted's naturalistic aesthetics.⁴⁰

Wilson's other significant contribution was his shift of emphasis from the big cities to smaller urban places where, in fact, many City Beautiful initiatives were actually carried out. Perhaps planning historians have downplayed the City Beautiful's success because they have overlooked places like Seattle, Denver, Kansas City, Dallas, and Harrisburg (Pennsylvania), where the movement helped implement some of the primary objectives of the nineteenth-century urban reform agenda. Possibly, too, scholars scrutinizing only the formal aspects of City Beautiful planning have failed to recognize the movement's complexity—"its development into a cultural, aesthetic, political, and environmental movement." Daniel Bluestone's *Constructing Chicago* (1991) supports Wilson's suspicion that the poor reputation of the City Beautiful has more to do with the modernist bias of the twentieth-century planning and architec-

tural professions. In a study of architectural expression as it was conceived in its social, cultural, and economic contexts, Bluestone shows how the building of Chicago respected "notions of aesthetics, civility, and moral order" deeply embedded in nineteenth-century urban culture.⁴¹

As part of the effort to reassess planning's intellectual origins, urban and planning historians have been devoting increasing attention to the Garden City reform scheme of Ebenezer Howard, much as the neoclassical town planning movement has rediscovered the virtues of plans designed by John Nolen and others.⁴² Peter Hall, in his heavily biographical "intellectual history of urban planning," *Cities of Tomorrow* (1988), fostered the Howard revival by declaring that he was "the most important single character" in twentieth-century planning thought. Howard's supporters as well as his critics, Hall charged, "have, at one time or another, been wrong about almost everything he stood for." Their most egregious error was to classify Howard as a physical planner instead of a social visionary. Like the other planning theorists Hall discussed, Howard offered a radical social vision not merely of an alternative built form, but of an alternative society, neither capitalistic nor bureaucratic-socialistic—a society based on voluntary cooperation among men and women, working and living in small, self-governing commonwealths.⁴³ Although planning historians have long celebrated Howard's influence on twentieth-century planning, Hall continued, the standard histories have eviscerated the intellectual substance of his ideas.

Stanley Buder went a step further and placed Howard's alternative social vision under close scrutiny in the hope of better understanding its nineteenth-century sources and assessing more accurately its salience for planning problems of the twenty-first century. Buder contributed another layer to historians' knowledge by focusing on the cultural and social origins of planning ideas. In *Visionaries and Planners* (1990), he argued "that Howard's garden city joined together two very different types of late nineteenth-century experimental communities"—the utopian cooperative and the

model industrial village—"creating a tension never fully resolved." Although distinctive as a planning model, key elements of the Garden City were commonplace ideas among London reformers in the 1880s. The Garden City was not the romantic, antimodern, and antiurban ideal that many have believed it to be; what Howard offered was a middle landscape, a new form of dispersed residential settlement that did not sacrifice the advantages of urban density or urban life.

Buder notes wistfully—and here he is in agreement with Hall—that Garden City proponents abandoned the communitarian dimension of Howard's new urban scheme in their effort to translate the paper version of the plan into actual built communities in Britain and the United States. In the contest between a visionary ideal community and bureaucratically sponsored stewardship, the sense of limitation won out over the sense of possibility.⁴⁴ In a contrasting and more upbeat interpretation, British historian Dennis Hardy reiterated Peter Hall's assertion that Howard's ideas were central to twentieth-century planning, and on a very practical level. He documented that Garden City proponents became the most important political pressure group not only for Garden City and garden suburb ideas but for urban and town planning in general throughout the United Kingdom.⁴⁵

Revisions: Planning, Politics, and Power

A second set of thought-provoking interdisciplinary histories written during the mid-1980s examined the relationship between planning, economy, and polity in American cities. The most controversial studies challenged directly the reform ideology claimed by and for the mainstream of the twentieth-century planning profession. One such critique, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (1983), by M. Christine Boyer, provided a tendentious reappraisal of planning ideology and practice. Although Boyer framed her research as a postmodern analysis of the "struc-