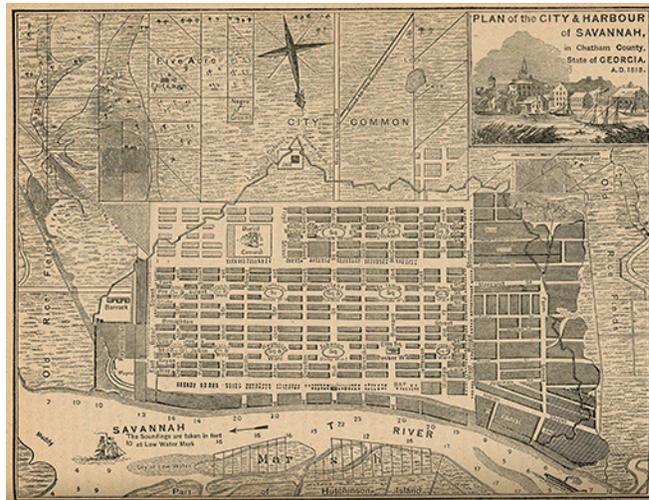


Changing Landscapes

Land use planning curriculum for natural resource professionals

- P** rinciples, people, and policies
- L** and planning and pressures
- A** pproaches
- N** atural resource planning tools

P1: An American History of Planning



Plan of the City and Harbour of Savannah, Georgia, United States, drawn out in 1818.

Overview

This factsheet gives an overview of the formative years of planning in America from the late 17th century through the early 19th century. It provides insight into planning and zoning that were influenced by the Progressive Era, social reform, abusive use of natural resources, and laissez-fair capitalism. This factsheet discusses the influence of planning boards on planning in American cities and the realization that zoning could provide orderliness and control of urban development. It expands on how movements such as the City Beautiful Movement, City Practical Movement, and the Environmental Movement made great strides in sound planning, including environmental planning. Finally, it provides a brief conclusion about planning challenges we face today.

In the Beginning: The Formative Years

The origin of almost every city in the country was a plat plan showing the proposed layout of streets, municipal boundaries, parks, and building lots. The original plat plans for Philadelphia and Savannah, GA, represent the first “planning” in America. Philadelphia’s plan was drawn by surveyor Thomas Holme for William Penn in 1682. The famous plan was a rigid grid of streets with five evenly spaced blocks for parks. It depicted a town of single-family houses and shade trees encircled by a greenbelt. James Oglethorpe’s 1733 plan for Savannah used rectangular streets with interspersed and connected parks along avenues. Trees, parks, and greenspace have always been important in planning.

Much of the planning in early 19th century American cities was undertaken by civic improvement and beautification committees concerned with poor sanitation, ugliness, and crowding of cities. These organizations were often privately financed and distrustful of the political corruption that was commonly found in many cities. There was tremendous population growth, speculation, and building in American cities by the end of the 1870s spurred by the Industrial Revolution in America and the associated immigration of Irish, Chinese, Italian, and other nationalities as well as the influx of rural southern African-Americans to northern industrial cities after the Civil War.



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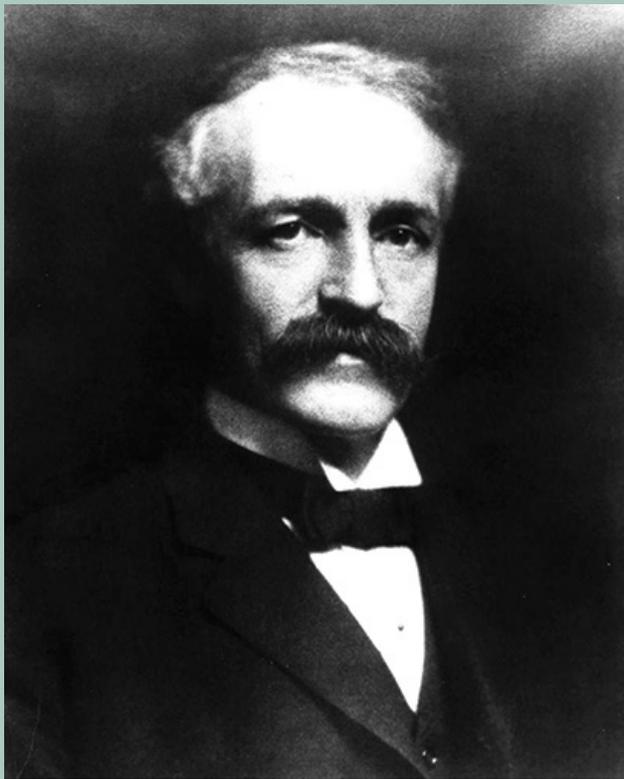
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The Progressive Era of Physical and Social Reforms: 1870 to 1920

The technology of the Civil War; the flood of immigrants from other countries and the South; and the intensive and often abusive use of forests, coal, water, and other natural resources all combined to feed the growth of American cities. Between 1900 and 1910, the country's population grew by 16 million people, and by 1910 fully half of the population lived in urban places. The laissez-fair capitalism promoted by Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations* was a prevailing doctrine.

Although the great industrial cities flourished, they were also places of chaotic growth, congestion, ill health, pollution, fire, poor light and ventilation, social injustice, speculation, and corruption. Tenement slums—houses in the shadow of the factory—sprang up, and the conditions of urban life, especially for immigrants and workers, were bleak and hazardous. At the same time, there were major advances in telephone communications, electricity, rail transportation, water authorities in Boston and New York, and other public services—all occurring faster and at a larger scale than at any other time in history.

The first National Conference on Planning was held in 1909, supported by the New York City Commission on Congestion of Population. By 1913, there were planning boards—the predecessors of today's planning commissions—in 18 American cities, and some State legislatures made planning a mandatory responsibility of local government.



First Forest Service Chief and conservationist Gifford Pinchot worked with preservationist John Muir and President Teddy Roosevelt to have Congress set aside roughly 16 million acres of national forest land in 1907 and establish the U.S. Wildlife Reserve System.

(Photo: Grey Towers National Historic Site)

Preservation of American Forests

Starting at the same time as the Progressive Era in city planning, conservationist Gifford Pinchot, later the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service; preservationist John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club; and outdoorsman President Theodore Roosevelt allied publically against a U.S. Congress that was increasingly hostile to the reservation and management of public forests. Their efforts resulted in the setting aside of some 16 million acres of national forest land in 1907 and the establishment of the U.S. Wildlife Reserve System. Many years later, pushed by activists Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall, the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964, the Wild and Scenic River Act in 1965, and the Endangered Species Act in 1977. America's national forest and park system was framed by the principles of preservation, conservation, and economic determinism. And today, arguments over multiple uses of Federal lands continue.

The main emphasis of planning during the Progressive Era was on overcrowded tenement housing, the location of unsafe and unhealthy industry, and uncoordinated real estate speculation and development. Planning as a social reform was seen as a way to improve conditions of the working class and immigrants. Governmental “police power” regulations—building codes, height limits, fire codes, tenement laws, and industrial districts—were first applied in an ad hoc, reactive, and localized manner.

Given the dismal conditions of many cities, however, many planners and architects believed that adequate solutions would come only from comprehensive city planning—studies and plans implemented by regulation, investment, and other such tools. They looked to German cities and their system of using zoning to control land use (districting), land value taxation, municipal ownership of undeveloped lands, and development planned by municipal government. Others, such as Frederick Law Olmstead, believed city planning should follow the path of technical expertise rather than regulation and public ownership. They believed that regulation must be limited because of the importance of private investment as a stimulus of growth and development.

In this complex arena, most planners and civic leaders began to realize that zoning could provide orderliness and control of urban development and real estate interests. When Los Angeles was faced with land and water pollution, fire, and other costs of chaotic development, it became the first city to use citywide zoning in 1909, with support from both the Chamber of Commerce and the Realty Board, to control the location of industry primarily to protect owners and developers of residential property.

At the same time, New York City attorney Edward M. Bassett investigated a legal instrument that would allow the power of the people to regulate their own destiny. He proposed the following definition of zoning, which holds true today: “The regulation by districts under the police power of the height, bulk, and use of buildings, the use of land, and the density of population.” Under this definition the first comprehensive zoning ordinance was enacted in New York City in 1916. The goals of the zoning ordinance were to protect business and residential areas, stabilize property values, provide a logical framework for urban landscapes, and reduce congestion and overcrowding. Some historians also believe that zoning was used to prevent the intrusion of immigrants into fashionable business and residential neighborhoods.

Hundreds of municipalities followed the actions of Los Angeles and New York by using zoning as a means to protect single-family, detached, owner-occupied houses. Although some considered this a noble endeavor, others raised questions of equity, justice, and bias because many zoning provisions disallowed multiple-family dwellings, which typically provided housing for African-American and immigrant families. Another concern about the early use of zoning was that it was applied after the city had taken shape.



New York City attorney Edward M. Bassett (1863–1948) is considered the “Father of American Zoning” and one of the founding fathers of modern day urban planning. (Photo: <http://en.wikipedia.org>)

The City Beautiful, City Park, and Garden City Movements: From Social Reform to Physical and Environmental Planning and Design

During the Progressive Era, several related initiatives known as the City Beautiful, City Park, and Garden City movements added a focus on the physical and environmental design of cities to address earlier planning concerns about social reform. One watershed event was the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, which astonished visitors from across the country and around the world with its electrified "White City." Architects Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., and John Root designed the 600-acre site that featured an orderly arrangement of gleaming white buildings, lighted and tree-lined boulevards, fountains, parks, lagoons, monuments, and sitting areas. That highly planned vision, of course, contrasted starkly with the squalor and din of so many American cities.

Once inspired, people took action, and a tidal wave of city planning swept the Nation. Cities appointed committees of elite citizens who financed eminent architects or landscape architects like Daniel Burnham to design grand plans. Burnham wrote, "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood." Following major urban fires, Burnham's 1906 plan for San Francisco and 1909 plan for Chicago were completed at colossal scales. All of these city plans included plenty of parkland and natural features.

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood."

—Landscape Architect Daniel Burnham

Together, the three interrelated movements—City Beautiful, City Park, and Garden City—formed the foundation for environmental planning in America, providing momentum for the creation of some of the largest regional and neighborhood park systems ever developed. Besides the large parks typified by the Chicago Forest Preserve and Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, over 2,000 neighborhood parks existed in 300 cities by 1910. Large parks were created in industrial American cities for reasons beyond the health, recreation, and other social benefits they provide. Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, for example, was originally established to protect the city's drinking water supply. Ultimately, the City Beautiful movement was criticized for disregarding the economic problems of citizens, being divorced from the reality of life in the cities, and costing too much.

The City Practical Movement: 1920 to 1930

The 1920s saw the emergence of a movement known as the City Efficient or City Practical approach to planning. This movement concentrated on providing plans that would improve the city as a commercial and investment center. The term "city engineer" was coined, and planning concentrated on reducing traffic congestion and residential densities as well as providing services such as utilities and public facilities, transit and rail systems, and water and sewer—all while promoting efficient government spending. Zoning continued to gain support as a means to keep development densities under control and to separate incompatible land uses to protect residential and other property values. Many civic leaders continued to believe that the public interest was better served by orderly development and growth rather than uncoordinated speculation.

The Garden City Movement

Borrowing from the designs of Englishman Ebenezer Howard, American designers Henry Wright and Lewis Mumford advocated in the 1920s for self-sufficient satellite cities that were connected by rail and encircled by green and agricultural belts. The movement enjoyed some success that was eventually overshadowed by auto-dependent suburbia. This design movement is credited with providing the ideas for today's planned-unit and cluster-density development practices.

In the 1920s, then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover appointed an Advisory Committee on City Planning and Zoning to prepare model planning acts, notably the Standard Zoning Enabling Act and the Standard City Planning Enabling Act. These model acts provided States with the legal rationale for granting planning and zoning authority to municipal government. At the same time, the U.S. Supreme Court bolstered that authority with a pair of major decisions in both the *Pennsylvania Coal v. Mahon* 1922 decision and the *Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.* 1926 decision. These decisions basically held that municipal zoning was constitutionally valid unless shown to be clearly arbitrary and unreasonable with no substantial connection to public health, safety, or general welfare.

The Depression Years

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 caused both economic and social chaos. Real estate foreclosures and a growing gap between fortune and poverty signaled a pressing need for city planning. While there was little direct attention to that need during the years between the Great Depression and World War II, several important supporting initiatives were launched under President Franklin Roosevelt's sweeping New Deal. Key among these measures was the creation of the National Resources Planning Board, Soil Conservation Service, and Civilian Conservation Corps, all of which addressed the condition of the Nation's land and water resources, which was especially critical during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s.

In response to the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal included creation of the National Resources Planning Board, Soil Conservation Service, and Civilian Conservation Corps.

Post War: The "Scatteration" of Suburbia

After World War II, the rebuilding of long-neglected American cities and the housing boom of the new "Levittown" style of suburbia were promoted as a means of national economic stimulus. Federal involvement in planning increased. Federal policy and funding supported suburban housing development with new highways, water, electricity, and other infrastructure projects; and addressed the physical and economic deterioration of American cities.

Important Supreme Court Decisions:

Village of Euclid, OH, v. Amber Realty Co.

(1926) – The Euclid case revolved around using zoning to protect single-family detached housing from incursions by multifamily housing and industrial uses. Proponents in the case argued that zoning protected property rights by excluding incompatible and nuisance uses and that the public benefited through increased property taxes. Opponents argued that the zoning restricted industry and private commerce. The court found that zoning could be used to protect both "morally desirable" detached residential housing and orderly development. However, by segregating single-family housing from multifamily housing and the working class, the decision has been criticized as supporting class, racial, and immigrant bias.

Pennsylvania Coal v. Mahon (1922) – The regulatory "takings" doctrine that emerged from this decision continues today. The court noted that, as a general rule, "while property may be regulated to a certain extent, if regulation goes too far it will be recognized as a taking." Exactly what constitutes "too far" has never been clearly defined and differs from municipality to municipality, depending on development and growth pressures, public sentiment, and other factors.

In 1949, Congress authorized Federal funding for urban “redevelopment.” In 1954, the Federal Housing Act established and funded urban planning and renewal. Known as the “701 Program” for the Act’s section that authorized urban planning assistance, the program provided many cities with the funding to complete their first city plans. These plans were a requirement for Federal urban redevelopment funds. As a result, the greatest amount of urban redevelopment and renewal since the grand plans of the City Beautiful movement was completed from Philadelphia’s Society Hill to Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles.

The 1956 Federal Highway Act allocated major funding for acquiring private property through eminent domain and developing the Nation’s highways. Although highway systems were seen by many as a way to increase mobility, commerce, and safety, some believed they destroyed and separated communities, facilitated suburban sprawl, and increased society’s dependence on the automobile and oil. In addition, some critics decried both urban renewal and highway construction as large-scale government intervention that served elites and the upper class at the expense of African-American and other disadvantaged city neighborhoods. The urban riots of the 1960s heightened concerns about planned freeways that divided cities and the wisdom of urban renewal overall.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the 1956 Federal Highway Act into law. (Photo: Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration)

The Environmental Movement: A Major Era in American Planning

In the 1960s and early '70s, a century of gradually increasing public and private support for the environment came to fruition. The early plans and designs of Lewis Mumford, Clarence Stein, and Benton MacKaye; the GIS and design-with-nature work of Ian MacHarg; and the environmental writings of authors Rachel Carlson, Aldo Leopold, and Edward Abbey all played important roles. Fueled by dire concerns over air and water pollution, major developments such as the Hudson River electric generating dam at Storm King Mountain, continued urban development and sprawl, the Santa Barbara oil spill, and continued undervaluing of natural resources in decisionmaking, the environmental movement was born on April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day.



Earth Day flag designed by John McConnell.

In the early 1970s, President Richard Nixon enacted the most sweeping environmental legislation of all time, providing not only command-and-control regulations, but also funding and technical assistance to clean up the country. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandated that environmental impact assessments be completed for Federal policies and projects that might alter or affect environmental quality. The Clean Water Act established the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System and provided \$150 billion for upgrading sewage treatment plants. Through State legislation such as the 1970 California Environmental Quality Act, States began to require that environmental and social impact reports be completed for subdivision and other development, and that local comprehensive plans consider air, water, coasts, and natural resources. Together, this Federal and State legislation translated into important action at the local municipal level to consider open space, steep slopes, and riparian areas in municipal comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

With the environmental movement of the 1970s, a changing view of private property rights emerged. Private property was seen not only as an avenue for speculation and private commodity, but as a shared community resource. Environmental planning supported the concept that individual property rights must be balanced with the rights of the larger community. This philosophy spurred rethinking about how to develop private property within a framework of plans and regulations that protect environmental and natural systems.

1980 – 2010: Too Much Government?

In 1987, the Montreal Protocol was ratified to address the control of chemicals threatening the ozone layer. This international effort, along with additional cap-and-trade policies and the Santiago Agreement that provided criteria for sustainability, reflected deep concerns about human actions causing environmental risk and degradation. Arguments about global warming, severe weather, and the acidification of oceans, often polarized along political lines, placed global environmental issues in the news.

In America, large-scale suburban development continued in places like Irvine, CA, and Fulton County, Georgia. In addition to major development within driving distance of cities, attractive rural places such as the Bitterroot Valley in Montana were also under development pressure by retiring Baby Boomers. Rural development was also supported by the major commercial disinvestment of forest lands, such as the St. Joe Company's 585,000 acres of forest holdings in the Florida Panhandle.

Together, suburban sprawl and rural development helped create a new landscape in America: the urban-rural or urban-wildland interface. This landscape has been viewed by some as a landscape of conflict in recreation and land use between newcomers and original residents and between fire and people. The development of the urban-wildland interface caused a growing recognition of the connection between land use planning and wildland fire protection. Organizations like the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Bi-State Fire Commission reduced the threat of fire by considering fire risk and behavior in comprehensive plans. They included fire protection in landscape, zoning, and building codes and ensured that subdivision and other plans were reviewed by fire protection agencies.

Suburban sprawl and rural development created a new landscape in America—the urban-wildland interface.

Private Property: An Important Planning Theme

Private property is a bundle of development, water, mineral, agricultural, and other rights that can be sold, leased, and in some cases regulated by the State. The restriction of private property rights is a theme in the history of planning. Over the last 100 years, planning's influence on private property has been viewed in different ways: as a way to secure property rights for the influential, as an intrusive regulatory power of government, or as policy that protects and enhances both private and community rights.

Police power is the government's authority to protect the health, safety, welfare, and morals of all people. It is the fundamental authority of government to regulate the use of private property through zoning and other ordinances. Entwined with the use of police power is a concern about whether and to what extent regulation should interfere with private property rights. This is the "takings" issue—a challenge to the validity of land use regulation that goes too far and results in the confiscation of private property without hearing or compensation.

This era's growth and development advanced planning in a number of ways, including support for the planning and acquisition of major open space systems in growing places such as Boulder, CO, and Thousand Oaks, CA; further use of municipal zoning to protect riparian areas, steep slopes, and other natural features; the creation of planning departments in rural places where they had not existed before; and a concentration on planning and regulatory policy that preserved forests and forest production.

Despite the advent of Smart Growth and New Urbanism policies, which encourage economic growth that is energy efficient, pedestrian friendly, and protects the environment during development, there has been a growing backlash supported by industry and political groups against environmental and other regulation in the United States. These groups argue that regulations go too far in restricting private property and commerce, and recent administrations have rolled back some Federal environmental regulations. Legislation and court rulings such as ballot measures 7 and 37 in Oregon, which overturned the State's Comprehensive Land Use Planning Program, have raised questions about the political viability and public support of environmental and other land use regulations.

Today and Tomorrow

The challenges for planning today are many:

- The ability to provide public services in a poor economy
- The continued tension between the restriction of private property and the promotion of societal good
- The costs and conflicts of continued suburban and rural sprawl
- Concerns about small-scale planning and the ability of planning to work in a system of fragmented municipal governments
- Concerns over outdated zoning and development ordinances that do not allow flexibility and ingenuity
- The growth of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitudes demonstrated by difficulties in moving needed projects and improvements ahead, including the placing of and access to greenways and open space.

Some fear the demise of environmentalism in the face of firm control by national and global industry. Despite all of that, however, many municipalities faced with growth and development continue to provide excellent planning and regulation. This includes the current trend toward support for “green infrastructure,” which seeks to use vegetation and open space to take the burden off the traditional “grey” infrastructure of pipes and treatment plants while providing many other environmental services at the same time.

The anticipated growth in the U.S. population to 392 million people by 2050 has led to greater concerns about sustainability. Smart growth approaches to planning demonstrate the use of increased greenspace, energy conservation, compact development, multiple-use development, regional planning, urban renewal and revitalization, traditional neighborhood design, stricter development standards, and improved walkability and public transit. Stormwater water quality and availability will likely become major drivers of environmental planning that encourage the use of clustered development and other Low Impact Development techniques. There will likely be increased planning for housing and services to suit an aging populations and larger ethnic populations. In addition, the role of nonprofit organizations and conservancies in providing recreation and conservation services may continue to grow in importance.



Green infrastructure uses vegetation and open space to help ease stormwater pressure on the traditional grey infrastructure of pipes and treatment plants. (Photo: <http://water.epa.gov>)

The ever-growing recognition of the profound impact of human actions on the global environment may lead to environmental and other planning at national and multinational scales. The development of a societal land ethic described by Aldo Leopold in the 1940s may be necessary for any meaningful conservation movement. This includes a deep emotional connection of people with nature, which may be more and more difficult in the future with a growing separation of children and nature.

The development of a deep emotional connection of people with nature may be more and more difficult in the future with a growing separation of children and nature.

Resources

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The Debate over Regional Planning

Led by cultural historian Lewis Mumford, the Regional Planning Association of America was formed in the 1920s. Its members combined ideas from the Garden City movement with conservation of natural resources and wilderness to promote regional ecological planning. Although concerns about the lack of regional planning and the predominance of small-scale and fractured municipal planning continue today, there are some notable examples of regional planning success including the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in 1969, the Adirondack Park Agency in 1971, and the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act of 2004.



Long Pond in the Saint Regis Canoe Area, New York Forest Preserve. (Photo: <http://en.wikipedia.org>)