

FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN AMERICAN CITY PLANNING

Most historians agree that modern American city planning began in the late 1800s. Some affix the date to 1893 and the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, though there is less orthodoxy regarding this moment than 15 years ago. In contrast to the earlier Colonial planning period (Philadelphia, Savannah, Williamsburg, etc.) wherein plans preceded development, planning in the 1800s generally responded to the urbanization stimulated by the industrial revolution in existing and haphazardly developing cities. The American Industrial Revolution occurred in two waves, the first in 1820-1870 and the second in 1870-1920. The U.S. grew from 7% urban in 1820 to 25% urban in 1870 and 50% urban in 1920.

Three social movements categorized as precursors to modern American city planning (public health/sanitary reform, settlement house and housing reform, and parks planning) responded to the challenges and consequences of chaotic urbanization prior to modern planning's beginnings. The City Beautiful movement was a fourth response at about the same time that modern planning began. The Garden Cities Movement simultaneously commenced in England and was imported soon after. American planning grew out of and hoped to provide a broader, more comprehensive vision to these movements.

Five interrelated and overlapping movements of the 19th Century had significant effects on the first half of the 20th Century and helped initiate modern American city planning.

1. Sanitary Reform Movement
2. Parks Planning/Parks Systems Movement
3. Settlement House/Housing Reform Movement
4. Garden City Movement
5. City Beautiful Movement

Movement

Sanitary Reform (extensive overlap with and sometimes referred to as the Public Health Movement) 1840-1890. Sanitary Reform's focus was infrastructure and Public Health was primarily concerned with preventing and contending with infectious diseases and epidemics.

Attributes

An outgrowth and response to the accelerating urbanization of the U.S. Accompanied by an increasingly scientific understanding of infectious diseases - from filth theory to germ theory.

Primary foci:

1. Potable water supply
2. Water carriage sewerage to supplant private lot waste removal
3. Sanitary survey planning: detailed examination of diseases and associated physical conditions.
4. Townsite consciousness - not a systematic doctrine but increased awareness and sensitivity to topography, drainage, water supply, parks, crowding, density, gross land use conflicts (slaughter houses in residential areas, etc.)
5. Memphis/American Public Health Association/National Board of Health 1878-1880 produced an exemplary analytical model.
