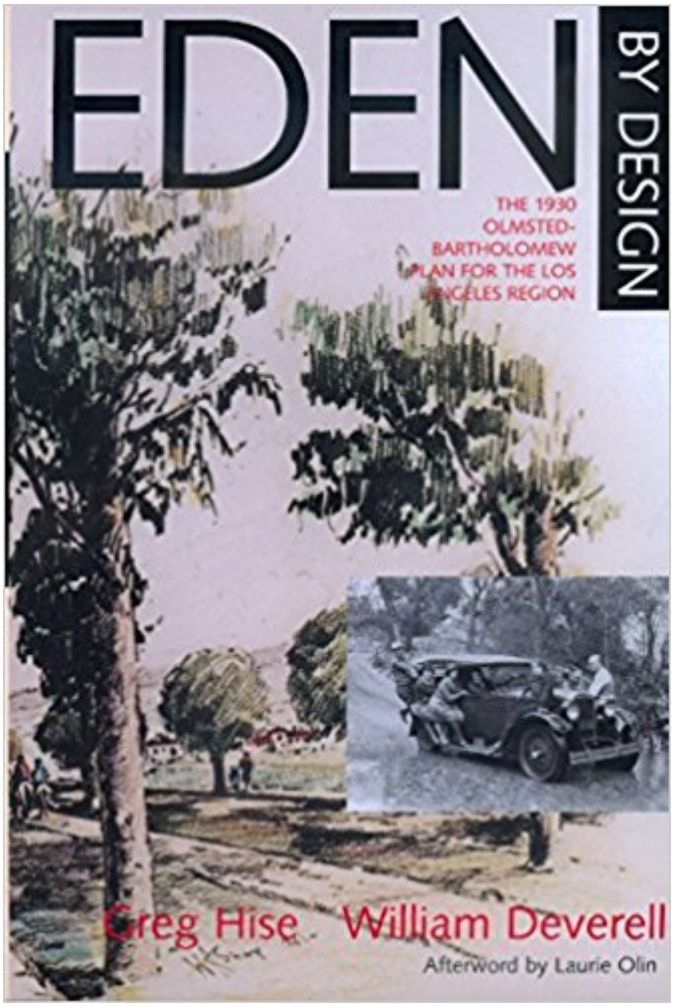
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Eden By Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan For The Los Angeles Region



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Synopsis

In 1930 the Olmsted Brothers and Harland Bartholomew & Associates submitted a report, "Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region," to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. After a day or two of coverage in the newspapers, the report dropped from sight. The plan set out a system of parks and parkways, children's playgrounds, and public beaches. It is a model of ambitious, intelligent, sensitive planning commissioned at a time when land was available, if only the city planners had had the fortitude and vision to act on its recommendations. "Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches" has become a highly valued but difficult-to-find document. In this book, Greg Hise and William Deverell examine the reasons it was called for, analyze why it failed, and open a discussion about the future of urban public space. In addition to their introduction and a facsimile reproduction of the report, Eden by Design includes a dialogue between Hise, Deverell, and widely admired landscape architect Laurie Olin that illuminates the significance of the Olmsted-Bartholomew report and situates it in the history of American landscape planning.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A strange artifact, invaluable for the relief into which it throws the decisions Los Angeles made, consciously and unconsciously, as it groped its way through the 20th century. Magnificent in its breadth and daring, it is also bizarre and even worrisome in many of its details." --"LA Weekly

"Eden by Design is a compelling and fascinating description of a possible Los Angeles that never came to be. Greg Hise and William Deverell have resurrected the Olmsted Brothers' 1930 plan for

Los Angeles County, and then, in a wonderful introduction, put the plan in context so that to read it now is to see not only what seemed dangerous and possible in 1930 but also how and why one route to the present was chosen over others. In their hands, the plan acts like a ghost of Los Angeles, reminding us about a vanished past, lost possibilities, and the secrets that our present masks."—Richard White, author of The Organic Machine"The Report is not only a vital document in the history of Los Angeles . . . but a lost classic of a neglected golden age of city planning and landscape architecture. . . . It embodies a truly regional perspective; an ecological perspective; a long-range vision; an integration of design with finance and administration; and a truly grand interpretation of public space. It deserves to be known to every serious student of the American planning tradition."—Robert Fishman, author of Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia"An essential document for understanding the history of the West's largest city. Los Angeles had the opportunity to become an extraordinarily beautiful environment, a Paris in the desert. The editors make clear why, sadly, it did not; but also they hold out hope that portions of this brilliant but neglected plan might still be recovered."—Donald Worster, author of Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas"A welcome addition to the literature of American urban planning history."—Roger Montgomery, Professor of Architecture Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

While the adage that those who do not know history are bound to repeat it may be somewhat trite, it is also true. This superb book documents how corrupt real estate developers trashed America's second largest city laving Los Angeles the most park poor large city in the nation. Because they wanted to "develop" every square inch of Los Angeles, they did not any land set aside for parks.The developers and the Chamber of Commerce continue in their corrupt ways, depriving Los Angeles of usable parks, pretending that the wilderness areas of Griffith Park with their steep cliffs and rattlesnakes are all the park space we need.The Chamber of Commerce was quite effective in getting copies of the Omstead-Bartholomew Plan away from the public, and for these authors to have actually found copies and published the Plan is wonderful for Angelenos who are still trying to ameliorate the harm done to residential Los Angeles by the rejection of the O-B Plan.The greed and corruption which deprived LA of the implementation of the O-B Plan is still at work in the Eric Garcetti Administration where there is nothing worse than any suggestion a park -- no matter how small. Garcetti is so anti-green space that he is trying to do away with front and back yards. The other title for this book could have been "Paradise Stolen."

Perfect!

It’s true that the maps are often too small and would be better in color, as the originals are. However, the reprints are far from illegible, and the text of the Olmsted-Bartholomew proposal is captivating in and of itself.I was fascinated to read the astute predictions of these men of vision, and their thoughtful proposals for increasing the quality of life for Angelenos. I remarked at the urgency of their recommendations; they seem to genuinely fear the social consequences of allowing a city to grow with inadequate space reserved for recreation and natural beauty.If only we could know what L.A. would have been if the plan had been adopted!

This reprint of "The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholemew Plan for the Los Angeles Region" is more exactly a low-quality copy. The maps are so dark they are very difficult to read, and the way they are bound into the book, much of the details are lost into the seams. The original maps were color, so any references to colors in the legends are lost, and the gray scales blended together make the maps even less articulate. It’s important that a document such as this is reprinted for all to see, but it seems as if this volume has missed an opportunity of becoming a library keepsake.

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