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Greg Hise, William Deverell. *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. ix + 314 pp. $48.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-22414-8.

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Imagine a seaside, mountainside, recreational haven in the Southern California desert that connects Riverside to Santa Monica by a series of unified parkways. In this Eden, children play wholesome games and grow to be vigorous productive citizens. Working and lower class citizens are inaugurated into the finer pleasures of life and the capitalist worldview of increased property values. Finally, immigrants are introduced to the "American" way of life defined by outdoor activity and healthy social interaction. This is the sweeping vision of the 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew plan for the development of the Los Angeles region. It is a regional design that would create an integrated system of parks, playgrounds, and beaches to attract tourists (especially the ultra wealthy) away from competing Santa Barbara and San Diego. Had this plan been implemented the tangled mass of concrete and steel that today represents Los Angeles could have been avoided. This is the message Greg Hise and William Deverell hope to convey in Eden by Design to those who are in a position to shape the urban environment of the future.

In this unique monograph, Hise and Deverell combine the best of both worlds for the historian and urban planner. They offer both a tantalizing primary source in the reprinting of "Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region," and a thought-provoking essay regarding this material. The reader leaves this book eager to engage in more in-depth research into the nature of this particular regional plan and to take up the authors' call to historians and city planners alike to engage in urban policy activism.

In a sixty-three page introductory essay, Hise and Deverell attempt the Herculean task of narrating and analyzing the history and legacy of the 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew regional recreational plan commissioned by the Citizens' Committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. They outline the history of this plan from its original solicitation to its demise at the hands of the same committee that commissioned it. They begin with an exploration of how the planners conducted their work of survey and design. Olmsted and Bartholomew are indeed worthy of the praise that Hise and Deverell give to their attention to detail, the scope of their vision, and their understanding of the inherent roadblocks in the planning process. This alone, the authors state, sets this plan apart from other contemporary comprehensive plans. They continue by assessing the findings and recommendations of the plan and conclude the essay with an effort to draw lessons from the experience.

Hise and Deverell are clearly fascinated by the original support the project received from the Citizens' Committee and by that same committee's fierce opposition to its implementation. In terms of the historical perspective, this issue raises interesting questions about the nature of an urban elite. Is this elite in Los Angeles looking out only for its own selfish interests as Mike Davis would have us believe? Hise and Deverell leave us to ponder this issue without fully convincing us. The elite they introduce is far more complex than Davis' work suggests. Take Mary Pickford, for example. She was a member of the very Citizens' Committee that both sponsored and killed the plan. In her arguments before the Chamber of Commerce in 1926, supporting the plan, she argued that beautification of the city promised commercial dividends. She believed that in Los Angeles, they could have their cake and eat it too. Beauty and growth were not at odds. She eventually rescinded her support after concluding that the expense of implementing the plan would not raise property values high enough to justify the expense. Her participation and her changing support for the program helps support the argument that city planning in Los Angeles was not a matter of an elite conspiracy.

The other point Hise and Deverell make is that this was not an exclusionary elite. Arguments that this elite was either destructively fragmented or a simple two-part monolith do not work. It was not an oligarchy of one mind, but it was also not deeply divided. The Citizens'

Committee was a broadly democratic organization with representatives from the middle to elite sectors of society who had come to understand that success in pursuing growth (e.g. through attracting new tourists who might be potential new residents) would decline if the entire region did not continue to offer recreational amenities. In addition, this elite envisioned a region at risk of demise due to the moral decay of its citizenry. The region needed to protect its parkland assets in order to avoid this moral decay. What self-respecting tourist would come to a decadent amoral hell when Eden remained a potential (and could be found up the road in Santa Barbara)? In general, the sponsors of the report "understood large-scale planning as a means for achieving the city profitable" (p. 10). The demise of the plan represented the last efforts by non-elected officials to engage in city planning and therefore marked the end of an era in American planning history.

It is the issue of elite formation and control that I find particularly fascinating in this story. The conclusions that Hise and Deverell hint at are supported by my own research into the elite and city planning in other Southern California cities like Redlands and Santa Barbara. In a study of the Chambers of Commerce of these two cities I found that they were composed of representatives of both the elite and the middle class. I also found that Chambers of Commerce began to be interested in comprehensive city planning in the early 1910s. When engaged in debates over city planning they were not discussing issues of limiting access to the city. To the contrary. They saw city planning as a means to increase the real wealth of all citizens. They were not a group of outsiders intent on exploiting the environment. They lived there. They were seeking to make their homes nicer. Economic growth and development are to be sought; but not if this means destroying one's own home. In the 1920s, it looked like that was going to happen in Los Angeles and so the elite commissioned a plan that would enhance quality of life not destroy it. Clearly they were motivated by a desire to build the city profitable, but this did not mean that the city beautiful had to be abandoned. Santa Barbara and Redlands learned this lesson early.

It is important to note that the intended audience for this book is primarily future urban planners. This explains the brevity of the introduction and the lack of detailed analysis of the plan by Hise and Deverell. Their message is one of advocacy for future planning efforts around the nation. They believe Los Angeles provides a lesson for urban planners and that this lesson is positive rather than negative. This is the antithesis to Mike Davis's vision of Los Angeles. In City of Quartz and other works, Davis sees the future of Los Angeles and the past of that city as the anti-city. Far from using it as a model for future plans, he says the only lessons we can learn from Los Angeles are what to avoid. Hise and Deverell, in contrast explain why Los Angeles became what it did, but also show the alternative from the city's past. It is not evil. It is not the product of a conspiracy on the part of a corrupt, money-hungry elite to use and abuse the environment. Hise and Deverell show us the human side of this elite and that this elite did make efforts to improve the urban environment. We must understand urban planning as a complex undertaking. Olmsted and Bartholomew understood this in 1930 and still felt it worthwhile to engage in comprehensive regional planning. Since the audience for this book is primarily urban planners and the stated purpose is to encourage these planners to engage in such visionary planning, this reminder is worthy.

Although the emphasis of the authors lies in promoting future regional planning efforts, the analysis of the report provides historians with much food for thought. Rediscovery of this plan indeed provides historians with an important source to study the structure of oligarchy in Los Angeles. As urban historians we must seek out these plans and study them for more than the vision they provide for a city. By analyzing the process of plan implementation we gain incredible insight into the nature of city leadership above and beyond "oligarchy." We must also keep in mind Hise and Deverell's point that this report is a useful case study of "the distance that separates a plan, a vision of the future, from its realization." To me, this is the key to understanding urban history in any city. Finally, the admonition to study this plan for "how it reveals the form and meaning, the very definition, of urban space as the product of an ongoing contest" is great advice to all urban historians.

On the other side however, I think it worthwhile to question the importance of this single plan to the history of Southern California. Did the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan represent the "critical juncture" in the history of regional planning in Southern California that Hise and Deverell assert? While Los Angeles is the dominant city of the region, should we downplay comprehensive planning efforts made by Orange County and Santa Barbara County that lasted well into the 1940s and 1950s? Western urban historians place a tremendous amount of power in the hands of Los Angeles, and rightly so. But to focus solely on this one city is to miss the richness of the human and environmental tapestry that makes up this region. It also takes agency away from the many other cities that make up this complex region. I would be inter-

ested in a comparative context for this report. How does it compare to other comprehensive regional plans for the period? How did other cities respond to the plan? Could it have succeeded if these other cities had been brought into the process from the inception of the plan? Why were these other cities excluded? These questions would require much more than sixty-three pages to answer. I hope other scholars will embrace this plan and further pursue these issues.

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