

# Why Plan?



Community planning is done for two reasons:

1. To solve one or more problems regarding the community's development, and/or
2. To achieve a preferred form of development (Hodge & Gordon, 2008).

## Engineering and health concerns

Layers of physical, economic, cultural, legal, and human factors must all function together to produce an environment that fosters health and well-being. Clean water, waste removal, emergency services, and access to services and employment must all be provided for. Urban design and sense of place should also be incorporated into the community.



Figure 1: Bandit's Roost (Jacob Riis, 1888) (PD-US)

Many early North American cities were unpleasant and in many instances unmanageable. People wondered why European cities could both be functional, manageable, and look good. From these concerns arose the City Beautiful Movement, which sought to improve cities through beautification and thereby sweep away the social ills — it was believed that the beautiful city would inspire civic loyalty and moral integrity in the impoverished (Bluestone, 1988). Cities would be brought to cultural parity with their European competitors using the European Beaux-Arts to create an inviting city center that would entice the upper classes back to work and spend money, if not to live (Duerksen, Dale, & Elliott, 2009).

While the City Beautiful movement failed to address “real” problems of housing and sanitation, it did identify the main elements of a city's form: street pattern; public buildings; and parks (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Health and sanitation issues, the need for clean water, fire protection, and wider streets due to the popularity of the car brought Civil Engineers into the world of planning.

## Sustainable development

Intolerance of poor or corrupt government has led to municipal reforms that have adopted more of a scientific approach to planning. This has led to more open discussion on the distribution of taxes for services, the establishment of formal procedures and specifications for tendering and management of contracts, etc. Disparities between rich and poor and among races became increasingly evident following WWII. From these concerns arose the social reform movement as a planning tool for social equity. This movement produced many of our current ideas focusing on reducing inequality in housing opportunity, equal access to community facilities, and more recently environmental equity.

The environmental revolution has led to Federal and Provincial legislation designed to protect air and water quality, wildlife, etc. that has imposed obligations on planners and engineers. These efforts have laid out the foundation for our thinking about sustainability.

All these concepts are woven into planning today in order to help communities meet their challenges and achieve their dreams.

## Sources

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