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Mark Tranel, ed. *St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis.* Louis Metromorphosis Series. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2007. xii + 402 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-883982-61-4.

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One Hundred Years of Planning in St. Louis

St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis, is about one hundred years of city planning in St. Louis and the surrounding area. The book is the third volume in a series called *St. Louis Metromorphosis*. An introduction by the editor, Mark Tranel, is followed by thirteen chapters by public and private planners. Tranel, an experienced St. Louis planner, is head of two public policy endeavors at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where he is a research associate professor of public policy.

Tranel explains that there is a vast gap between idealism and reality in modern city planning. "As these chapters detail, planners often experience the same frustrations," he writes. "The authors identify a number of issues, governmental structure most prominent among them, that limit not only the effectiveness of citizen input but also that of the planning professionals. Despite evidence of the technical proficiency of the planners at projecting community change and needs (although they are not flawless), their policy recommendations are not accepted in many cases" (p. 15).

Another important consideration relates to how a city developed historically. Planning started in St. Louis in 1763, when French fur traders selected the site of the future metropolis in Upper Louisiana. They laid out lots in gridiron fashion on a low, relatively level bluff, easily accessible to an ample river landing on the Mississippi River. St. Louis was roughly twenty miles below the mouth of the Missouri River, providing a ready portal to the West. Under first French and then a short period of Spanish rule, St. Louis became a fur-trading center. In 1804, at the time of the raising of the U.S. flag over St. Louis, the town of three thousand people was one of the largest communities west of the Appalachian Mountains. Mercantile buildings covered the riverfront and most of the French-speaking inhabitants lived in the outskirts in a pastoral setting.

St. Louis grew very rapidly, becoming part of the new slave state of Missouri in 1821. A decline in the fur trade was more than compensated for by a new commercial economy. Steamboats lined the riverfront, making St. Louis a transportation center. In 1860, with a population of 161,000, St. Louis ranked ninth nationally in size. Following the Civil War, slavery ended, steamboating declined, and the economy temporarily languished. The coming of trunk railroads and the acquisition of heavy industry brought renewed prosperity that transformed St. Louis. A total of 515,000 people lived in the city in 1900, giving it the status of the fourth biggest American city. St. Louis emerged as a cultural center, manifested in a highly successful World's Fair in 1904. Over the next fifty

years, two World Wars and the Great Depression failed to stop the rise of St. Louis. The population reached 857,000 in 1950 and predictions of 900,000 people by 1970 seemed obtainable. Unfortunately for St. Louis boosters who used population growth as a measurement of progress, it was not to be.

In the last half of the twentieth century and on into the next, St. Louis gained a reputation as the fastest shrinking big city in the United States. A long-festering problem came back to haunt St. Louis. Back in 1876, voters in St. Louis and surrounding St. Louis County approved the "Great Divorce," making St. Louis an independent city of sixty-two square miles. In the ensuing decades, consolidation proposals failed. After World War II, a large influx of African Americans into St. Louis and "white flight" to the suburbs compounded problems. The failure of a huge housing project received unfavorable publicity.

At the same time that the city suffered a reversal of fortunes, St. Louis County experienced robust growth. In 2005, the county had over a million people and the fifteen-county metropolitan area of 2.7 million ranked eighteenth in the country. Conversely, the city of St. Louis with 344,000 inhabitants–a loss of 513,000 since 1950–had fallen to fifty-second among the nation's cities. The city had a high poverty rate, although St. Louis remained a cultural and industrial center. It had lost its thrust as an engine of population growth.

The current problems of St. Louis obscured a rich twentieth-century planning legacy that followed over a century of planning neglect. The destruction of old French St. Louis happened with little notice. When an 1849 conflagration destroyed the riverfront mercantile buildings, developers replaced them with utilitarian three- and four-story warehouses, soon made obsolete by the rather abrupt decline of steamboat transportation. With little sense of order, the city spread to the west, one subdivision after another, following street railroad lines and important thoroughfares. Most industry generally occupied space along the Mississippi River. Railroads entered the city from the east over the massive Eads Bridge. Partly elevated tracks ran along the river landing, abruptly swinging west, through heavily built-up sections. In keeping with new Progressive-era conceptions of cities as organic wholes, there was an obvious need to formulate a comprehensive design to unify St. Louis at the time of the 1904 fair.

In response, St. Louis planners, much to the satisfaction of civic leaders, produced a landmark 1907 plan that set St. Louis on a course it followed for the next hundred years. The poor were not consulted and many were unwilling victims of a rough-and-ready kind of urban renewal. A principal planner, George Kessler, formulated an elaborate scheme for interconnected parks and boulevards from a riverfront park to Forest Park and several forest reserves. A distinctive feature called for a great east-west mall lined by important buildings, including the main railroad station. The mall and a series of neighborhood civic centers served as unifying elements for people of all classes. The results were imperfect. Only a start was made on the mall, the neighborhood centers were not all constructed, and the riverfront remained covered by mid-nineteenth century warehouses. Forest Park and some impressive boulevard streets, flanked by private gated residential districts for the wealthy, were important legacies of the 1907 plan, which garnered favorable national notice.

In 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, St. Louis politicians and planners initiated a long-term project to revive plans for riverfront redevelopment. By 1947, a Jefferson National Expansion Memorial called for a large park capped by a gigantic arch. Working out funding arrangements, repositioning railroad tracks, and land clearance consumed more than a decade. Construction of the arch took seven years. When completed in 1968, the Gateway Arch exceeded all expectations, becoming an instant urban symbol. In downtown St. Louis, the arch loomed as a key element in what boosters hailed as a renaissance. The mall that was proposed in the 1907 plan, however, remained incomplete. Despite new civic and private amenities, including impressive stadiums and office buildings, downtown St. Louis steadily declined as a retail center. Focus shifted increasingly to suburban shopping malls. A new plan, "St. Louis 2004," sought to shift attention away from downtown, placing more emphasis on neighborhood improvements.

Saving neighborhoods was a far cry from what longtime city engineer Harlan Bartholomew, a driving force behind the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, envisioned for post-World War II St. Louis. Bartholomew authored a comprehensive 1947 city plan that emphasized a vibrant downtown and a need to deal with obsolete housing stock through urban renewal. He found especially reprehensible the conditions in Mill Creek Valley, the largest African American district in St. Louis.

Bartholomew advocated a course popular among civic leaders to raze entire blighted neighborhoods, including stores and churches. A solution for underprivi-

leged African Americans and whites was segregated public housing. He envisioned the balance of the white population residing in single housing units in low-density neighborhoods, both in and outside the city. To move people around the St. Louis area, he advocated expressways, with buses replacing streetcars. In addition, he believed St. Louis needed thirty-five airports. Expressways materialized, but the airfield plan was unrealistic. A Supreme Court decision struck down segregated housing, making it difficult to know how Bartolomew's housing plans, predicated on continued population growth, would have worked in a segregated setting. And, while he was woefully wrong on airport construction and right on expressways, he failed to anticipate the impact of a network of expressways on the metropolitan area, especially in drawing people away from downtown.

The depressing population situation in the city of St. Louis and rise of St. Louis County presented a serious challenge to planners trying at the same time to deal with current needs and to determine future requirements. Moreover, planners have broadened the scope of their responsibilities to include everything from the preservation and restoration of historic buildings to cultural planning involving the needs of museums and schools. Planning for the city at least involves only one governmental jurisdiction. In the county, on the other hand, there are over ninety different incorporations, some quite small, but all with their own interests. Under the circumstances, it is noteworthy that the city and the county have been able to cooperate on building sewers and on cultural taxes. School reform has been elusive and controversial. Such areas as regional workforce planning and social planning are visionary and require educational work. Yet, in the twenty-first century, few people deny the importance or need for professional planning. Over a hundred years, plans shaped the direction of St. Louis and to a lesser extent that of St. Louis County.

St. Louis Plans is a unique book on the neglected history of urban planning. Tranel's introduction is informative and sets the stage for chapters on education, social, and educational planning; highway and transit planning; workforce development; and the like. In spite of the many different contributors, the book holds together reasonably well, although more comparable data and a concluding section would have been helpful. Tranel's fine study will be of use to all kinds of urban planning specialists, to all students of St. Louis history, and to all people concerned about urban development in the United States.

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