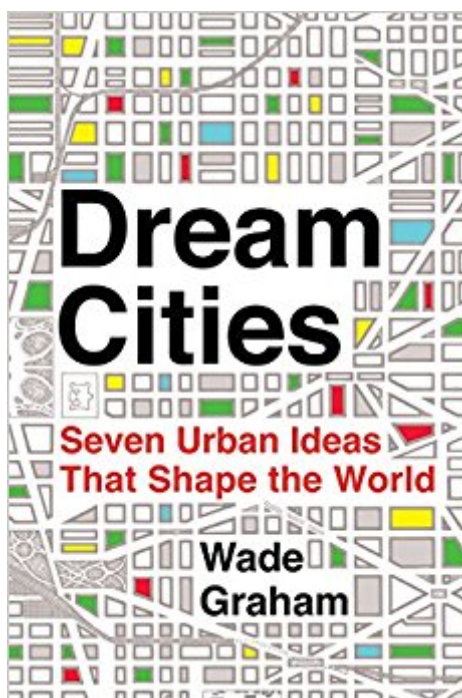


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# Dream Cities: Seven Urban Ideas That Shape The World



## Synopsis

From the acclaimed landscape designer, historian and author of *American Eden*, a lively, unique, and accessible cultural history of modern cities—from suburbs, downtown districts, and exurban sprawl, to shopping malls and “sustainable” developments—that allows us to view them through the planning, design, architects, and movements that inspired, created, and shaped them. *Dream Cities* explores our cities in a new way—as expressions of ideas, often conflicting, about how we should live, work, play, make, buy, and believe. It tells the stories of the real architects and thinkers whose imagined cities became the blueprints for the world we live in. From the nineteenth century to today, what began as visionary concepts—sometimes utopian, sometimes outlandish, always controversial—were gradually adopted and constructed on a massive scale in cities around the world, from Dubai to Ulan Bator to London to Los Angeles. Wade Graham uses the lives of the pivotal dreamers behind these concepts, as well as their acolytes and antagonists, to deconstruct our urban landscapes—the houses, towers, civic centers, condominiums, shopping malls, boulevards, highways, and spaces in between—exposing the ideals and ideas embodied in each. From the baroque fantasy villages of Bertram Goodhue to the superblocks of Le Corbusier, from Radiant City to the pseudo-agrarian dispersal of Frank Lloyd Wright, from Broadacre City, our upscale leafy suburbs, downtown skyscraper districts, infotainment-driven shopping malls, and “sustainable” eco-developments are seen as never before. In this elegantly designed and illustrated book, Graham uncovers the original plans of brilliant, obsessed, and sometimes megalomaniacal designers, revealing the foundations of today’s varied municipalities. *Dream Cities* is nothing less than a field guide to our modern urban world. Illustrated with 59 black-and-white photos throughout the text.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“An excellent and novel exploration of key ideas behind city spaces and the behaviors they engender. . . . Mr. Graham is as masterly as a novelist when it comes to character development and narrative.” (Wall Street Journal)

“An intriguing architectural history and an effective antidote to the excesses of urban renewal and city planning.” (Kirkus)

“Dream Cities offers a fascinating look at seven trends in urban planning that shaped the modern world.” (Shelf Awareness)

Praise for American Eden: “An ambitious study of the forms and ideas of the contemporary city.... Graham wants us to see these urban and architectural forms afresh, not as the drab commonplaces they have become but as the work of visionaries whose dreamed-of cities became the blueprint for the world we actually live in.” (New York Times Book Review)

A lively, unique, and accessible cultural history that explores our cities in a new way—as expressions of ideas, often conflicting, about how we should live, work, play, make, buy, and believe. Beginning as visionary concepts, the blue-prints for the world we live in today—sometimes utopian, sometimes outlandish, always controversial—were gradually adopted and constructed on a massive scale in international cities from London to Dubai to Ulan Bator to Los Angeles. Wade Graham uses the lives of the pivotal dreamers behind these archetypes, as well as their acolytes and antagonists, to deconstruct our urban landscapes—the houses, towers, civic centers, condominiums, malls, boulevards, highways, and spaces in between—exposing the ideals and ideas embodied in each. Through in-depth portraits that take us from the baroque fantasy villages of Bertram Goodhue to the superblocks of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City to the pseudo-agrarian dispersal of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City, our upscale leafy suburbs, downtown skyscraper districts, infotainment-driven shopping centers, and “sustainable” eco-developments are seen as never before. In this elegantly designed and illustrated book, Graham uncovers the original plans of brilliant, obsessed, and sometimes megalomaniacal designers, revealing the foundations of today’s varied municipalities. Dream Cities is nothing less than a field guide to our modern urban

world. Praise for Wade Graham's American Eden "Mr. Graham recounts his tale with considerable verve and a vast erudition in the history of gardening and the arts generally. . . Among much else, Mr. Graham shows us that the history of how our nation grew can be found in what it has grown." •Wall Street Journal "A blazingly fresh, critical, and ecologically astute masterwork." •Booklist (starred review) "Enjoyable . . . well researched, posing an interesting historic tie from the past to the present." •Washington Post "Informative and absolutely engrossing . . . an astute analysis and, ultimately, a joyous celebration of four hundred years of ingenuity and vision." •Ross King, author of Brunelleschi's Dome "We are what we plant, LA-based writer Wade Graham posits in his history of gardens. When he isn't explaining the economic and cultural influences, he crafts fascinating profiles. . . . An engaging look at our own pieces of paradise." •Los Angeles Magazine

I just devoured this book. I read a lot of books on history and architecture and I must say this one really stands out for a couple of reasons. First, it is just plain well written. So many books of this type get lost in boring and academic prose. It is the opposite of a tome just a nicely proportioned book that is easy to dig into. Second, it is well documented and researched without bogging down in references. (I like the use of end notes rather than footnotes.) Obviously we turn to a book like this with the expectation that the topics are well researched and no fancy writing can substitute for that. Finally, it is fun to apply the concepts outlined in the book to the place where you grew up, where you live now or where you are visiting. I have had the book sitting on my desk at work and everyone who asks me about it seems genuinely taken with the premise.

"Dream Cities: Seven Urban Ideas That Shape The World", by Wade Graham, is a dream book for armchair urbanists. The book is not long, but Graham covers the seven architectural concepts that he claims have influenced the development of cities over the years. His seven, "Castles", "Monuments", "Slabs", "Homesteads", "Corals", "Malls", and "Habitats", are fleshed out by giving the prime architects who either conceived the ideas or were leading practitioners of them. Let's take "Slabs". These are those rows of tall buildings designed to house people on masse. Think Robert Moses - city planner of New York City - who proposed these buildings as both offices and apartments. As Wade Graham writes, "Building slabs has been a collective exercise, or at least a widespread one... Many tens of thousands of different agents - architects, planners, developers,

governments - have built them to supply new housing for growing populations, and to accommodate new modes of transportation, especially cars. In this sense, slabs were a "rational" choice made by many people in many places, in response to actual modern conditions". The reader might ask, "what WERE these conditions that required these soulless pieces of concrete? Well, in the 1930's and on, when Robert Moses was charged with modernising the city of New York and the boroughs, he proposed these building to house the growing population. They were to house people whose neighborhoods had been destroyed by both urban blight and the roads and highways Moses was proposing to slash through the city. Graham writes about how many of Moses' plans were never built - the LOMEX through lower Manhattan, for instance - many in response to community protests at the destruction of their settled neighborhoods. Jane Jacobs - author of "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" - was a foremost opponent of Moses' lofty plans. In the relatively short chapter on "Slabs", Wade Graham goes into detail about slabs, Robert Moses, and Swiss architect Le Corbusier. Now, maybe you're not interested in "Slabs

Fascinating book, very well written, clever and insightful review of seven different architectural concepts, complete with photos.

It is not clear what Graham was attempting. In the intro he says the book is intended to provide the reader with a "field guide" to the architecture around him/her, but also to narrate the dreams and intentions behind the modern city, and in doing the latter there is significant discussion of projects never built. I found more focused books more satisfying: Jane Jacobs, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities", and William H. Whyte, "City: Rediscovering the Center". In some chapters Graham devotes much space to professional biographies (cf. "Monuments"), and in other, more satisfying chapters he concentrates on architectural ideas (cf. "Corals"). Graham has done much research, but in some chapters the enumeration of architects gets tedious. The best aspect of this book is the chapter ending summaries and photographs; because of limitations of weight and production expense the photographs are best used as a guide to what to look up in Google images. In retrospect I am sorry I did not try reading each summary before the chapter. It was often difficult for Graham to provide unity to everything covered in the chapter, but this is made clear in a reading of the summary, and reflects the diversity of architecture. A remarkable statistic (p.222): "The time shoppers spent in malls declined by half from 1980 to

1990. Is that per capita, per visit? I assume the former, but regardless this was before .

The book was decent. However, I felt that the title was a little misleading. A great amount of time was spent describing the lives and accomplishments of architects as well as mocking various urban concepts. The book should have been called "crappy urban design ideas", not Dream Cities.

Received the book and holding for Christmas.

Brilliant scholarship! Very inspiring ideas! Reads like a novel or thriller. A classic! Excellent Book!!!

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