

How London Has Kept Green

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According to the Greenspace Information for Greater London, the city of London is composed 33.0% of Green Spaces as of 2015. This is a higher percentage than any city in the US, surpassing San Francisco and New York City both.

Introduction

Today, London's city limits contain "an astonishing sixty-seven square miles of parks, commons, community gardens, garden squares, nature reserves and churchyards." Through 200 year-long evolutionary process, expanded and sought out the establishment of public green spaces to shape the lives of Londoners for the better. The perceived benefits and pervasive nature of green spaces in London varies frequently, yet the urban green space remains a central instituting in the city beginning in the 18th century.



Greenwood's Map of 1827

Source: Fowler, L. (2013, June 7). London in vintage maps. Retrieved June 19, 2017, from <http://www.cntraveller.com/photos/photo-galleries/vintage-maps-of-london>

Hyde Park served as the earliest example a green space established as a park that established a recreational use of the space, setting it apart and representing a push against the use of parks for only leisure

More Information at:

Reeder, D. (2006). The European city and green space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850-2000. Aldershot: Ashgate.,ch. 3. pg. 30-31.

An Extended Gift to the People

The way in which green spaces were seen in the 18th century came from how most public green spaces were gifted to the larger London community. Because most green spaces came directly from ordinances made by royals and aristocrats, parks, commons, and such were seen at the time as places traditionally meant for high society leisure.

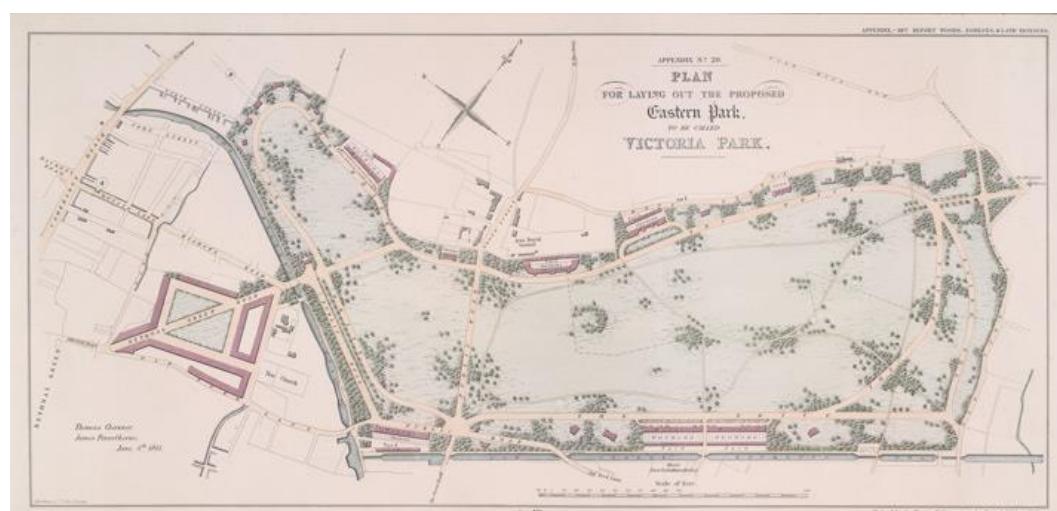
Private benefits the Public

Land owning royals and aristocrats had time to for aristocratic estate developers, villa architects and landscape gardeners, to pioneer and perfect new forms of landscaped open space before public implementation. This helped give the impression of public green space being a place of formality and civility.

Park Etiquette

Into the mid-19th century, open green spaces increasingly became places of model citizenship and values **essential** of the Victorian area. The appropriately named, Victoria Park, opened to the public in 1845 and Battersea Park, opened 1860, stood as the paragons aspiring green spaces at the time. These parks were the largest and most costly public green space works of their era, enforcing the perceived close relationship between wealth and green space.

Source: Reeder, D. (2006). The European city and green space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850-2000. Aldershot: Ashgate.,ch. 3. pg. 30-31.



Proposed plan for Victoria Park

Source: Victoria Park, East London: 'the People's Park'. (2015, June 25). Retrieved June 20, 2017, from <https://municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2013/07/09/victoria-park-east-london-the-peoples-park/>

The Civic Utility of Green Space

The years following the 1860s witnessed an unprecedented expansion of green spaces, mainly consisting of commons and public parks at the tail end of the 19th century. However, diversification of how green space was seen and used came about after the First World War. As a result of interwar-time introspection, London sought to identify and manage the persisting problems plaguing the urban environment. For London city planners at the time, green spaces presented the perfect boon to counter this dilemma

Addressing the London's Fog

A large part of addressing the city's pollution was in an effort to combat the frequent city-wide smog. Commissioning the development of public open green spaces worked as a straightforward means of exposing the public to more air and light, a commodity made more difficult to find in an increasing industrious London. This response to pollution in the urban landscape helped set the precedent for green spaces as a counterbalance to industry expansion.

Movement for a Recreational Green Space Development

London's interwar years also saw a surge in public interest around outside exercise and play. With London government reaction of setting aside land for green spaces dedicated to playing fields and recreation, post-World War I London established itself as a city committed to creating and maintaining public open green spaces for not only the tolerance of the city, but for the enjoyment of the city as well. London's initiative of becoming a "Garden City" sought to instill a sense of civic pride, duty, and community amongst Londoners.

Source: Reeder, D. (2006). *The European city and green space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850-2000*. Aldershot: Ashgate., ch. 3. pg. 31-67.

Identity in the 20th Century

Immediately after the Second World War, minimal priority was put aside for London's green spaces as England recovered from the international conflict. In spite of this apparent negligence, London's definition of public green spaces as places of civic pride and community centers prevailed through the war. Eventually, some areas cleared by German bombings were cleaned and replaced with public green spaces.

Historical Cyclical Nature and Civic Representation

As the London approached the 21st century, many issues arose over environmental pollution, cramped urban housing, population density, and continued development of commercialism and urban industry. Public green spaces' perceived ability's part in combating or counteract these dilemmas, reestablished the urban green spaces' identity as problem solver and means of appeasing the public. As an urban cure-all, public green spaces in London adopted

the multi-layered identity as a means by which to contact with nature, build community, and raise London's reputation.

Source: Garside, P. (2006). The European city and green space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850-2000. Aldershot: Ashgate.,ch. 4. pg. 68-92.

The Present State of London Green Space

Contemporary public open green space serve as vague amalgam of characteristics that have glommed on the term over its history in London. Recent studies have taken a retrospective look at London's use of green spaces to analyze where, if anywhere, do public open green spaces fit in contemporary society.

Looking to the Past to Plan for the Future

An increased interest has risen around green space implementation in modern cities over the last few decades. Similar trends of the past including low priority on maintenance of green spaces and urban development in London have compelled interest once again on London's stance toward green spaces and their implementation. Along with combating widespread air pollution, London's will tackle with defining and using green spaces as long as the city continues to evolve.

Sources: Swanwick, Carys, Nigel Dunnett, and Helen Woolley. "Nature, Role and Value of Green Space in Towns and Cities: An Overview." 29.2 (2003): 94-106. Web. 14 June 2017. pg. 92-105.

Conclusions

Over the years, London's reasons behind the eventual accumulation of sixty-seven square miles of green space have resisted the urge to remain constant. London's Green spaces have transformed from symbols of private wealth to a place of leisure and high society to recreational amenities to environmental boons to urban decoration and propaganda. As time goes on, Londoners' morals and values change and with that the city reflects these changes. Eventually, green spaces are bound to embody new meanings and movements. However, if the last two centuries are an indication of the London green space's staying power as an institution imbedded in the city's basic infrastructure, London is bound to significantly shape the definition of urban green space in the years to come.

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