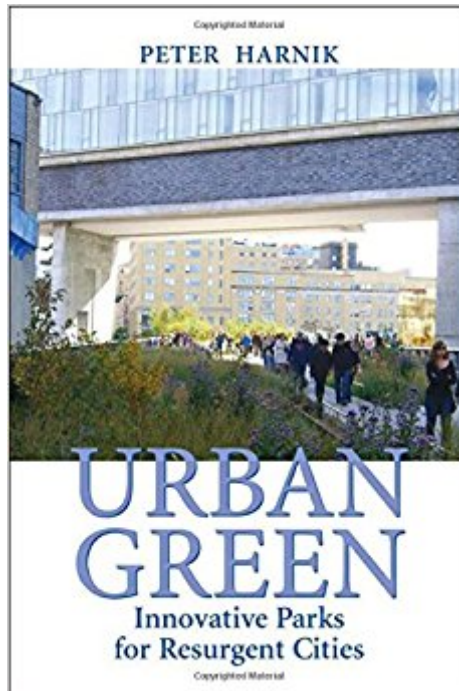




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# Urban Green: Innovative Parks For Resurgent Cities



## Synopsis

For years American urban parks fell into decay due to disinvestment, but as cities began to rebound—and evidence of the economic, cultural, and health benefits of parks grew—investment in urban parks swelled. The U.S. Conference of Mayors recently cited meeting the growing demand for parks and open space as one of the biggest challenges for urban leaders today. It is now widely agreed that the U.S. needs an ambitious and creative plan to increase urban parklands. Urban Green explores new and innovative ways for “built out” cities to add much-needed parks. Peter Harnik first explores the question of why urban parkland is needed and then looks at ways to determine how much is possible and where park investment should go. When presenting the ideas and examples for parkland, he also recommends political practices that help create parks. The book offers many practical solutions, from reusing the land under defunct factories to sharing schoolyards, from building trails on abandoned tracks to planting community gardens, from decking parks over highways to allowing more activities in cemeteries, from eliminating parking lots to uncovering buried streams, and more. No strategy alone is perfect, and each has its own set of realities. But collectively they suggest a path toward making modern cities more beautiful, more sociable, more fun, more ecologically sound, and more successful.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Urban Green is a testament to the progress of the livable communities movement. While others cringe at urban eyesores—underutilized parking lots, vacant commercial areas, and abandoned rail lines—Harnik sees new green spaces for residents to stroll, garden, play,

socialize, and enjoy their natural heritage. Best of all, he offers practical advice on politics and funding, providing community leaders with tools for turning their vision into reality." (Congressman Earl Blumenauer Oregon third congressional district)"Peter Harnik reveals how the push to preserve and promote our nation's urban parks is one of the most exciting frontiers in urban planning, dramatically changing the way we think about what is possible in a 21st-century city." (Michael Bloomberg Mayor of New York City, from his foreword)"Specific, succinct, well-written, full of innovative ideas from all over the world •Peter Harnik's Urban Green: Innovative Parks for Resurgent Cities is all one could ask of a practical planning book." (Planning)"With this timely and valuable book, Harnik has done a great service. Public-sector officials, planners, and designers will find it useful, but so will community activists, neighborhood groups, and anybody else who uses an urban park. Which, in a densely populated city, is just about everyone." (Landscape Architecture Magazine)"Harnik conveys in pragmatic, no-nonsense terms what it takes to make the outdoor rooms of a city serve the true needs of their users. Fundamental questions are asked about which kinds of parks to build, how much to build, for whom to build, and where the parks should go. The answers imply new or renewed solutions and new ways of defining the very term parks." (Urban Land)"Urban Green is part reference manual, part guidebook and part inspiration. It provides an unprecedented look at the re-greening of urban America. From rail trails to rooftops to landfills, Peter Harnik shows us how to find and fund green spaces for the next century." (Edward T. McMahon Charles E. Fraser Chair for Sustainable Development)

Peter Harnik is director of the Center for City Park Excellence at the Trust for Public Land and author of Inside City Parks, a book about the park and recreation systems of the 25 largest U.S. cities. In 2003, his research resulted in The Excellent City Park System: What Makes it Great and How to Get There. Previous to that, he was co-founder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

Well organized, clearly written, and a good overview of benefits of urban green spaces. Good examples and salient points throughout. Could easily be incorporated into classrooms on urban planning. I found it very helpful as a review prior to preparing a presentation on fundraising for a local park. Recommended.

Great book. Short and simple

I got this text assigned as a class reading and I was very disappointed. The first part is a clueless

blabla about whether or not to apply level of standard to park planning. The second half is about where in an urban context land for new parks can be found. This section is simply a list, with 2 pages of irrelevant text to each point. Harnik doesn't ever cite any relevant work or studies. I would not assign such a book in a grad level course. I told my teacher the same thing.

Who better to seek advice from on the topic of city parks than the nation's premier urban park expert? Director for City Park Excellence, Peter Harnik, generously offers up specific data and useful answers to anyone confounded by questions about parks. The advice is air tight and the data is reliable. Nothing made up or superfluous. As co-founder of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, his chapter 16 on Rail Trails offers succinct counsel on managing idealistic expectations: "Six years is a record? Well, yes. Creating a rail trail, candidly, is not easy. The land ownership issues are confusing. Legal and regulatory complexities stretch from the local level to the state capital to Washington, DC. Railroad companies frequently have unfathomable bureaucracies and are generally uncooperative. Invariably, there is at least one obstreperous adjacent landowner opposed to a trail...." Important anecdotes such as this one inhabit virtually every paragraph of the book. Whether you seek advice about how much park land a city should have or the best way to cull park space in a crowded city, you will find helpful suggestions throughout this book. Ideas abound on subjects ranging from cemeteries to parking lots.

What the author does well, is demonstrate the enormous variety of extant park models. The chapters are short and succinct and would allow all ranges of readers with disparate knowledge bases an informative and not overwhelming learning experience. Giving Jane Jacobs her rightful due, he underscores repeatedly, that it is not the size or number of parks that matter, but how they are created, managed and used. Her warning that the knee-jerk response to build a park whenever possible without considering the complexity of the urban realm has not go unheeded by the author. Whereas she explored the social dimensions of the phenomenon, Harnik stays close to the professional planning side of things. His suggestions lack the annoying totalistic tone of the ideologically driven, no doubt his passion is simply for good parks in all their diversity. Every urban planner should have to read this book and every city planning committee should have to be familiar with his text.

This book is tremendously intelligent, as it should be from Peter Harnik. It is a very compelling argument for how to think about parks in a realistic way that might help urban planners present

arguments for them, and cites very good examples. I would love to see more photos, but can easily look up cited examples.

Peter Harnik's book is a must-read for all park enthusiasts and supporters of the urban parks movement. Harnik masterfully lays out the challenges of designing metrics for success, prioritizing, and acquiring land for parks. His book is filled with examples of successful cities, and lessons for aspiring ones. It gave me great ideas of green spaces to visit and enjoy, and now that I work for a parks organization I consider it one of the leading works in the field.

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