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Plan for New York City

Stock#: 92009
Map Maker: New York City Planning
Commission
Date: 1969
Place: Cambridge, MA, and London
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 17 x 17 inches each book
Price: \$ 1,800.00



Description:

An Unflinching Look at New York in the 60s. A Fine, Boxed Set of the Six-Volume Modernist Plans to Change the City.

"It is obvious enough that there is a great deal wrong. The air is polluted. The streets are dirty and choked with traffic. The subways are jammed. The waters of the rivers and bays are fouled. There is a severe shortage of housing. The municipal plant is long past its prime."

This richly illustrated complete six-volume report produced by the New York City Planning Commission in 1969 that proposes remedies and improvements for the city's ills.

The report praises the successes, diversity, and strengths of New York City while not shying away from the city's ills. The report was produced three years into John Lindsay's influential stint as governor by his handpicked Planning Commission, who were as committed to remedying the city's social ills as Lindsay. Through this report, they propose a comprehensive, top-down approach to development rather than the project-driven approach that had predominated to date.

Illustrating the volumes are hundreds of exacting photographs that represent life in New York City in the 60s. Taken by both local and leading photographers, they capture the city from all angles and all boroughs. As was often the case with the best photography of the 60s, they avoid grandiose moments while capturing the essence of city life in snapshots of individuals and scenes shot from unusual perspectives. The volumes, between them, have some 200 maps, 800 photographs, and 750 charts.

These images complement the many maps and aerial photos that appear in the work as references. These



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maps, including several that fold out, provide a block-by-block analysis of the plan. They note many different factors, for example, where "Major Action" or "Preventive Renewal" are needed in residential areas. Unsurprisingly, Harlem, parts of Brooklyn, and the Bronx are the areas where this is suggested as most needed.

The Proposals

The proposals center around building both a wealthier and more equitable city. The report does not shy away from the issues that faced minorities, particularly Black and Puerto Rican citizens, and made widening opportunities for higher education a priority. However, it did recognize flaws in some other proposals and remained budget-conscious.

One of the issues that may be had with the proposal is that it appears to favor Manhattan at the expense of other boroughs. It likes ... This is not the only instance where Mayor Lindsay's government was accused of favoring Manhattan, for example, the deadly blizzard of 1969 that left 15 inches of snow in the city prompted a political crisis after Manhattan was well taken care of but other boroughs were left unploughed for up to a week.

Today, the report's analysis seems strangely prescient. It envisages a New York that will grow ever closer to the center of American culture, but one that faces a difficult road out of its current plight. It predicts that these ills will persist for many years, but that, slowly, it will be brought out of this rut and have brighter days ahead.

New York in 1969

New York in 1969 was facing growing ills, with smog, police corruption, and decay plaguing the city. Much of this came out of the forefront in 1968 and 1969, when major events, such as months-long strikes by everyone from sanitation workers to teachers, Stonewall, and assassinations (attempted and successful) were occurring with frightening regularity. Crime increased drastically, and quality of life fell.

Investment in the city continued and race relations were better than in many other American cities at the time. However, the financial crisis of the 1970s would prevent the many remedies suggested for the city's ills from being implemented, and it would be many years before the city would recuperate from its losses.

Collation

Volume 1: 1-182 and 3 fold-out maps.



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Volume 2: 1-156.

Volume 3: 1-192 (with mispaginations).

Volume 4: 1-172.

Volume 5: 1-158.

Volume 6: 1-68.

Rarity

While individual volumes, especially the early ones, appear on the market with some regularity, it is rare to see a complete set of the books. The last example we trace as appearing at auction was sold in 2013.

Detailed Condition:

Six volumes each with cover titled "PLAN FOR NEW YORK CITY" with green-cloth clamshell case. Minor tears and chips in the spine of covers, and some covers slightly sunstruck. Volume 4 cover partially torn, but all there. Volume 1 back cover slightly loose. Three fold-out maps are present in Volume 1.