



The Land That Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century (Urban and Industrial Environments)

William A. Shutkin

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In this book, environmentalist and lawyer William Shutkin describes a new kind of environmental and social activism spreading across the nation, one that joins the pursuit of environmental quality with that of civic health and sustainable local economies. In the face of challenges posed by often corrosive market forces and widespread social disaffection, this civic environmentalism is creating nothing less than a new public discourse and dynamic social vision grounded in environmental action. Shutkin points the way to vibrant, sustainable communities through four inspiring examples of civic environmentalism in action: the redevelopment of contaminated urban land for agriculture in inner-city Boston, mass-transit-based development and waterfront restoration in Oakland, protection of open space and conservation-based development in rural Colorado, and smart-growth and sustainability strategies in suburban New Jersey. The book's underlying message is that the nation's environmental health is a critical factor in its success as a vital democracy.

Social health, democratic community, and environmentalism, Shutkin shows, are one. From the author's preface: "This book asserts that environmentalism is as much about protecting ordinary places as it is about preserving wilderness areas; as much about promoting civic engagement as it is about pursuing environmental litigation; and as much about implementing sound economic development strategies as it is about negotiating global climate change treaties. Ultimately, I believe, environmentalism is nothing less than about our conception of ourselves as a social and political community -- what the bald eagle, our national symbol, really means."

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