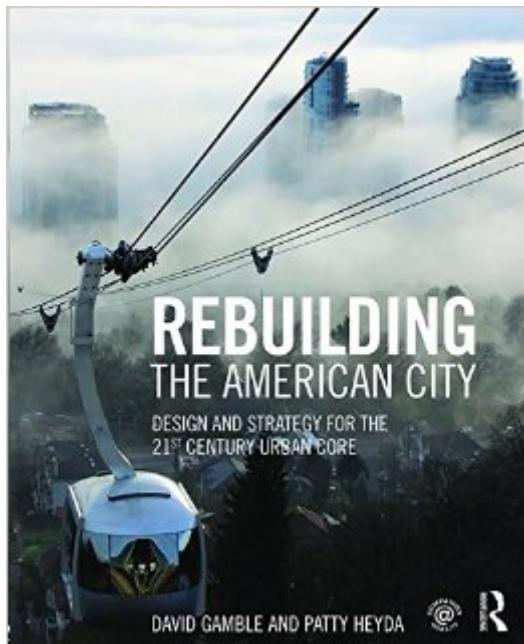


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Rebuilding The American City: Design And Strategy For The 21st Century Urban Core



Synopsis

Urban redevelopment in American cities is neither easy nor quick. It takes a delicate alignment of goals, power, leadership and sustained advocacy on the part of many. Rebuilding the American City highlights 15 urban design and planning projects in the U.S. that have been catalysts for their downtownsâ •yet were implemented during the tumultuous start of the 21st century. The book presents five paradigms for redevelopment and a range of perspectives on the complexities, successes and challenges inherent to rebuilding American cities today. Rebuilding the American City is essential reading for practitioners and students in urban design, planning, and public policy looking for diverse models of urban transformation to create resilient urban cores.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

(Full disclosure: I'm a former student and friend of one author and a close friend of the woman who made the data visualizations.) That said, I think this book is incredible. As Alex Krieger points out in the introduction, most books about cities are more like sales pitches for moving downtown or theories on what cities should be. This book, however, tells 15 specific stories about how very different cities have made dramatic changes in or near their downtowns with strategic public investment and private development. Each case is described, mapped, illustrated in 3D, photographed, and enhanced by conversations with the people who made it happen. As a practicing urban planner in a city that wasn't featured, I was constantly underlining and annotating as I found details and strategies that I want to apply to my work.

Contemporary analyses of urban design often organize around high-level themes such as techno-futurist, sea level rise, or demographic friction. What's frequently missing from the current dialog are successful and replicable models for realizing catalytic projects in 21st century cities. Rebuilding the American City fills this critical gap with compelling cases from cities of various sizes and locations that have implemented exemplary urban projects, many despite adverse economic conditions. The authors build a uniquely rich reading of each case by bringing the voices of various stakeholders the forefront, revealing the behind-the-scenes stories that often determine which projects succeed and which fail. In contrast to books that structure their analysis towards a specific conclusion, Rebuilding's open-ended form allows the reader to draw their own conclusions, and to imagine how these different models might play out in their own city. Without sweeping the challenges facing urban areas aside, the book is nonetheless firmly a cheerleader for resurgent American cities. The difference is that it includes the playbook as well. (Disclosure- I know one of the authors. However, I would feel the same regardless.)

A lot has been written on the contemporary evolution of American cities – but this book stands out for its readability, graphic clarity, and particularly for its unique interviews with stakeholders discussing the challenges of design and implementation of the urban environment. I especially liked the selection of places to use as case studies – lots of people study the parks system in New York City, but what do you know about CityDeck in Green Bay, Wisconsin? Gamble and Heyda also have the talent to draw out thematic clarity – even as each city teaches us a particular set of lessons, the interrelations and comparisons between the different approaches and results are dramatically evident without explicit statement. Disclosure – this book was assigned to me as part of my coursework, but I would have likely bought it anyway for its relevance to my field of study.

A thoroughly engaging and illuminating read! This book is not only well written but thoroughly researched and presented in a way that is accessible both to the urban planner and the layman. The revitalization of each urban resource that Gamble and Hayda have surveyed attest to the courage and steadfastness of the institutions and citizens that brought them to fruition.

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