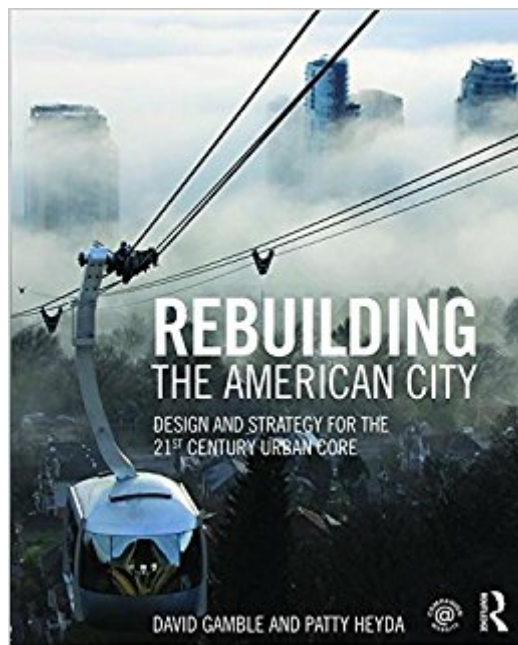




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Rebuilding The American City: Design And Strategy For The 21st Century Urban Core



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 downtowns—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.

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Customer Reviews

"There's plenty to like in *Rebuilding the American City: Design and Strategy for the 21st Century Urban Core*...After a succinct introduction, 15 U.S. case studies show both the public side and the messy underside of rebuilding key parts of cities....This book is the real deal, worth a dozen thinly disguised puff pieces and not to be confused with them." -- Harold Henderson, *Planning Magazine*

"Transforming our cities, building a bridge to a more sustainable and productive way of life, is both essential and hard work. This book provides a highly informative account of how 15 US cities succeeded by leveraging their key assets — anchor institutions, natural features, existing momentum, obsolescent lands and transit investment — to do so." — Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consultants

"Without ignoring issues of equity and displacement, *Rebuilding*

American Cities celebrates the inventiveness of cities as they leverage the assets of the city by breaking down barriers, blurring boundaries, and building connections. In an age when government no longer leads in rebuilding cities, the authors tell the behind-the-scenes story of how public, private, and nonprofit civic entrepreneurs collaborate to make it happen. Rebuilding American Cities is essential reading for those who want to know how urban revitalization really happens from the viewpoint of those who actually make it happen." — Todd Swanstrom, Des Lee Professor, University of Missouri—St. Louis

David Gamble is a Lecturer in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, USA. He is a registered architect and certified urban planner and Principal of Gamble Associates based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The practice focuses on urban revitalization and community development. Patty Heyda is an Assistant Professor of Urban Design and Architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis, USA. She conducts research on the processes underpinning contemporary urbanism and design through drawing, writing and design projects.

This is a very useful book on how cities can work to rebuild the cores of their cities. A number of strategies are discussed: using anchor institutions to revitalize neighborhoods; leveraging development through using waterfronts that were underused beforehand; developing the core by recognizing the benefits of using existing buildings; taking existing deteriorating infrastructure such as railroads and corridors, old canals, shadowed spaces under highways, and so on; looking at regions within a city as the base for redevelopment. For each approach, three case studies are provided. For instance, Buffalo, NY, exemplifies the first tactic. Two major hospitals were in close proximity—Roswell Park Cancer Institute and Buffalo General Hospital. A concerted effort to leverage these institutions by co-locating other related institutions in what came to be called "Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus." Other actors: The University at Buffalo constructed its Medical College in this area; the Gates Vascular Institute, Children's Hospital, a skilled nursing center, Clinical Sciences Center, and the like. The end result was a substantial area focusing on the medical field, etc. Over twenty institutions are now centered here. Bringing coherence to the development was construction of an urban design framework. In the process. The result has been a great deal of investment and employment growth in the area. Other examples: Chattanooga and waterfronts; San Antonio's Pearl District and reuse of buildings; Houston Texas' Buffalo Bayou and using underutilized land; Denver's Union Station and building new districts around old ones. A fascinating

look at directions for redesigning the urban core. There are no magic fixes in trying to revitalize cities, but these perspectives suggest possibilities for the future.

(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.

Very thorough overview and the interviews add such a range of perspectives!

My daughter liked it 5 stars

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 to 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. I've seen 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.

An excellent description of how stakeholders worked together and made cities more livable and enjoyable as well as more sustainable. These improvements were at a level, each stakeholder separately would not have been able to achieve.

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