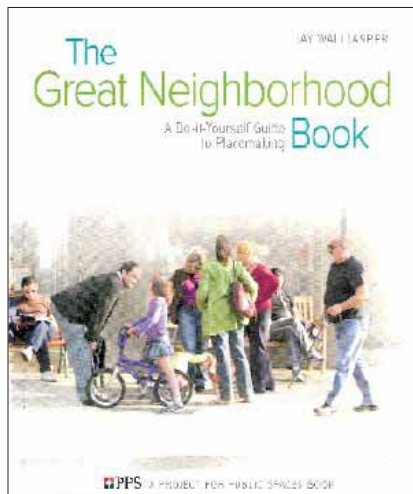


The Great Neighborhood Book: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Placemaking

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NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS
P.O. BOX 189, GABRIOLA ISLAND,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA V0R 1X0;
800-567-6772; www.newsociety.com.
2007. 175 PAGES. \$19.95.

Jay Walljasper's new book, *The Great Neighborhood Book: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Placemaking*, is an inspiring read for any person who cares about his or her city. A collaboration with Project for Public Spaces, the book is a collection of well-researched examples and case studies of citizens, neighborhood groups, developers, and nonprof-



its finding creative ways to enhance the places where people live, work, and play.

Countless organizations publish lists of ten guiding principles of place making. This book identifies 11 such principles in the introduction, then expands on them, collecting 58 stories, each illustrating and exploring its own principle and lesson in some way.

The stories are widely varied, providing examples of place making that relate to planting flowers, starting a farmers' market, tearing down a fence between yards, adding benches, reducing automobile use, cleaning up parks and graffiti, and revitalizing business districts. Any single story in the book contains one or more references to the concept being illustrated, and often a corresponding Web site or a list of additional resources is provided, which can inspire the reader to take action in his or her own city or neighborhood.

The Great Neighborhood Book should encourage developers to work more closely with community groups to enhance their develop-

ments, especially where the private and public realms intersect. Those in the real estate development industry will note that the very first of the 11 principles listed in the book's introduction states "the community is the expert." Anyone who has dealt with NIMBY (not in my backyard) contingents may take exception to this.

Despite questions some would raise about ideas in the book—and any number of the stories or principles are certainly worthy of discussion and debate—the prose is fresh. Each story gives an example of someone seeing his or her city in a new light. If Richard Florida's research on the "creative class" asks how cities are going to attract talented people, Walljasper turns the question on its head, asking what people are going to do to sustain or improve their city once they arrive.

For each success covered in *The Great Neighborhood Book*, undoubtedly there are many failures, and Walljasper does not shy away from the fact that caring for one's neighborhood is difficult and sometimes lonely work. But that is the essence of the book: people who care enough to do something—anything—to improve their city or neighborhood should simply make the effort. Sometimes, as the last example in the book will attest, the best approach is to do nothing except watch the world go by—get to know the neighborhood by simply sitting and observing its activity, perhaps from the perspective of a sidewalk café or bar. Professionals in the development industry, neighborhood activists, and the general public should find in *The Great Neighborhood Book* ideas that can be employed in any neighborhood.

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The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream

CHRISTOPHER B. LEINBERGER
ISLAND PRESS
1718 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW,
SUITE 300, WASHINGTON, DC 20009;
www.islandpress.org.
2007. 200 PAGES. \$29.95.

It has been widely chronicled that sprawl can be detrimental to the environment and to the health, mobility, and social interaction of people. Less chronicled, however, are solutions to sprawl that are market driven rather than purely theoretical. Strong demand for suburban environments persists, so part of addressing the problem of sprawl is to bolster the market that counteracts the demand for it. In the latest of his long list of notable writings and accomplishments, author Christopher B. Leinberger introduces in *The Option of Urbanism* a new framework within which to tackle the question of sprawl and imagine the future.

Through real-life examples and historical analysis, Leinberger explains how and why the United States moved to a model of drivable suburbanism from the underpinnings of walkable urbanism, and how and why the pendulum is swinging back toward the walkable model. Recounting General Motors' Futurama exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City to set forth the premise that transportation drives development, Leinberger explains why progressive development that encourages walkability is gaining market acceptance and how it can be expanded.

However, no development pattern is perfect, as Leinberger points out in his chapter "Unintended Consequences of Walkable Urbanism." Among these consequences are the lack of affordable housing, the problem of what happens to the leftover large-lot single-family homes on the fringe, and the potential erosion of character as national chains replace local mom-