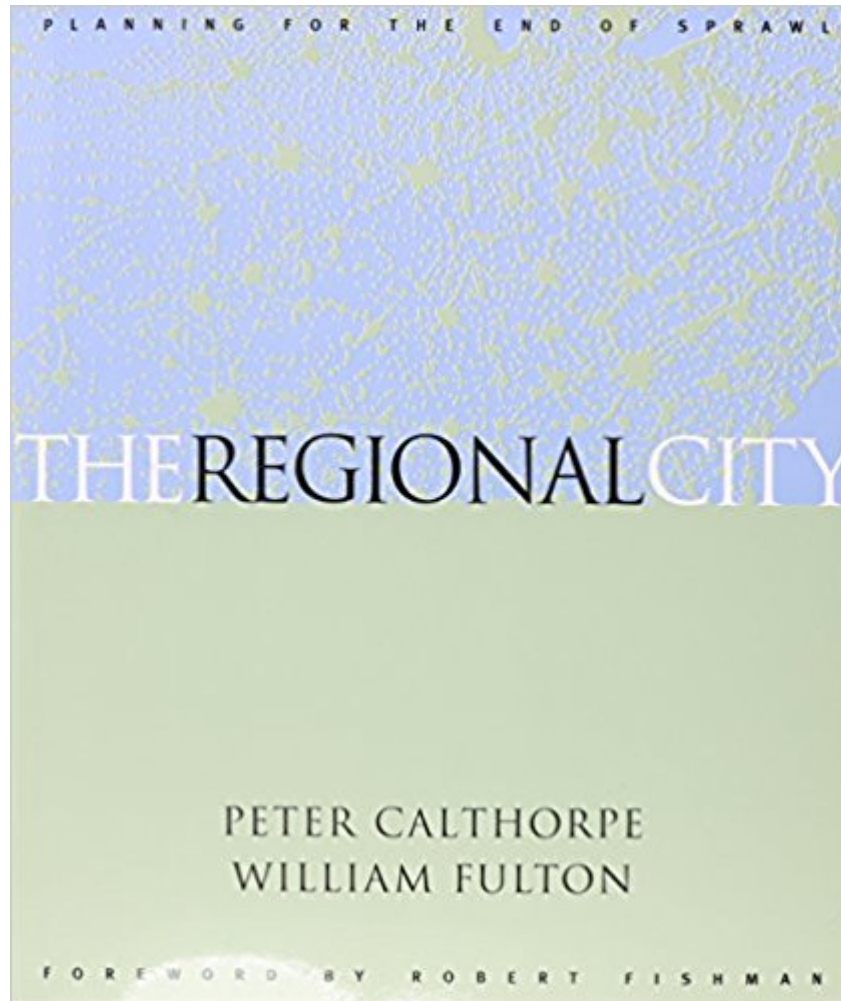




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# The Regional City



## Synopsis

Most Americans today do not live in discrete cities and towns, but rather in an aggregation of cities and suburbs that forms one basic economic, multi-cultural, environmental and civic entity. These "regional cities" have the potential to significantly improve the quality of our lives--to provide interconnected and diverse economic centers, transportation choices, and a variety of human-scale communities. In *The Regional City*, two of the most innovative thinkers in the field of land use planning and design offer a detailed look at this new metropolitan form and explain how regional-scale planning and design can help direct growth wisely and reverse current trends in land use. The authors: discuss the nature and underpinnings of this new metropolitan form present their view of the policies and physical design principles required for metropolitan areas to transform themselves into regional cities document the combination of physical design and social and economic policies that are being used across the country consider the main factors that are shaping metropolitan regions today, including the maturation of sprawling suburbs and the renewal of urban neighborhoods Featuring full-color graphics and in-depth case studies, *The Regional City* offers a thorough examination of the concept of regional planning along with examples of successful initiatives from around the country. It will be must reading for planners, architects, landscape architects, local officials, real estate developers, community development professionals, and for students in architecture, urban planning, and policy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Readers interested in environmental issues and urban development should hungrily consume Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton's innovative contribution, *The Regional City: Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Authors of *The Next American Metropolis* and *The Reluctant Metropolis*, respectively, Calthorpe and Fulton argue that the design of our current metropolitan regions—inner cities surrounded by rings of isolated suburbs filled with malls and office parks—has placed our remaining land at considerable risk and exacerbates the divide between the rich and the poor. According to the authors, these "edge cities" have sprawled beyond human scale, and they suggest a regional model that they claim will offer a cleaner, more socially equitable U.S. for the 21st century.

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What does a good place to live in America look like? Is it a teeming city like New York, a stylish designer community like Seaside, FL, or an innovative if imperfect mid-sized city like Portland, OR? Our cities, warts and all, are generating more interest than has been seen in decades. In *The Regional City*, Calthorpe, a leader in the New Urbanism movement, and Fulton (The Reluctant Metropolis), president of Solimar Research Corp., take a more systemic approach to urban design than has been typical of New Urbanism, best known for creating planned communities. The authors are adamant that regional cooperation and coordination is essential to sustaining healthy cities and addressing complex urban problems. Modern cities are actually linked metropolitan regions—concentric rings of often decaying inner cities, older suburbs, new suburbs, and once autonomous towns that have become part of the metropolis. Through regional planning, the links can be strengthened to create a coherent city with a sense of place. Written in accessible style, *The Regional City* outlines a framework for planning today's cities. Marshall criticizes New Urbanism for being more about style than substance, but he acknowledges that the more it recognizes the hard truths of regional planning, the more it can become a positive force. A journalist by trade, Marshall writes with wit, reason, and style, effectively driving home his well-researched premise that cities exist and evolve based on transportation systems, the building of wealth, and government guidance or misguidance. He offers few solutions to current urban problems, setting his sights on enlightening the reader about why and how cities evolve. Marshall cites the human craving for simple solutions to complex problems and makes it clear that when people come together to plan a regional city consciously, as they have in Portland, OR, difficult choices must be made. *The Regional City* is essential for academic collections supporting programs in urban planning, public administration, or architecture. *How Cities Work* is very strongly recommended for both academic and public libraries as an excellent resource on the history and future of American cities. Drew Harrington, Pacific Univ.,

It is a real bargain that the book is totally new. While the cover is flipped at a corner, it is still worthy of \$3.99.

This is yet another book on a New Urbanist idea. This one describes the idea of transit oriented communities. These are relatively dense planned communities that try to maintain what is seen as the essentials of small community life. The density and distribution of these communities make them amenable to public transport. However more emphasis is placed on the development of community. Shopping facilities are centralized and made accessible to pedestrians. Public buildings and public space like squares are made central to the life of the community. The public buildings are given distinguished architecture to show their importance to the community. The public park or square is placed at the hub of planned pedestrian traffic to provide a place for unplanned meetings and interactions. As it is this sort of community will probably work. The idea of the public square at a transportation crossroads as a means to create interaction is straight out of Bill Hillier's seminal work 'Space is the machine.' With proper attention to the principles presented by Hillier, there is no reason why a community designed in the way advocated here cannot produce the types of interactions advocated within this book. However the book does not go far enough to truly identify what these principles are or even to state clearly and directly what basic principles are guiding the plans that it advocates. It would be possible to create developments that follow the plans described here that would work against the outcomes that it is advocating. Hillier's book, in its analysis of some modern housing estates based on similar goals, demonstrates this. Yet there is something fundamentally wrong with this book. It is a basic statement of architectural determinism. Traditional suburbs are blamed for all problems in society from environmental pollution to school shootings and possibly even to asteroid impacts causing mass extinctions. There seems to be nothing wrong in society that is not the fault of suburbs and that cannot be fixed by these pedestrian-based communities. The author acknowledges that the autonomy and privacy provided by the suburban form is attractive to many. He even states that his suggested community form is not antithetical to it. However following that one statement the remainder of the book is a jeremiad against suburban life. Privacy and autonomy references are replaced with descriptions of isolation and alienation. The book would be more convincing if it remained an advocacy for its desired form. There is no doubt that this form if designed properly can foster the close community life that many people find very attractive. However not all people are attracted to this sort of life. Many people prefer the social

autonomy that is provided to them in suburbs. With modern communication mechanisms like the telephone, Email, automobile etc, they can maintain multiple social networks each with the social distance that they find comfortable. They are not forced to interact with a neighbor that they do not care for simply because his residence is nearby. All in all this is a good book for its purpose. The unfortunate blathering about the shortcomings of suburbs distracts from its main purpose and weakens its argument. However many will find the small community life presented here very attractive. It is worth reading despite these handicaps.

Pretty good book

There is a very informative review by Suzannah Lessard in the February 18th issue of the New York Times Book Review. Not only does she provide interesting background to the issues surrounding urban growth in America, she also defines what these issues mean to us today, and the contribution this book makes to our understanding of the built world around us.

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