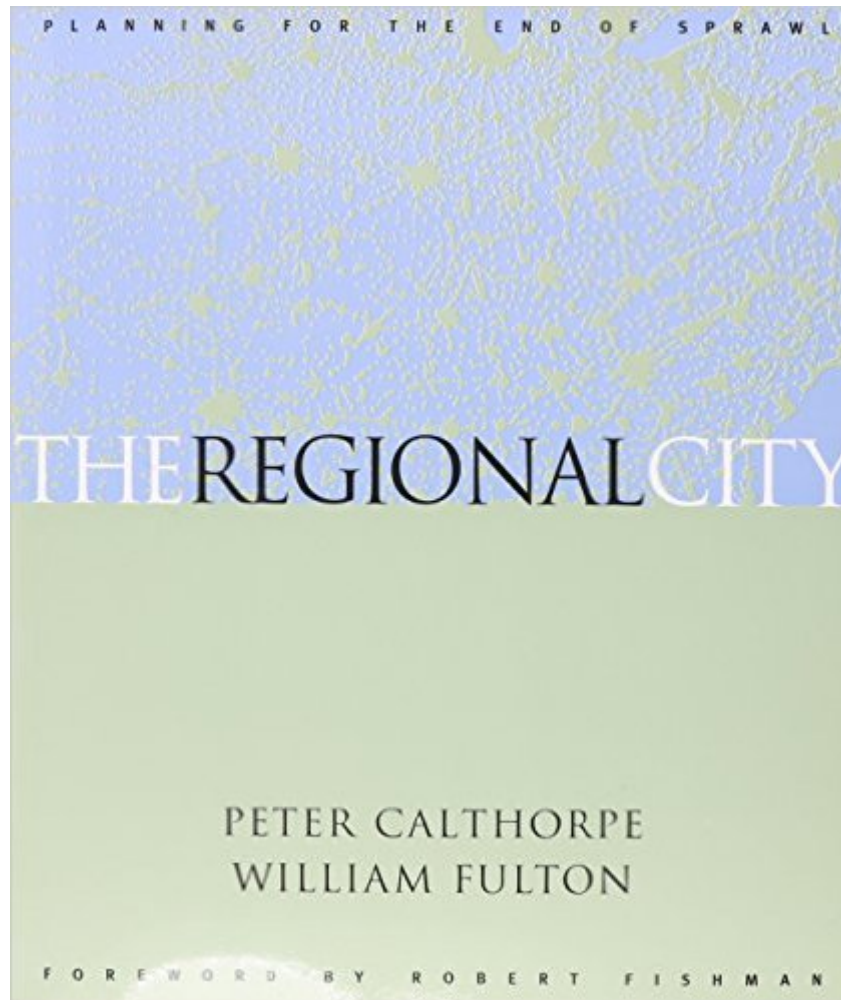


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# The Regional City



## 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

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.

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.

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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