

## Land Use, Zoning, and the Politics of Land Use

### *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*

Margaret Kohn. Routledge, New York, 2004. 256 pages. \$85, \$22.95 (paperback).



Truly public spaces are government owned, openly accessible, and must foster communication among persons. These spaces are a dying breed, as privately owned public spaces, such as shopping malls, business improvement districts (BIDs), and simulated old-town centers, have become increasingly ubiquitous in America. Drawing on political theory and legal precedent, Kohn presents a passionate defense for spaces where diverse viewpoints are voiced, advocating public spaces that support the values of democracy, inclusion, and free speech.

Kohn explains that owners of privatized public spaces can restrict or exclude political activists, homeless people, or groups of teenagers from entering these spaces because they are not legally obliged to allow universal entry. She argues that profit-seeking businesses often remove the untidy “other” from their customers’ view. This exclusion reinforces segregation and undermines free speech and political dissent. She bemoans the loss of a truly public realm where strangers come in contact with individuals of different backgrounds and viewpoints, contending that the rules and regulations governing privately owned public spaces essentially handpick communities of like-minded people.

Kohn should be commended for grounding these theoretical concerns in real-life contexts. Her colorful discussions vary widely in scope, from buffer zones surrounding abortion clinics to Celebration, a New Urbanist community in Florida, demonstrating that these issues cannot be removed from the everyday spaces occupied by everyday people. Chapter 1 introduces the debates covered throughout the monograph, and the two subsequent chapters present case studies from diverse politico-economic contexts. Beginning with an account of the early 20th century free speech protests of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), she then describes various legal decisions regarding the public forum doctrine. Chapter 4 relates how privatized shopping malls and BIDs have replaced the traditional downtown business district, and the next chapter discusses the attempts by religious groups to form ecclesiastical or “perfectionist” zones in the United States. The author finds that gated communities and homeowner associations are often successful because patrons desire a sense of community, but these privatized zones often contribute to exclusivity and conformity. In chapter 7, Kohn considers the high-profile case of Battery Park City, concluding that the privately owned project in downtown New York City separates areas of privilege from areas of decline. Chapter 8 employs various theoretical perspectives to discuss the exclusion of the homeless, while chapter 9 summarizes the book’s main arguments. Kohn also includes an Afterword, which provides an interesting but slightly unconnected look at the role of public space in the context of cyberspace.

*Brave New Neighborhoods* was funded through a research grant by the American Council of Learned Societies and reflects some of

Kohn’s longer-term concerns. The book, inspired by an earlier article by the author, provides a very timely look at one of today’s critical planning issues. Several recent planning and geography titles have addressed these themes of privatization and exclusion, but Kohn makes a commendable attempt to chronicle the most relevant perspectives. A major accomplishment of *Brave New Neighborhoods* is Kohn’s success in addressing these issues through a rigorous legal, political, and normative framework, building on recent works that employ strictly legal or political analyses.

*Brave New Neighborhoods* moves beyond the realm of the high-profile theme park projects to those fundamental everyday spaces—our playgrounds, streets, and sidewalks. Indeed, Kohn’s most original contribution is her depiction of the IWW’s fight for access to those very sites of daily activity and contested turf. The book unfortunately fails to address the elevated fear levels and subsequent desires for increased public security since September 11, 2001; she includes only two passing mentions. Related is the author’s failure to delve deeper into the gender or racial critique of privatized public space. She would have strengthened the analysis by moving beyond the conceptual level of “excluded people” to a more nuanced look at who is being excluded, and for what reasons. Additionally, Kohn assumes an idealized model of the openly accessible public space; historically excluded citizens might question this supposition.

This book is an important addition to the literature on privatized public spaces. Its extremely accessible nature should attract municipal legislators, planning practitioners, and ordinary citizens to this critical analysis. Appropriate for an introductory urban theory class or a graduate planning seminar, *Brave New Neighborhoods* draws ire while forcing students to look more critically at the urban spaces that surround them.

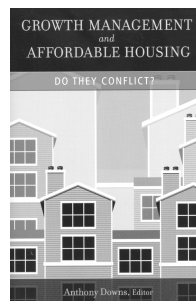
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## Housing

### *Growth Management and Affordable Housing: Do They Conflict?*

Anthony Downs, editor. Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2004. 288 pages. \$52.95, \$22.95 (paperback).



Does growth management aid or thwart the provision of affordable housing? To answer this question, a more detailed definition of growth management and affordable housing is required. Just as important is distinguishing growth management from growth control and planning theory from reality. Growth control limits land and development opportunities, leading to a worsening of affordability problems. Determining

## Reviews

### From the Review Editors

To recognize reviews of exceptional quality, the review editors asked Phil Berke from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Alex Schwartz at the New School in New York, both *JAPA* editorial board members, to evaluate the nearly 70 reviews published in Volume 71. They used the following criteria:

1. Relevance to *JAPA* audience (appropriateness for teaching and practice).
2. Clarity of description of main themes/thesis.
3. Assessment of structure and content (major parts and chapters).
4. Assessment of organization and presentation of information (clarity of table of contents, usefulness of glossary, effectiveness of illustrations).
5. Intellectual rigor in analysis.
6. Lack of personal bias.
7. Quality of writing (clarity, style, wit).
8. Originality, insightfulness, creativity.

In addition to excelling according to these criteria, the best reviews stood out because they had special qualities of style or were particularly incisive. The following four reviews were selected as the most outstanding for Volume 71:

Eugenie Birch, review of *Downtown America: A History of the Place and People Who Made It*, Spring 2005, pp. 228–229

Jeremy Nemeth, review of *Land Use, Zoning, and the Politics of Land Use*, Summer 2005, p. 341

Richard Schmoyer, review of *Amsterdam Human Capital*, Winter 2005, p. 101

Emily Talen, review of *Toward the Livable City*, Spring 2005, pp. 223–224

We congratulate these reviewers for their fine contributions to *JAPA* and thank Phil Berke and Alex Schwartz for their service.

Because this issue focuses on transportation planning, we are including an insightful essay by Martin Wachs on influential transportation planning books. We also urge readers to see the many reviews of books related to transportation in the last several issues of *JAPA*.

Tom Sanchez

## Special Section on Transportation

### REVIEW ESSAY

#### Reading About Riding: Observations on 50 Years of Transportation Books

I recently retired from the faculty at the University of California at Berkeley nearly 39 years after teaching my first university course in transportation planning and policy, and have taken a position in transportation policy research with a think tank. Moving to a smaller office and a smaller home led me to self-consciously set about the task of dispersing the large library of books, journals, and ephemera I had gradually accumulated. Behaving as if my dusty, disorganized collection were the essence of my knowledge or a principal measure of the value of decades of work, I reluctantly and sometimes emotionally dispatched most of my holdings to university libraries that had served me well. Younger generations, I hoped, might make good use of them. Other materials seemed so outmoded and faded that they logically landed in the recycling bin. Why had I held onto so many documents whose relevance had faded with the years? Inevitably my heart demanded that I retain the books I most treasured: a core collection of works written by mentors, friends, and colleagues, plus those that had most influenced my thinking about my chosen field of work. While I retained some books and parted with the majority based more on emotions than rationality, the process led me to ask whether I could identify the most important books in transportation planning and policy: Which must I keep because they defined the core ideas in the field and stimulated my thinking, influenced my writing, and inspired my teaching?

Some academic fields are known by their “canons.” Many disciplines possess great books that illuminate their cultures more than bound knowledge. But while I can easily list of my favorite transportation planning books, the field lacks an identifying set of formative works. Perhaps more interesting, while sorting and packing up my library, I have gradually realized that the impossibility of identifying a small set of defining works can be as fundamental a characteristic of some fields as are core bibliographies in others. Transportation planning is not a discipline with well-defined topics and modes of inquiry. Rather, it is an area of application, in which intellectual inquiry in many disciplines provides support for action in the world of practice. Many advances over the decades have come from borrowing thought processes from other fields and applying them to planning or policymaking. The field draws from civil engineering, politics, public health, sociology, economics, and others. Innovation is the result of mixing and matching to meet needs in the real world. To make a list of required readings in transportation planning would inappropriately restrict a field that is inherently an amalgam.

Transportation systems exist to facilitate and enable other human activities, from work and education to recreation and health care. When the transport system is functioning well, it should be taken for granted and barely noticed. There is no single transportation mission and no single transportation problem. When the public and politicians focus on transportation, it is because of problems as mundane as potholes, as common and complex as traffic congestion, or as seemingly intractable as threats to personal security while