

American Urbanist

How William H. Whyte's
Unconventional Wisdom
Reshaped Public Life

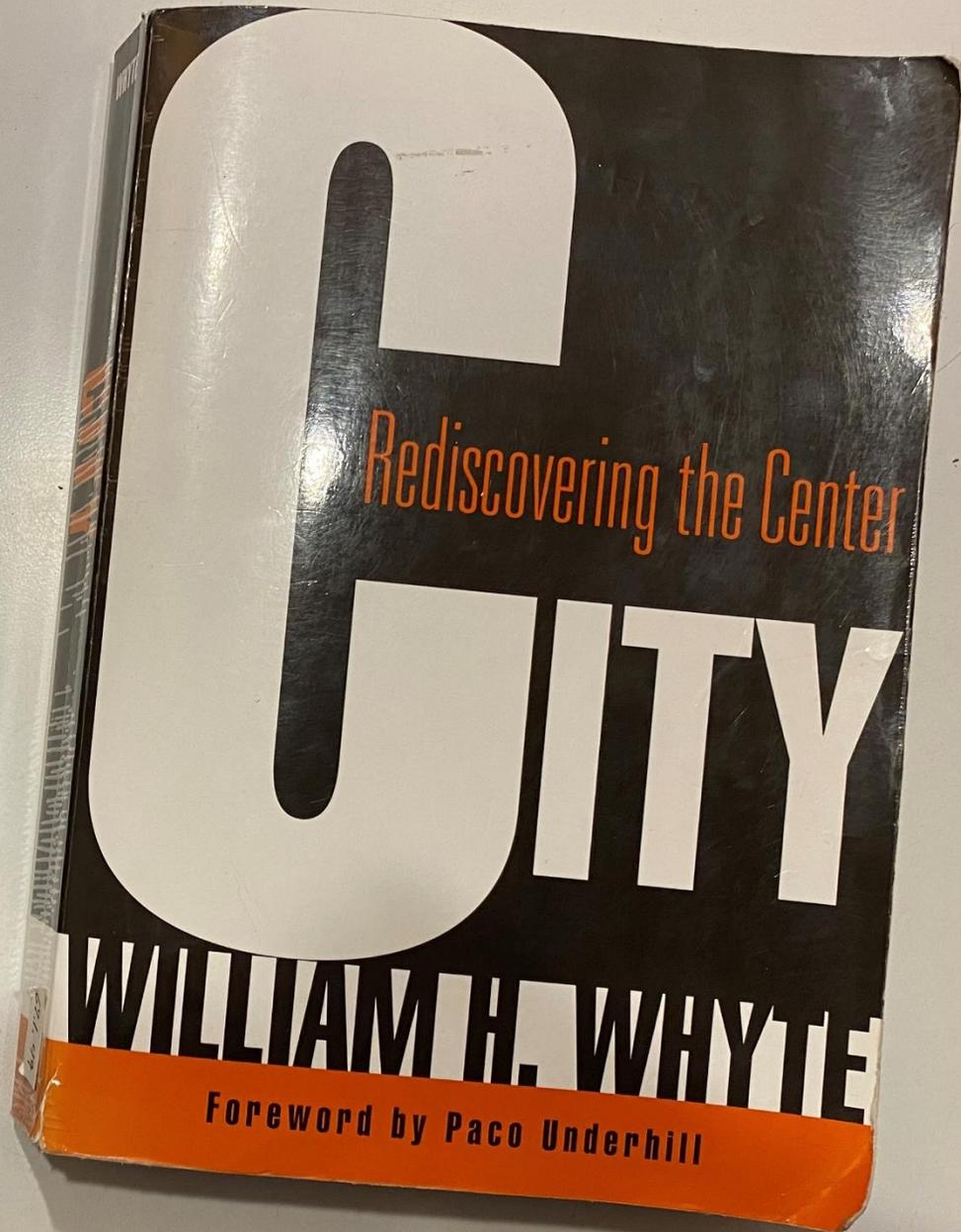
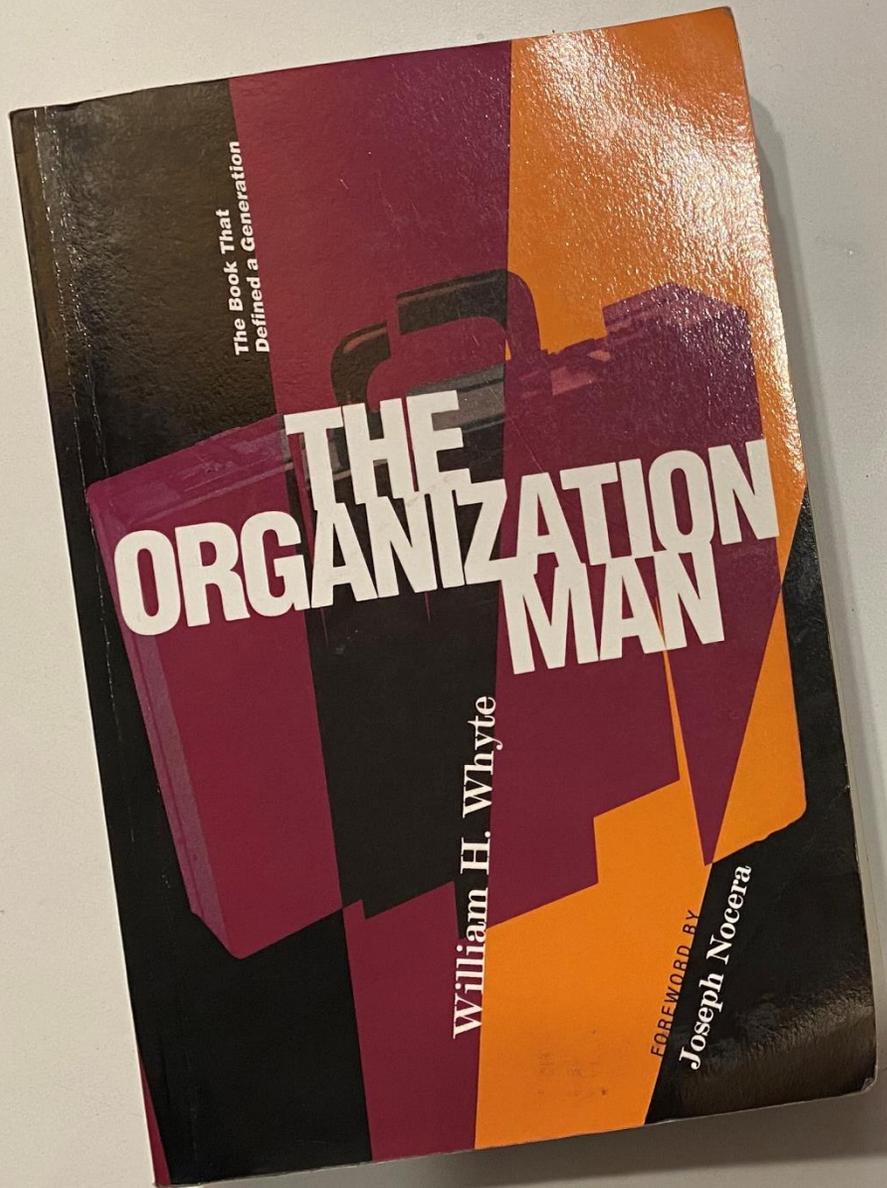
Richard K. Rein

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After a reporting career that included stops at *Time Magazine* and *People*, **RICHARD K. REIN** launched a nationally acclaimed weekly newspaper, *U.S. 1*, that helped the Princeton–Route 1 corridor become more than just another “edge city.” Rein now serves on the council of Princeton Future, a non-profit that promotes sustainable urbanism in his hometown.

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THE

ORGANIZATION

MAN

by **William H. Whyte Jr.**

The clash between the individualistic beliefs he is supposed
to follow and the collective life he actually
lives—and his search for a faith to bridge the gap.



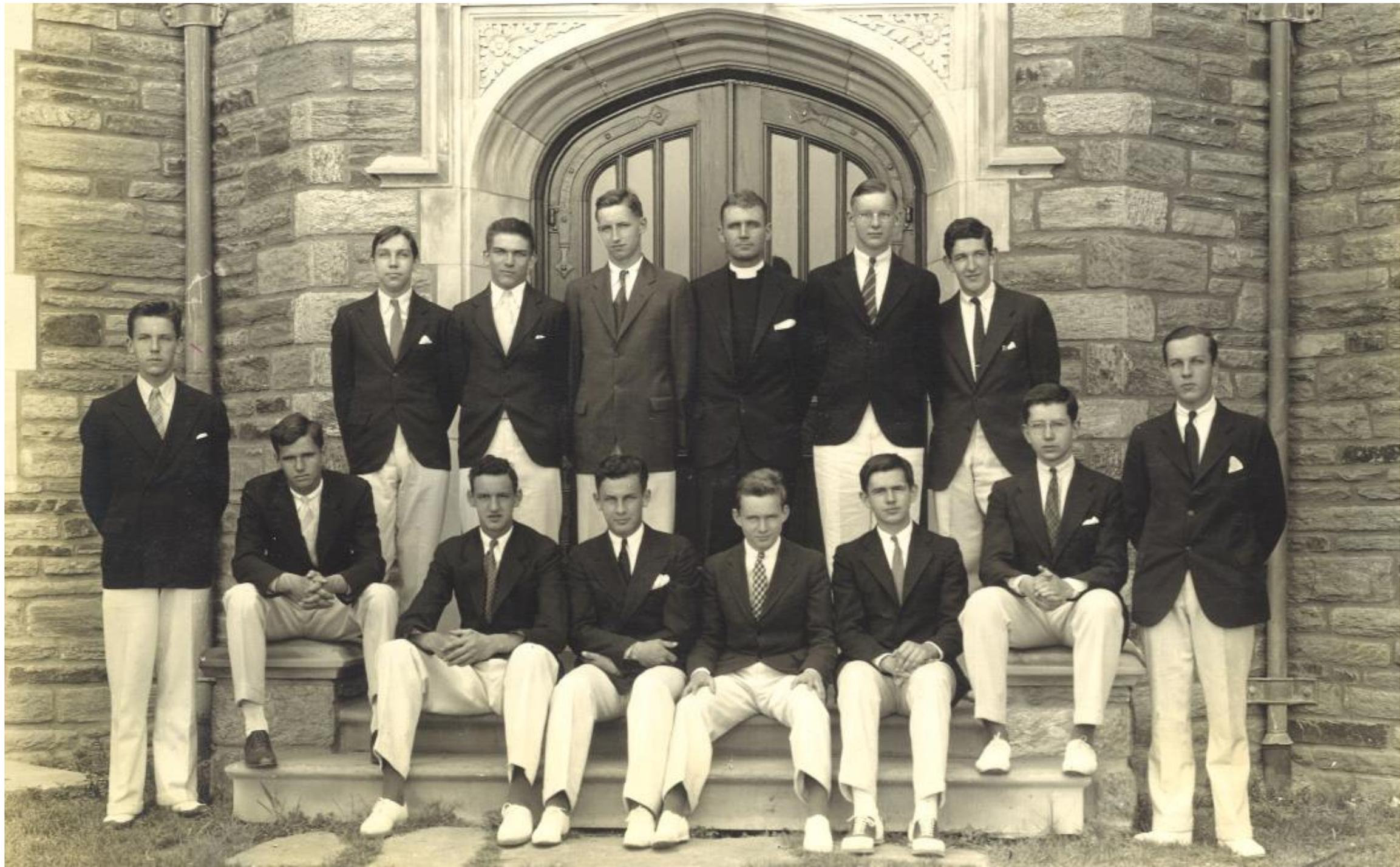
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ever since the publication in 1952 of *Is Anybody Listening?* William H. Whyte, Jr., has been recognized as one of the leading figures in the analysis of contemporary American culture. As Assistant Managing Editor of *Fortune*, he has been engaged in a continuing exploration of American organization life. This book, on which he spent three years of original research and study, is his attempt to trace the long-range shift this life is bringing about in Americans' personal values.

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Mr. Whyte was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was educated at Princeton (Class of '39) and in the U. S. Marine Corps at Guadalcanal.







‘Whyte is an unusually brilliant boy whose temperament is such that he can scarcely be classified in the ordinary way.’







The
Man
in
the
Gray
Flannel
Suit

a novel by

Sloan
Wilson



Groupthink

‘A rationalized conformity—
an open, articulate philosophy
which holds that group values
are not only expedient
but right and good as well.’

Opinion Meter

By C. F. ROCKEY

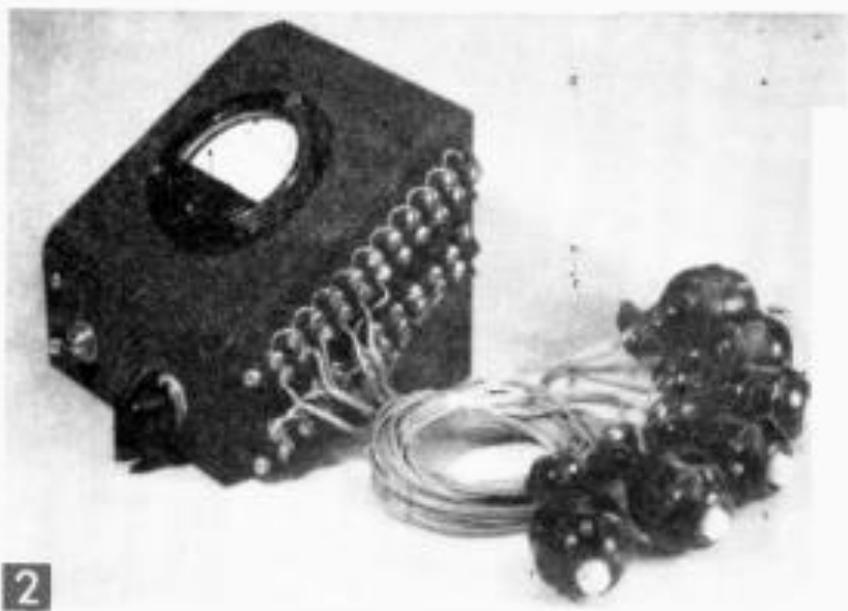


in favor or against, without fear of offending a friend, a co-worker, or a boss.

We suggest that you build a Thinkometer and try it at a club meeting, or in a class discussion. You may find that it gives you a much more accurate reflection of what people think about controversial issues. Someday perhaps, legislatures may vote electronically, with equipment much like the Thinkometer.

Construction can be completed in an evening if you use the Premier metal case (Fig. 2). It comes pre-drilled with a 2-in. hole that needs only a little filing to fit the body of the meter. Drill $\frac{3}{16}$ -in. holes for mounting the meter and outside terminal strips, using these parts themselves as drilling templates.

Now take two of the five-point tie strips and make a 5-rung ladder, using 10,000-ohm resistors as each rung (Fig. 3). Solder each resistor



2

The Organization Man

“While industry does not ignore the brilliant but erratic genius, in general it prefers its men to have ‘normal’ personalities.”

From industry trade journal, Personnel, 1953





‘If another woman would not
be out of place, might I suggest
that a substitute be
Mrs. Robert Jacobs—
Jane Jacobs on our masthead.’

Douglas Haskell

THE EXPLODING METROPOLIS

THE EDITORS
OF FORTUNE

A STUDY OF THE ASSAULT ON URBANISM
AND HOW OUR CITIES CAN RESIST IT

A STUDY OF THE ASSAULT ON URBANISM
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the hands of state highway engineers, and though they are supposed to hold public hearings, there is no provision that they must take any heed of what people say in the hearings. New rights-of-way, for example, will eat up a million acres of land. Yet the highway engineers are likely to favor precisely the land that planners would most like to keep untouched—parkland in the built-up areas, flat or gently rolling land in the country.

Santa Clara County is again a case in point. No sooner had the agricultural zoning been put through than the local people found that the state highway engineers were planning to lay a new highway right in the middle of the narrow floor in the southern part of the county. The county people pleaded with the highway department to put the route on the edge of the foothills; this would add a little more mileage to the route but it would save the valley for both agriculture and amenity's sake, and it would also make for a much more scenic route. The highway engineers are thinking it over.

But perhaps the most important feature of the new highway program will be the location of the interchanges, for these will be to the community of the future what river junctions and railroad division points were in the past. The interchanges become the node of new developments, and whatever ideas planners may have had for the area, the pressure of land prices can be an almost irresistible force for hit-or-miss development.

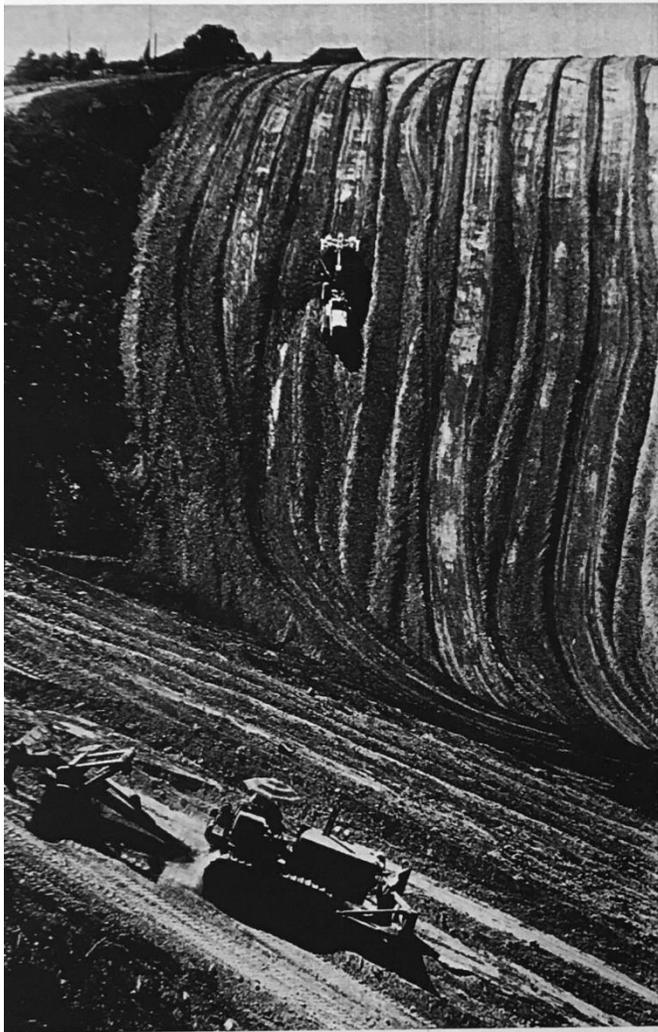
But there can be coordination between the engineers and city planners, and if there is, the highway program will be a positive force for good land use. Through "excess condemnation," rights-of-way can be made broad enough to conserve large areas of open space. The spacing of interchanges can also help preserve open space. At the very least the highway program has provided a deadline. The program is going through whether the communities like it or not; there will be no chance of controlling it unless they get together in an effective program to secure a pattern of open space and orderly development.

Enlightened opportunism

What should the program be? Ironically, for the fundamentals of a workable plan, the best guide is not what is being done now but what was done. For there have been open-space programs in the past—brilliant ones—and unique as each may have been, together they provide several valuable lessons.

• *New York's Central Park.* In 1844, William Cullen Bryant took a walk over the hilly countryside north of the city. It struck him that a large tract should be bought for a "central reservation" while land was still cheap, for eventually it would be surrounded by the growing city. He started to agitate for it. Ridiculous, said the *Journal of Commerce*: there is plenty of countryside for people to go out and see, so why pay for it? But the populace liked the idea; the politicians declared for it, and in 1856 it became a reality.

continued page 194

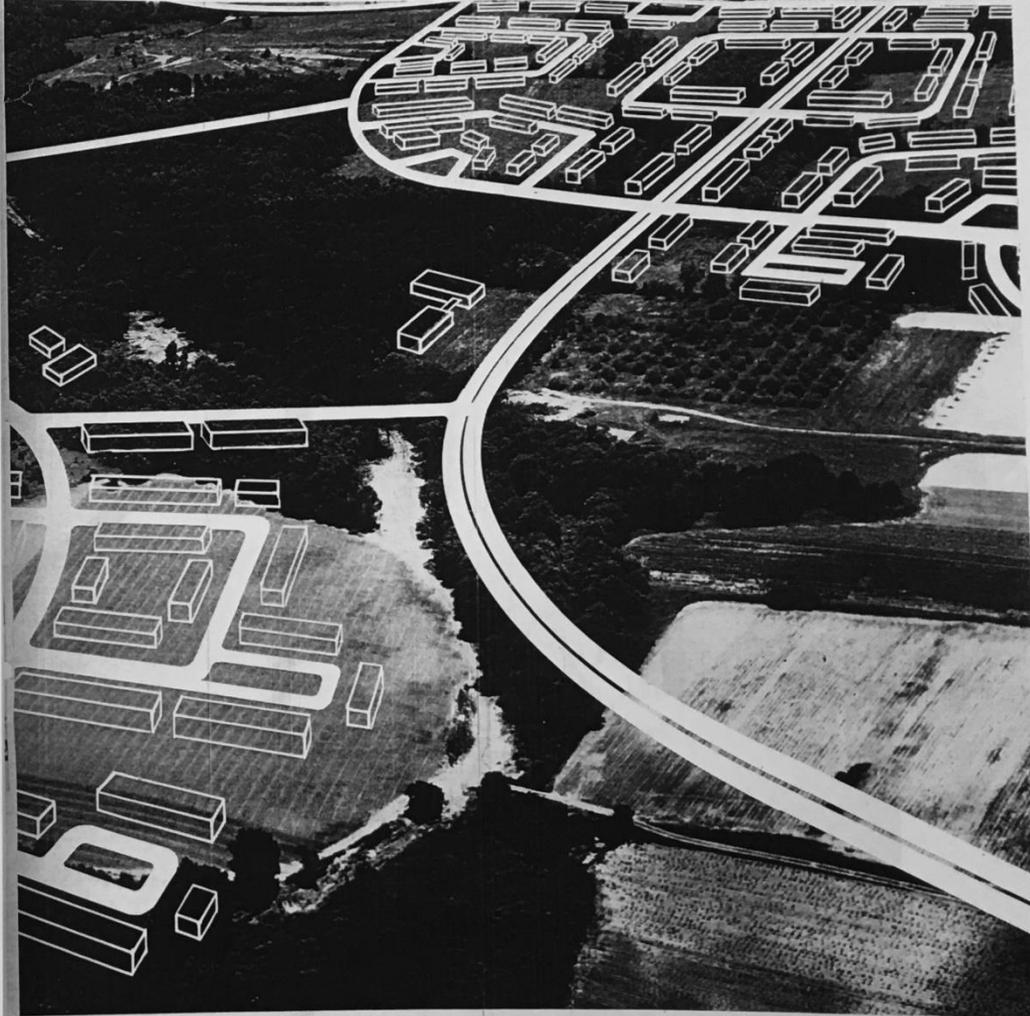


BULLDOZING, here slicing away at hills in Los Angeles, is consuming U.S. scenery at growing rate.

In the week ahead, if the weather happens to be good, another 10,000 acres will go under scrapers.



CLUSTERS of houses, here shown in planners' design for neighborhood being built in Philadelphia,



show one way to save space and scenery. Instead of covering whole area with identical plots, this plan

groups housing, thus providing system of parks and greenways. Being within the city limits, these will

be row houses but the basic idea is just as applicable to one-family subdivisions out in suburbia.

A PLAN TO SAVE VANISHING

An expert observer tells how to protect our open spaces and halt the land-killing

TAKE a last look. Some summer's morning drive past the golf club on the edge of town, turn off onto a back road and go for a short trip through the open countryside. Look well at the meadows, the wooded draws, the stands of pine, the creeks and streams, and fix them in your memory. If the American standard of living goes up another notch, this is about the last chance you will have.

Go back toward the city five or 10 miles. Here, in what was pleasant countryside only a year ago, is the sight of what is to come. No more sweep of green—across the hills are splattered scores of random subdivisions, each laid out in the same dreary asphalt curves. Gone are the streams, brooks, woods and forests that the subdivisions' signs talked about. The streams are largely buried in concrete culverts.

Where one flows briefly through a patch of weeds and tin cans it is fetid with the ooze of septic tanks.

A row of stumps marks the place where sycamores used to shade the road and if a stand of maple or walnut still exists the men with power saws will soon be at it. Here and there a farm remains, but the "For Sale" signs are up and now even the golf course is to be chopped into

U.S. COUNTRYSIDE

disease of urban sprawl

by WILLIAM H. WHYTE JR.

lots. What open space remains you can no longer see. To the eye it is all a jumble, an endless succession of driving ranges, open-air theaters, billboards, neon signs, frozen custard spas, TV aeriels and pink plaster flamingos.

This is only a foretaste of the future. The mess we have made so far has been achieved with a population reaching 175 million. By 1970 there will be 35 million more Americans.

Most of the housing to take care of the increase will be built on the edges of our metropolitan areas. And long before that the pattern will have been set. The new federal highway program, just now getting into gear, will visibly accelerate the exploitation of outlying areas. With each new interchange will come a speculative land rush the like of which few communities are prepared to resist. If any open

THE AUTHOR

William H. Whyte Jr. edited the book *The Exploding Metropolis* which dealt with the rapid growth of U.S. cities. He previously wrote the 1957 best-seller about American corporation life, *The Organization Man*. For the past year Whyte has been touring the country on leave of absence from FORTUNE, where he is assistant managing editor, analyzing and seeking solutions to the problem of urban sprawl as it encroaches on the U.S. countryside. A fuller and more technical version of this article, which resulted from his research, will be available this fall from the Urban Land Institute of Washington, D.C.

CONTINUED

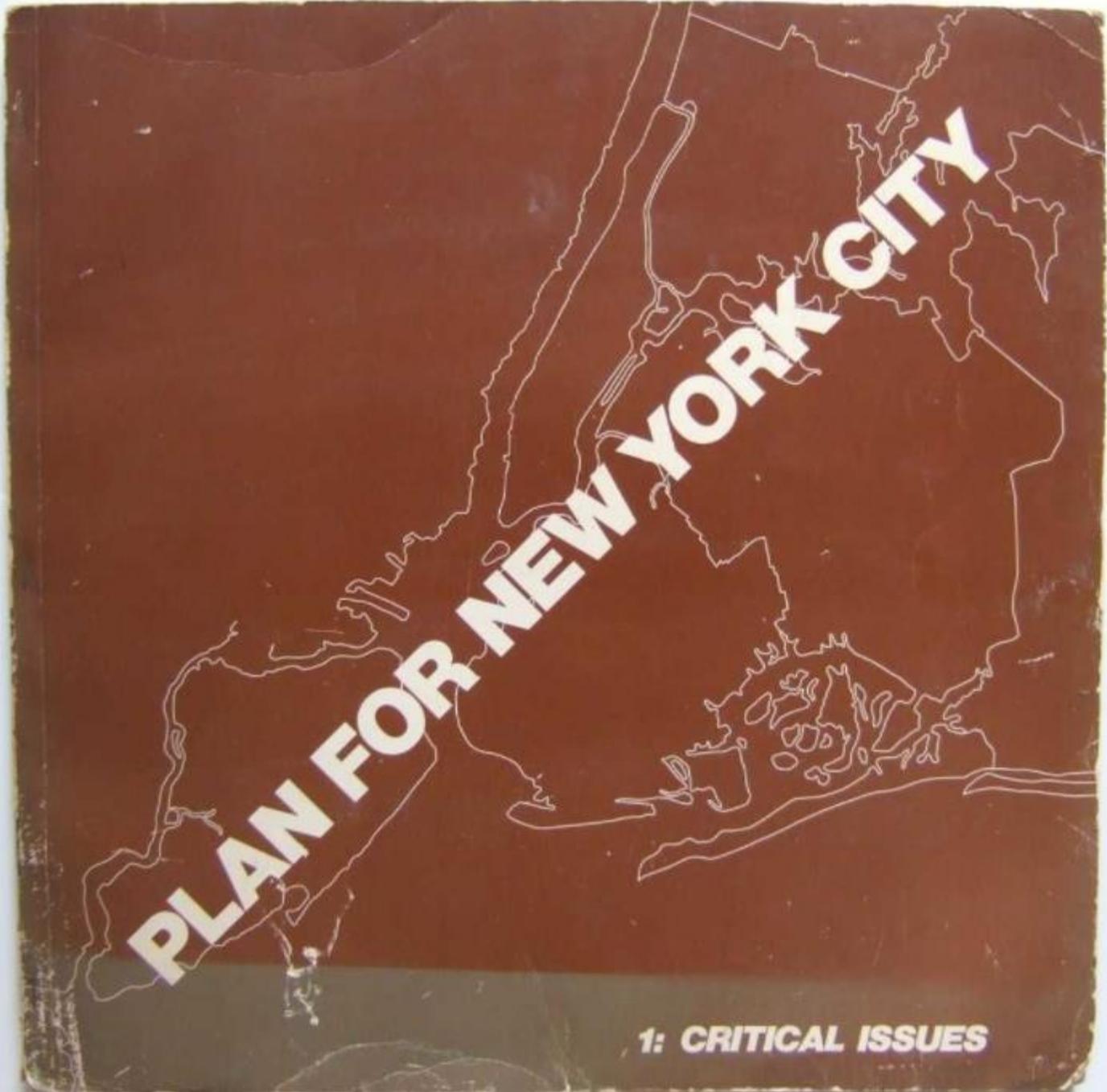
The Last Landscape

William H. Whyte

Author of *THE ORGANIZATION MAN*

How our cities and suburbs can be better places to
live in — because more people will be living in them





PLAN FOR NEW YORK CITY

1: CRITICAL ISSUES

The 1960s - The Protest Era

*‘Don’t write off the revolution
because it is being made
by men in business suits.’*

Ada Louise Huxtable

*Every day two million people pour
into this partially dysfunctional,
potentially lethal environment.*

*Can the NYC Planning Department
save the day?*



Experts are full of ideas.

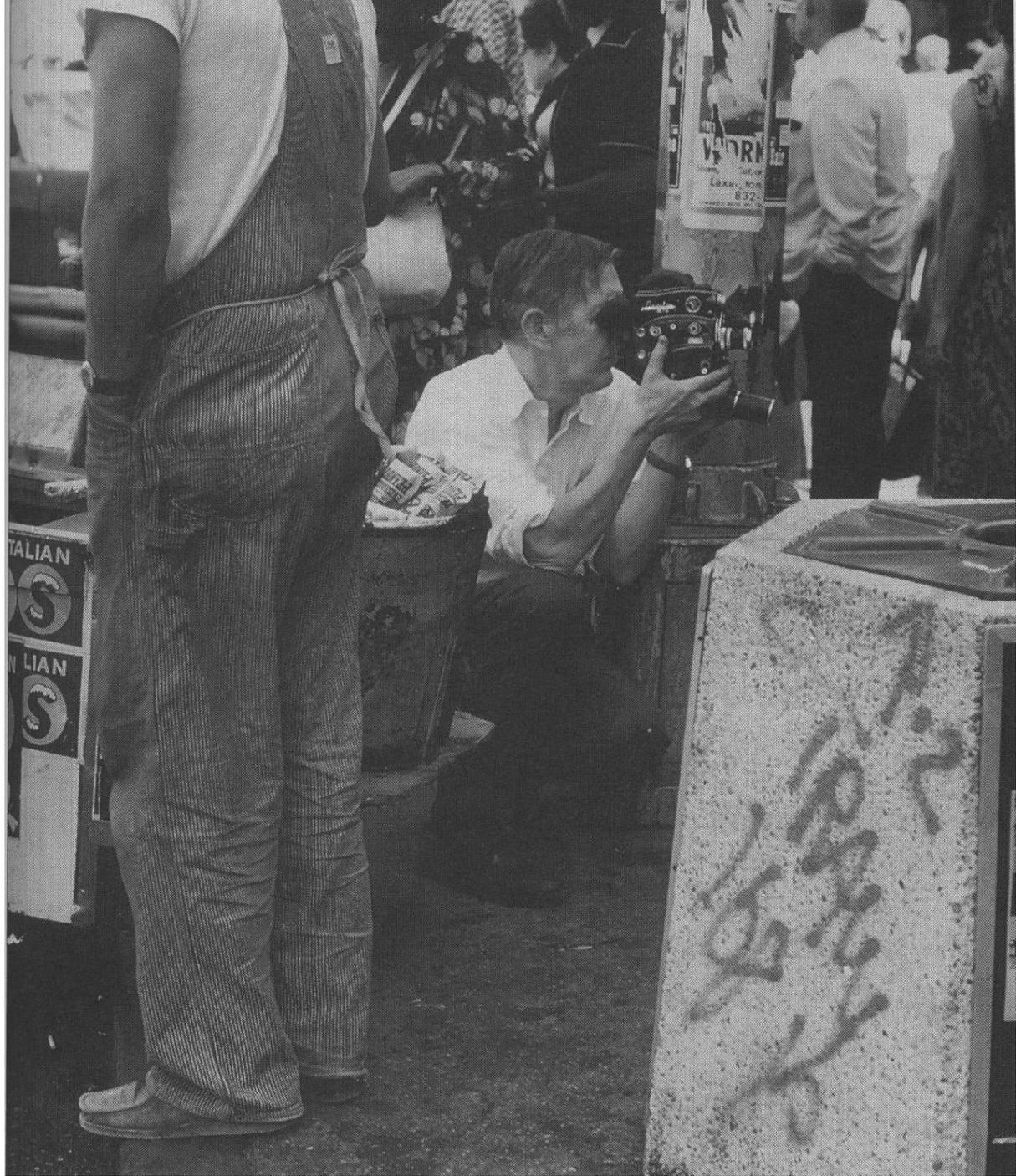
Residents sometimes

have better ones.



Nothing I have done demonstrates the lessons I learned on Guadalcanal as much as the Street Life Project, initiated in New York City in 1970.





Manhattan



THIS MAN HAS BEEN SPYING ON US

His conclusion: We live in the greatest city in the world...and thanks to his research, it's going to get better.

See Page 2 **OVER**

JUN 2021



The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces



William H. Whyte

Project for Public Spaces

*Whyte presents an underlying
premise about what makes some
public spaces work,
and some not work.*

But first he shows his work.

*Whyte's film on plazas
does not end at a plaza,
but someplace else,
even more important.*

Elements of a Successful Public Space

Sitting Space

Sun, Trees, Water

Food

Triangulation

The Street



MOYNIHAN TRAIN HALL

NY FORWARD

↓ 31st Street ↓

7
—
8



7
—
8



9
—
10



Baggage Check-in

AMTRAK

Tracks 9-14
Amtrak Metropolitan Lounge
Amtrak Baggage Claim
31st Street

MAGNOLIA BAR

New York
Fashion



9th Avenue ↓

EXIT

← AIRTRAIN

Food Hall ↑
Services at Farley • Shops
9th Avenue • Ride Services ↑

PLACE YOUR PETS
THEY GET DOWNY

Ticketed Waiting Rooms

How do I get
to my airport?



oad

Meet • Taxi  

NYNIHAN
N HALL



*‘It is difficult to design a space that
will not attract people.*

*What is remarkable is how often
this has been accomplished.’*

- William H. Whyte

AMERICAN URBANIST

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RICHARD K. REIN

*Planners would prefer to go to hell
with a plan than to heaven
without one.*







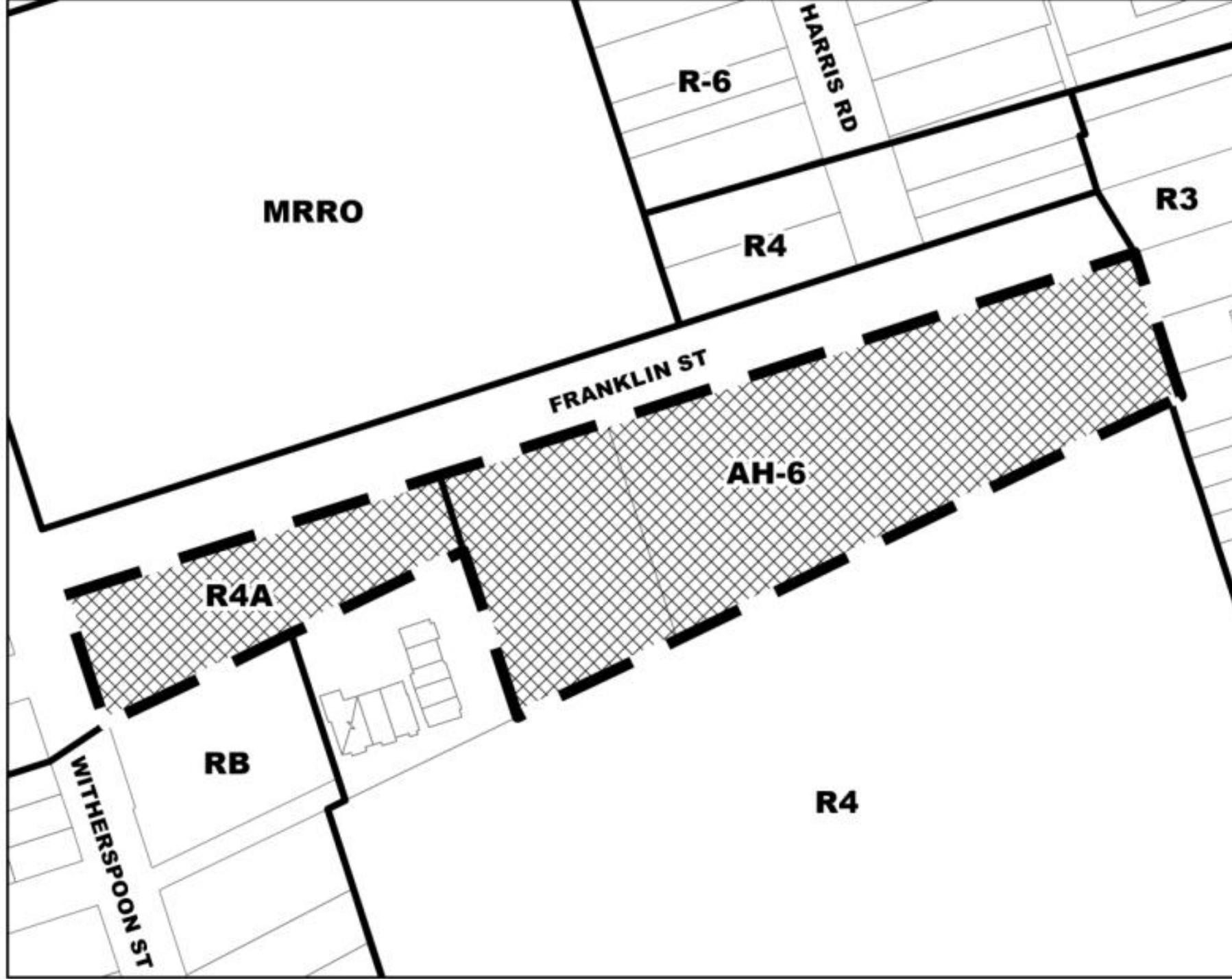
The following are prohibited in the
plaza -

SKATEBOARDING
BIKING
HORSEPLAY
SMOKING
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

The Plaza Closes at Dusk

“Some might be impressed by a torrent of details, particularly if accompanied by elaborate overlays and sketches. Actually passing on such a report amounts to saying, ‘The devil with it – you figure it out!’”

- Marine Corps Gazette







120
PROSPECT
APARTMENTS

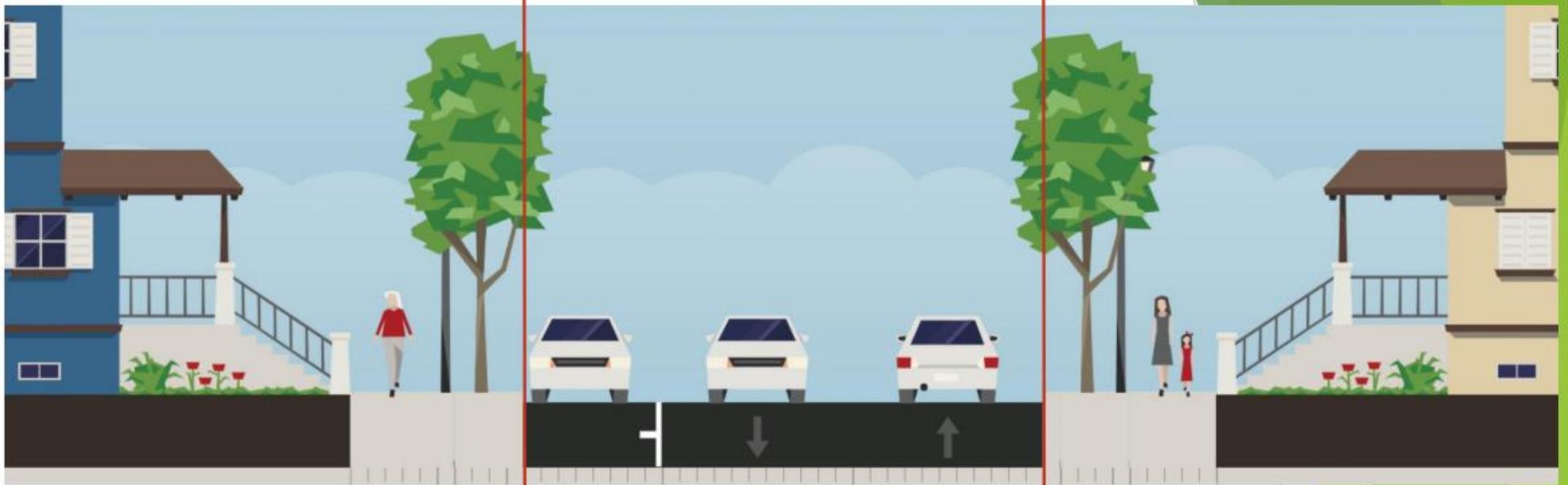
‘Observation is an extremely tough business. It will take much patience, many long hours of watching for the little things.’

- Marine Corps Gazette



Witherspoon St

Concept A



Concept B



Pros and Cons of Concepts A and B

Concept A

- ▶ Pros
 - ▶ Traffic calming to slow cars
 - ▶ More and safer pedestrian crossings
 - ▶ Promenade character
 - ▶ Allows for most existing trees to remain
 - ▶ Minimal changes for buildings/houses on Witherspoon Street
 - ▶ Additional room for benches, bike racks, etc. on bump-outs
- ▶ Cons
 - ▶ Loss of parking (35%)
 - ▶ No dedicated bicycle lanes - continue to share street with cars

Concept B

- ▶ Pros
 - ▶ Protected bike space southbound for 4 blocks; 1 block unprotected
 - ▶ More and safer pedestrian crossing opportunities
- ▶ Cons
 - ▶ Loss of parking (45% or more)
 - ▶ Conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists at intersections and along route
 - ▶ Conflicts between bicyclists and vehicle users at parking areas and driveways
 - ▶ Loss of mature trees, with potentially fewer replacements - incl. all existing on neighborhood side
 - ▶ Removal of green buffer between sidewalk and drive lane - need to find space for signs, poles, bus stop waiting areas, bike parking, etc.
 - ▶ Driveways moved to sidewalks - sloping down sidewalks
 - ▶ Garbage & recycling cans in parking spaces, bike lane and/or sidewalks
 - ▶ New parking paystations required - no room for meters

*‘Group harmony is not an unmixed blessing. . . .
Progress is often dependent on producing
rather than mitigating
frustrations and tensions.’*

- The Organization Man, 1956





'Now coming of age is a whole generation of planners and architects for whom the formative experience of a center was the atrium of a suburban shopping mall.'







*‘Intelligence fundamentals remain the same
no matter how many technical devices
supplement human observation
and communication . . .*

*The principle will remain the same.
Get the data recorded, then classify it.’*

- Marine Corps Gazette, May 1946



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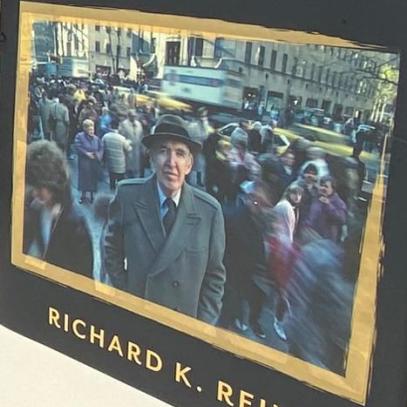


RICHARD K. REIN



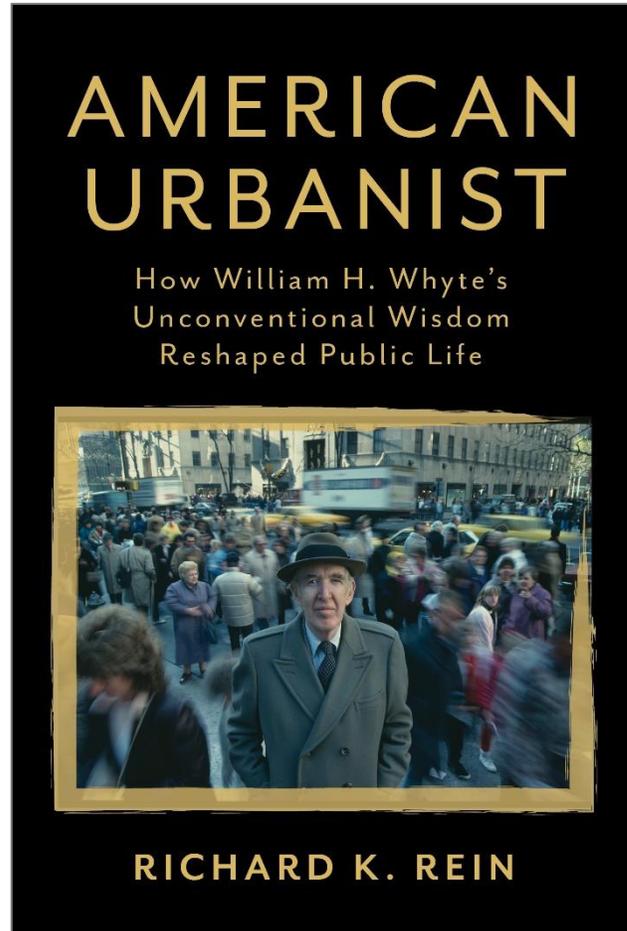
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