

From the Planners' Bookshelf...

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

by Richard K. Rein, Island Press, 2022.

From Amazon...

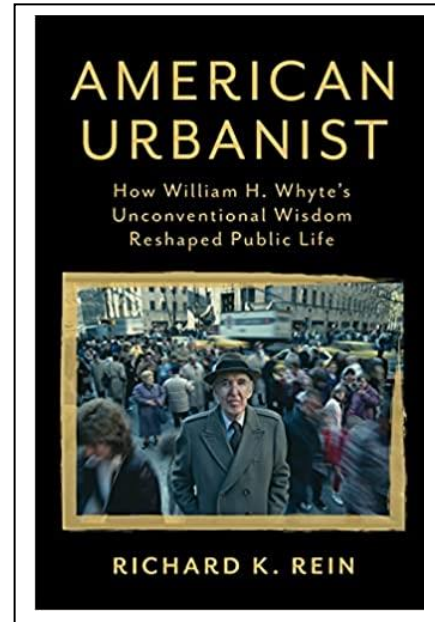
“On an otherwise normal weekday in the 1980s, commuters on busy Route 1 in central New Jersey noticed an alarming sight: a man in a suit and tie dashing across four lanes of traffic, then scurrying through a narrow underpass as cars whizzed by within inches. The man was William “Holly” Whyte, a pioneer of people-centered urban design. Decades before this perilous trek to a meeting in the suburbs, he had urged planners to look beyond their desks and drawings: ‘You have to get out and walk.’

“*American Urbanist* shares the life and wisdom of a man whose advocacy reshaped many of the places we know and love today—from New York’s bustling Bryant Park to preserved forests and farmlands around the country. Holly’s experiences as a WWII intelligence officer and leader of the genre-defining reporters at *Fortune Magazine* in the 1950s shaped his razor-sharp assessments of how the world actually worked—not how it was assumed to work. His 1956 bestseller, *The Organization Man*, catapulted the dangers of “groupthink” and conformity into the national consciousness.

“Over his five decades of research and writing, Holly’s wide-ranging work changed how people thought about careers and companies, cities and suburbs, urban planning, open space preservation, and more. He was part of the rising environmental movement, helped spur change at the planning office of New York City, and narrated two films about urban life, in addition to writing six books. No matter the topic, Holly advocated for the decisionmakers to be people, not just experts.

“‘We need the kind of curiosity that blows the lid off everything,’ Holly once said. His life offers encouragement to be thoughtful and bold in asking questions and in making space for differing viewpoints. This revealing biography offers a rare glimpse into the mind of an iconoclast whose healthy skepticism of the status quo can help guide our efforts to create the kinds of places we want to live in today.”

LINK: <https://www.amazon.com/American-Urbanist-William-Unconventional-Reshaped/dp/1642831700>



About the Author

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 an “edge city.” Rein now serves on Princeton Future, a nonprofit that promotes sustainable urbanism in his hometown.

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From the Planners' Bookshelf...

From The New York Times...Excerpts by CT.org.

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

(When you purchase an independently reviewed book through our site [NYT], we earn an affiliate commission.)

'American Urbanist,' a Well-Timed Biography of a Man Who Reshaped City Life.

By Alexandra Jacobs, Jan. 12, 2022

"Before crowdsourcing, there was groupthink. The first sounds almost jolly: a mosh pit of ideas. The second, a term introduced with sinister Orwellian overtones by William H. Whyte in a 1952 article for Fortune magazine, describes how creativity and even morality can be stifled by consensus. Not long after that article ran, Whyte wrote "The Organization Man," a book that was seminal — the masculine etymology of that overused word here entirely apt.

"Though 'The Organization Man' [1956] is dated in major ways, parts of it remain blazingly relevant. It condemns, for example, the administration of personality tests, an odd form of [office astrology](#) whose use in management training persists to this day. Whyte went on to a distinguished career as a sui generis urban anthropologist: writing a half-dozen more books; making [mesmerizing films](#) in which he peered from above at [ant-like pedestrians](#); weighing in widely on public affairs; and marrying a charismatic fashion designer, Jenny Bell. That he isn't better remembered and frequently cited, especially now that both workplaces and cities are getting a hard look during the pandemic, is something "American Urbanist," a marvelous new biography by Richard K. Rein, explains and should help rectify."

Follow this LINK for the rest of the Review:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/12/books/review-american-urbanist-william-h-whyte-biography-richard-rein.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage§ion=Books>