



## City: Rediscovering the Center

By William H. Whyte

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### City: Rediscovering the Center By William H. Whyte

Named by *Newsweek* magazine to its list of "Fifty Books for Our Time."

For sixteen years William Whyte walked the streets of New York and other major cities. With a group of young observers, camera and notebook in hand, he conducted pioneering studies of street life, pedestrian behavior, and city dynamics. *City: Rediscovering the Center* is the result of that research, a humane, often amusing view of what is staggeringly obvious about the urban environment but seemingly invisible to those responsible for planning it.

Whyte uses time-lapse photography to chart the anatomy of metropolitan congestion. Why is traffic so badly distributed on city streets? Why do New Yorkers walk so fast—and jaywalk so incorrigibly? Why aren't there more collisions on the busiest walkways? Why do people who stop to talk gravitate to the center of the pedestrian traffic stream? Why do places designed primarily for security actually worsen it? Why are public restrooms disappearing? "The city is full of vexations," Whyte avers: "Steps too steep; doors too tough to open; ledges you cannot sit on. . . . It is difficult to design an urban space so maladroitly that people will not use it, but there are many such spaces." Yet Whyte finds encouragement in the widespread rediscovery of the city center. The future is not in the suburbs, he believes, but in that center. Like a Greek agora, the city must reassert its most ancient function as a place where people come together face-to-face.

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## **City: Rediscovering the Center** By William H. Whyte Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Informal, spontaneous interactions give the modern city its vitality, so Whyte's ( *The Organization Man* ) enemies are urban planners who evince disregard and even contempt for street life. Part meditation, part design manual, this marvelously observant tour of cities will please anyone who cares about urban livability. Whyte (who also wrote *The Exploding Metropolis* and *The Last Landscape* ) offers astute observations on recognizable street typesnimble pedestrians, food vendors, handbill distributors, loitering gossipers, panhandlers. With the help of 120 photographs, he measures the rhythms of neighborhood parks and playgrounds; shows how taken-for-granted design elements like stairs, entranceways, sidewalks and plazas influence human interaction; and dissects office/store mega-complexes, covered pedestrian areas, shopping malls and other artificial environments that destroy spontaneity. Of special interest is his thesis that charges of "gentrification" are misguided when applied to the revival of neighborhoods sapped by federal and local disinvestment.

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From Library Journal

Whyte's Street Life Project studied the use of urban spaces for 16 years. This follow-up to *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* ( LJ 4/15/80 ) is an engaging look at the variety of human interactions which make "downtown" vibrant. Whyte looks at such diverse topics as pedestrian movement, concourses and skyways, sunlight and its effects--all from the perspective of a confirmed city-lover. His observations and recommendations can be read with profit and pleasure by professional planners and readers interested in what makes a city tick.

- Diane K. Harvey, SAIS-Johns Hopkins Univ. Lib., Washington, D.C.

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Review

"Whyte's Street Life Project studied the use of urban spaces for 16 years. This follow-up to *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* is an engaging look at the variety of human interactions which make 'downtown' vibrant. Whyte looks at such diverse topics as pedestrian movement, concourses and skyways, sunlight and its effects—all from the perspective of a confirmed city-lover. His observations and recommendations can be read with profit and pleasure by professional planners and readers interested in what makes a city tick."—*Library Journal*

"We who hug the city to us by instinct are grateful to Whyte for providing us with a hundred—a thousand—arguments for doing so."—*New Yorker*

"*City* is written in clear, straightforward, and vivid prose. . . . Whyte bubbles over with data. . . . He is an authentic visionary."—*Los Angeles Times*

"Informal, spontaneous interactions give the modern city its vitality, so Whyte's enemies are urban planners who evince disregard and even contempt for street life. Part meditation, part design manual, this marvelously observant tour of cities will please anyone who cares about urban livability."—*Publishers Weekly*

"*City* punctures commonplace assumptions about urban life in virtually every chapter. . . . There is genuine brilliance here."—*New York Times*

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### **Doris Rice:**

The experience that you get from *City: Rediscovering the Center* may be the more deep you digging the information that hide into the words the more you get serious about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but *City: Rediscovering the Center* giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this kind of *City: Rediscovering the Center* instantly.

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