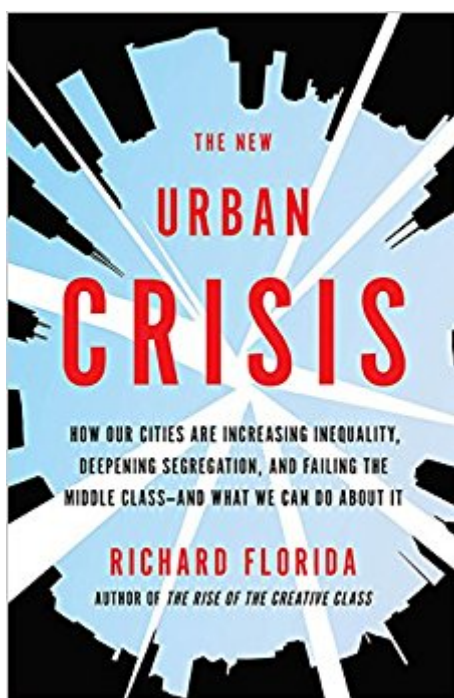


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The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, And Failing The Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It



Synopsis

In recent years, the young, educated, and affluent have surged back into cities, reversing decades of suburban flight and urban decline. And yet all is not well, Richard Florida argues in *The New Urban Crisis*. Florida, one of the first scholars to anticipate this back-to-the-city movement in his groundbreaking *The Rise of the Creative Class*, demonstrates how the same forces that power the growth of the world's superstar cities also generate their vexing challenges: gentrification, unaffordability, segregation, and inequality. Meanwhile, many more cities still stagnate, and middle-class neighborhoods everywhere are disappearing. Our winner-take-all cities are just one manifestation of a profound crisis in today's urbanized knowledge economy. A bracingly original work of research and analysis, *The New Urban Crisis* offers a compelling diagnosis of our economic ills and a bold prescription for more inclusive cities capable of ensuring growth and prosperity for all.

Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; 1 edition (April 11, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465079741

ISBN-13: 978-0465079742

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #11,697 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > City Planning & Urban Development](#) #10 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Urban Planning & Development](#) #29 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Class](#)

Customer Reviews

Wall Street Journal: "The New Urban Crisis bracingly confronts this tension between big-city elites and the urban underclass...Mr. Florida is right that there are really twin crises: inequality and segregation... The government should concentrate on helping poor people, not poor places. After all, the American economy will not benefit from stemming the flow of people from less productive places to more productive ones. The answer instead is, as Mr. Florida nicely puts it in his conclusion, a 'new and better urbanism.'" The Washington Post: "[Richard Florida] vividly expose[s] how gentrification, followed by rising housing costs, concentrated affluence and glaring inequality,

has pushed the displaced into deteriorating suburbs far from mass transit, employment, services and decent schools.... [The New Urban Crisis is] nuanced and proposes solutions."Kirkus Reviews:"Florida draws subtle, thoughtful inferences from his research, and he writes in slick, approachable prose...Throughout, the author remains an idealistic, perceptive observer of cities' transformations. A sobering account of inequality and spatial conflict rising against a cultural backdrop of urban change."Library Journal:"Urban planners should consider the case being made for the need to address a new urban crisis. A thought-provoking work for those interested in all stages of urban planning and placemaking."Steve Clemons, Washington Editor at Large, The Atlantic:"I loved The New Urban Crisis. Richard Florida writes about the tensions and the divides that have emerged within and between cities, between the broader community-and I felt it throughout the book and loved it."The Englewood Review of Books:"A keen assessment of the state of global cities in 2017, and a vision for how they need to move forward."California Planning & Development Report:"The New Urban Crisis provides a tidy, timely summary of the current urban problem, in all its enormity."""The New Urban Crisis deserves to stand alongside Thomas Piketty's Capital In The Twenty-First Century as an essential diagnosis of our contemporary ills, and a clear-eyed prescription of how to cure them. It's also a rare and compelling example of a great intellect displaying the courage to re-think his older ideas in the face of changing circumstances. Anyone interested in the crisis of inequality and in the vitality of our cities will want to read this book."-Steven Johnson, author of How We Got To Now and Where Good Ideas Come From"Richard Florida offers a brilliant assessment of the varied and evolving challenges facing our cities today. At a time when cities are more important than ever to our economic and political future, The New Urban Crisis is essential reading for urban leaders and all city-dwellers."-Richard M. Daley, former mayor of Chicago"Richard Florida demonstrates again that he is one of the most discerning (and provocative) observers of the great metropolitan migrations of the past 60 years. Using masses of carefully curated demographic data, he identifies the winners and losers of the widespread 'urban resurgence' of the past couple of decades. His observations are disquieting on many levels, and Florida doesn't shy away from proposing bold and sometimes costly solutions. The New Urban Crisis is certain to be one of the most widely debated books of the year."-Governor John Hickenlooper, Colorado"Cities are engines for prosperity and progress, but it's essential that the benefits extend far and wide. Florida proposes promising ideas for building stronger cities that offer greater opportunities for all."-Michael Bloomberg, former mayor of New York City"Richard Florida is the great pioneer thinker who first explained how the influx of creative people was reviving cities. Now he takes the next step: looking for ways to make this urbanism more inclusive. Florida

takes a hard look at the problems and, as usual, comes up with some smart new policies. Making cities work for all residents is one of the great economic, political, and moral issues of our time."-Walter Isaacson

"This is the book we have been waiting for. Richard Florida is the greatest American urbanist of our time. In this book, he thoughtfully and forcefully confronts how Americans' return to our cities has brought incredible cultural and economic renewal but without careful and thoughtful land use, infrastructure, and economic justice initiatives, this renewal is leaving a disappearing middle class in its wake. This is an indispensable read for policy makers, students, educators, and all urban dwellers alike. Florida sketches an urgent roadmap to ensure that America's urban revival brings prosperity to everyone, not just a few."-Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles

"A sweeping narrative of the most significant human movement of our times: global urbanization. Richard Florida lays out with unassailable facts and clear vision the convergence of an urgent human development-the drive for more livable cities and the quest for a more sustainable planet. Clear, compelling, and full of vision."-Martin O'Malley, former governor of Maryland

"Perceptions of urban crisis are steeped in the past, dominated by images of deindustrialization, economic decline, high crime, the hollowing out of cities, and rampant suburbanization. Urban divergence is the reality today-superstar cities like New York are thriving like never before while other cities continue to languish. Suburban communities are also tackling problems once thought unique to cities, and as the recent presidential election revealed, the divide between urban and rural has deepened. The urbanist Richard Florida, famous for his work on the creative class, turns his attention in *The New Urban Crisis* to the paradox of our times-the "clustering force" of concentrated talent and economic activity is simultaneously an engine for urban growth and a driver of inequality. Not everyone will agree, but the general public, leaders, and students of cities will profit by engaging his provocative data and ideas. Don't be fooled by the title-crisis is double-edged and at the end, Florida lays out an ambitious but concrete plan for a renewed and more equitable urbanism. Rather than provoking angst, *The New Urban Crisis* is an inspired and pointed call to action."-Robert J. Sampson, Harvard University and author of *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*

"Our ability to innovate and grow our economy and job base will be a result of our ability to educate and cluster talent and reimagine our infrastructure, while having a diverse work force with access to transit systems and housing to support that growth. In his new book, Richard Florida does an incredible job in not only laying out these issues facing the great urbanization of America with compelling data, but in offering thoughtful solutions to the challenges and opportunities."-Jodie W. McLean, Chief Executive Officer, EDENS

"Like the superstar cities it describes, this book is dense, complex and stimulating. Florida's

well-researched and fluent exposé of inequality is a wake-up call to all the major actors engaged in planning, designing and managing cities in the 21st century."-Ricky Burdett, Professor of Urban Studies, London School of Economics

Richard Florida is University Professor and Director of Cities at the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and Distinguished Fellow at NYU's Schack Institute of Real Estate. He is Senior Editor at The Atlantic, editor-at-large for The Atlantic's CityLab, and founder of the Creative Class Group.

This is one of the books i keep next to my bed for times when i'm trouble falling asleep. That being said, it is a very well written book, and the research seems very legitimate and thorough.

Richard Florida has done it again. His insightful books are a boon for city planners as well as those who care about urban future. Bravo

As a practicing planner and GIS professional, this book got me juiced. Lots of data with lots of cited research. Well done!

A bit repetitive in the middle, but a must read for those in urban planning.

It was a class assignment reading and all went well.

A very current analysis of the realities of our current dilemma. I will be using parts of the book for a course on "InEquality"

Richard Florida went from Newark-born son of a factory foreman to Rutgers student to long-term professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He saw how Pittsburgh kept hemorrhaging its population, no matter how many tax breaks it offered. He asks why all the tech companies were going to Boston, New York City, San Francisco, and Silicon Valley, when the cost of living in those places was so high? What was unattractive about Pittsburgh if the living cost was so low and there were so many financial incentives to be there? The answer is that the talent was in Boston, NYC, and the West Coast, but nobody with the talent wanted to live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Professor Florida's research shows cities, not the suburbs, to be the most

government-dependent. Factory closings make the city ground zero for unemployment, along with a loss of income tax revenue, and if the houses are deserted, they lose property tax income and the schools suffer. Worse still, poverty has been reaching the suburbs in the last few years (and this is not the first book about it) so there's less refuge for those fleeing the city. He blames a lot of it on poor infrastructure in cities and suburbs, especially in car-dependent communities (forget about biking to work in the snow) where no car means no getting to work. I remember being a teenager in Nassau County, and my summer job options were limited to camp counselor (lucky to make minimum wage there) unless I found one in the city (\$8 to use the LIRR) or found a job nearby (forget about biking to work on the highway) in the county. Gentrification (now a dirtier word than NIMBY) is a problem too. He recounts taking flak for suggesting that small, quiet jets be allowed to land in Toronto. The response was an extreme "absolutely no" even though the city needed the revenue. It was the elites who were against the jets at the airports (turboprop only) even though there wouldn't really be much noise from them (we're talking about small jets, not 747s.) All the "no noise" and "no building" demands were going on at the same time as a financial deficit, and into the strife waded Rob Ford, the big unhealthy drug-using mayor, who tore up the bike lanes and plowed up the nostalgia. The people who voted for him were the less-educated, fed up with stagnation and with little use for creative arts districts. They welcomed the malls because they provided jobs. At the same time, Florida is not entirely sympathetic to the anti-gentrification lobby. He criticizes Spike Lee, and his analogy of "white mothers pushing strollers down 125th street at 3am" which he equates with neocolonialism. However, the author cites how 40 years ago the Black leadership criticized "White flight," while at the same time attacked the few Whites who moved in as interlopers. If you read Judith Maitloff's memoir *Home Girl* then you'll see an unusual shift; in the early 2000s, it was the educated Black residents who were happy to see Whites moving into Harlem. Elderly Black men and women, part of Harlem's creative class (a lot of them were educators) were fed up with the crime and filth. They were fed up with the Dominican drug dealers, and fed up with the out-of-state plated cars pulling up to buy drugs. They were happy to see White people moving in. It makes you think. I don't agree with a lot of his descriptions of gentrification, however. Soho wasn't really gentrified (nobody got evicted), it simply went from an industrial zone to a residential one. The artist's lofts were all owned by the artists, sold to them as co-op apartments. Take

for instance 80 Wooster Street, one of the early artist spaces in the area. The artists bought the lofts for \$10,000 each in the 1970s, and so what if they sold them 20 years later for 50 times that? These artists paid their dues, and they are entitled to profit. As for it becoming a place of overpriced stores, that's life, it's going to happen one way or the other. Furthermore, thanks to rent-control and tenant protections, few people were evicted from their homes in NYC. The real problem is that when the rent-controlled tenant's daughter turns 22 and wants her own place, she won't find an affordable one nearby. Will she opt for an apartment in a disreputable area, or a safe and cheap neighborhood that's an hour and a half from her job? As for the "creative class" that the author doesn't seem to like, they are hardly powerful by any means. The average creative types in Manhattan and Brooklyn are making less than \$45k and are crammed five to an apartment. As far as the poor go, the author quotes Patrick Sharkey's book *Stuck in Place*, about multi-generational poverty. Newcomers can't be responsible for a problem that existed long before they arrived. I'll sum up by saying that no building in this country has lasted since the dawn of time. The author mentions childhood trips to the Woodbridge Mall in New Jersey, a wonderful suburban experience. What the author forgets is that the mall was built on the site of the old Woodbridge clay pits, and the backwoods people who lived there must have been evicted. Did anybody hear their complaints?

I know urban planning professor Richard Florida did not intend it, but his new book represents an indictment of urban liberalism. To Florida the motive force in urban America is "The Rise of the Creative Class," the title of a highly influential book he wrote in 2002. The creative class consists of occupations in the sciences, the arts, music, entertainment, media, management, finance, healthcare and education; in other words the educated elite. Sitting below them is the working class who represents blue collar workers and the service class consisting of routine jobs food service, hospitality, maintenance and retail. In other words people like Florida, despite his humble roots, determine the destiny of a city. And to him the defeat of Hillary Clinton and the victory of Donald Trump in last year's presidential election meant that the barbarians were at the gates. That may be true but the seeds of urban liberalism's failures were already planted well before the arrival of Trump. As an aside, my guess is that if Hillary won, Florida would now be sitting in a high post at HUD. As Florida accurately notes the influx of the creative class into the cities of America brought with it rising real estate prices that exacerbated pre-existing income

inequality, racial segregation and spatial segregation of the well-off from the poor. This has been especially true in the super star cities of New York and Los Angeles and the education/tech hubs of Boston, San Francisco and Washington D.C. In those cities the demand-driven house price increases were exacerbated by the planning and zoning controls put in place by the very creative class that Florida champions. If you don't believe me, just look at the over-the-top real estate ads that appear regularly in The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times. As a result the creative class has been enriched and the middle class is being forced out. Thus in urban America zoning is the engine of economic inequality. All of this was true from the 1980s on and most, if not all of it, were accomplished under the auspices of urban liberal regimes.

Florida's major error is that he conflates social liberalism with economic liberalism. While his creative class may largely support immigration, gay rights and a high degree of tolerance for different lifestyles; they do not necessarily believe that social liberalism requires them to make personal sacrifices with respect to their tax burden, the schools their children go to and the location of affordable housing in their neighborhoods. For example the liberal voters of Los Angeles just voted to tax themselves to provide housing for the homeless. However there are no neighborhoods volunteering to accommodate such housing. Now Florida to his credit understands all of this. He offers several commendable proposals to offset the income inequality generated by his creative class. I fully agree with him that urban/suburban densities ought to be substantially increased, additional density bonuses ought to be issued to allow for an affordable housing component in major developments, property taxation should build on the ideas of Henry George by taxing site value alone rather than land and improvements, transportation infrastructure should be expanded to accommodate higher densities, and low income earners need an expanded earned income tax credit. Further he sensibly understands that rent control is not part of the solution. Where I would disagree with him is that he advocates a substantial increase in the minimum wage on metro-area by metro area basis. The problem here is that substantially higher minimum wages may worsen the problem it seeks to solve and recent research out of the University of Washington on Seattle's minimum wage tends to support my skepticism. We are also in an age of artificial intelligence and that will work to obliterate routine task jobs in food service and retail. Where I really differ with Florida is that he thinks that his creative class will support substantially increased urban densities. Here I am very skeptical because it is the legally savvy creative class who has refined protesting new developments to a high art. Listen, I hope he is right, but I am not holding my breath. Three last points, he leaves out a discussion on self-driving vehicles which might work to decrease urban densities by making long distance commuting far easier. He fails to even mention

the underbelly of every major city in America, unfunded pension liabilities largely created by that bulwark of urban liberalism, the public employee unions. And third he is silent on the state sponsored child abuse that takes place in all too many urban school systems. I am hopeful he will discuss these three items in a future book. Despite my critique, Florida's data driven analysis told us how we got to this place in urban America today and for that he deserves much credit.

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