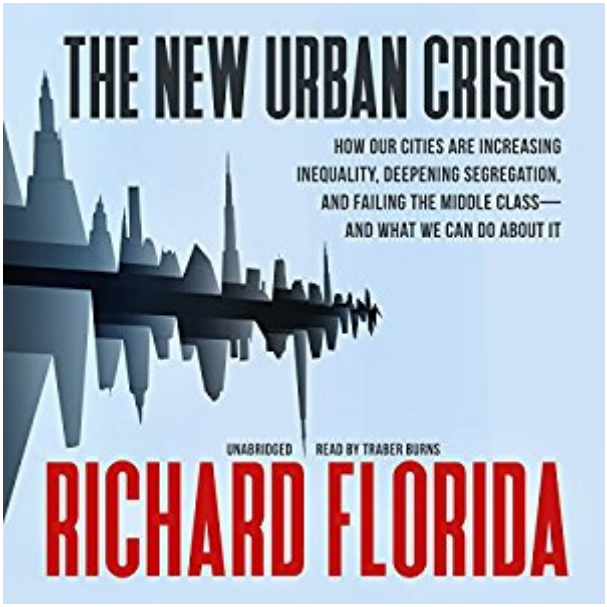
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The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, And Failing The Middle Class - And What We Can Do About It



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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.

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the books i keep next to my bed for times when i'm trouble falling alseep. That being said, it is a very well written book, and the research seems very ligitimate 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 Pittsburg. He saw how Pittsburg 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 Pittsburg if the living cost was so law 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 Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Professor FloridaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 thereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“absolutely noÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• even though the city needed the revenue. It was the elites who were against the jets at the airports (turboprop only) even though there wouldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t really be much noise from them (weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re talking about small jets, not 747ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s.) All the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“no noiseÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“no buildingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

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 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“white mothers pushing strollers down 125th street at 3amÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• which he equates with neocolonialism. However, the author cites how 40 years ago the Black leadership criticized ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“White flight,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• while at the same time attacked the few Whites who moved in as interlopers. If you read Judith MaitloffÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s memoir Home Girl then youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll see an unusual shift; in the early 2000ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s, it was the educated Black residents who were happy to see Whites moving into Harlem. Elderly Black men and women, part of HarlemÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t agree with a lot of his descriptions of gentrification, however. Soho wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t really gentrified (nobody got evicted), it simply went from an industrial zone to a residential one. The artistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 1970ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s, and so what if they sold them 20 years later for 50 times that? These artists paid their dues, and theyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re entitled to profit. As for it becoming a place of overpriced stores, thatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life, itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 tenantÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s daughter turns 22 and wants her own place, she wonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t find an affordable one nearby. Will she opt for an apartment in a disreputable area, or a safe and cheap neighborhood thatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s an hour and a half from her job? As for the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“creative classÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• that the author doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t seem to like, theyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re 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 SharkeyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book Stuck in Place, about multi-generational poverty. Newcomers canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t be responsible for a problem that existed long before they arrived. IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Rise of the Creative Class,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• 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 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 yearÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s presidential election meant that the barbarians were at the gates. That may be true but the seeds urban liberalism 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 donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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. FloridaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 SeattleÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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, FloridaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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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