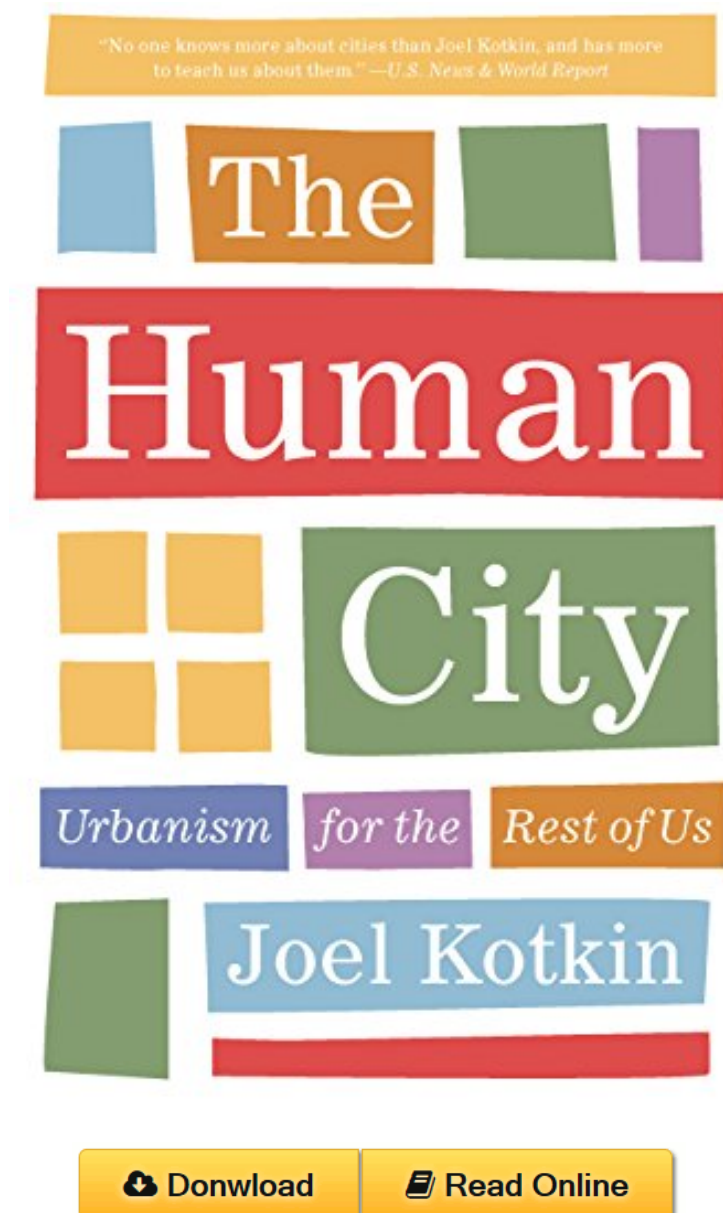


## The Human City: Urbanism for the Rest of Us

Joel Kotkin

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**Joel Kotkin : The Human City: Urbanism for the Rest of Us** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Human City: Urbanism for the Rest of Us:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. City Planning with a Generous HeartBy JaneyVeeI live in a small city in the Northern Rockies. Anti-family/ anti-single-family-homes/ anti-middle class/ cars-are-evil urban planners are currently in control. This book is a welcome counter-argument. Joel Kotkin cogently reaffirms the obvious: the purpose of a city (and, I would argue, of a whole society) is to preserve natural resources while constructing a human-built environment that enables individuals to live flourishing lives and promotes healthy family life. Like our generous Founders, we should show intentional concern for "our posterity."He points out that, through a lifetime, each

individual and family passes through life stages. As we change, the places we call "home" are likely to change as well...from parental home, to college dorm, to shared apartment, to childless couple condo, to a detached house with a yard, to an empty nest, to an assisted living facility. Truly inclusive city planning needs to be open to all sorts of residential preferences if people are to live and flourish in urban environments. I'm very grateful to Joel Kotkin for writing this book. 13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. There is nothing wrong with pragmatic housing

By Jim El greatly appreciate Joel Kotkin book. I am citizen who volunteers to serve on the El Paso County Planning Commission. The City of Colorado Springs constitutes some 70% of the urbanized population in the County. I have been intuitively ambivalent about efforts to increase urban population densities. Many professional planners treat increased urban density as if it is a modern "Holy Grail". My wife and I live in a suburban setting, in one of 126 detached townhomes inside a gated community. I prefer not to maintain a yard and we enjoy the freedom to travel. Transportation is good and I can travel to the City's relatively small core in 15 to 20 minutes. All 4 of our adult children all live in a suburban setting with good sized yards and 2-car garages. It is a great place to raise children. Some people want to live in a higher density apartment or townhome. They like this life style. Joel used a heavily data-driven narrative to both validate my residential living choice and to help me to understand why others will choose something different. Joel insists that housing must work for the resident, not some planner or governmental official. Joel also exposes much commonly accepted thinking as being unsupported by the data. This a good read for anyone interested in understanding the urban, suburban, and exurban dynamics. I recommend it very highly!

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. ... of this book seems to be that cities are bad and suburbs are good

By Michael Lewyn The general point of this book seems to be that cities are bad and suburbs are good. Kotkin's most widely publicized argument is that suburbia will protect us from plunging birthrates. However, Kotkin writes that (a) affluent nations are suburbanizing and (b) birthrates throughout the world (not just in affluent nations but even in not-so-affluent places like Iran and Morocco) have been plunging. If both (a) and (b) are true, obviously suburbanization has not prevented declining birthrates. Kotkin is right about one thing: families are being priced out of our most affluent cities. He therefore argues that children simply don't belong in cities. But it seems to me that one could just as easily argue that we should allow more urban housing to reduce housing costs, and thus make city living more affordable for those who want it.

"The Human City presents the most cogent, evidence-based and clear-headed exposition of the pro-suburban argument. . . . enriching our understanding of what cities are about and what they can and must become." —Wall Street Journal

Around the globe, most new urban development has adhered to similar tenets: tall structures, small units, and high density. In *The Human City*, Joel Kotkin—called “America’s uber-geographer” by David Brooks of the *New York Times*—questions these nearly ubiquitous practices, suggesting that they do not consider the needs and desires of the vast majority of people. Built environments, Kotkin argues, must reflect the preferences of most people—especially those of families—even if that means lower-density development.

*The Human City* ponders the purpose of the city and investigates the factors that drive most urban development today. Armed with his own astute research, a deep-seated knowledge of urban history, and a sound grasp of economic, political, and social trends, Kotkin pokes holes in what he calls the “retro-urbanist” ideology and offers a refreshing case for dispersion centered on human values. This book is not anti-urban, but it does advocate a greater range of options for people to live the way they want at all stages of their lives.

Praise for Joel Kotkin’s *The Human City: Urbanism for the Rest of Us* “[Kotkin] weaves an impressive array of original observations about cities into his arguments, enriching our understanding of what cities are about and what they can and must become.” —Shlomo Angel, *Wall Street Journal*

“Kotkin argues that suburbs are where middle-class families want to live. . . . A city hostile to the middle class is, in Kotkin’s view, a sea hostile to fish.” —Alexander Nazaryan, *Newsweek*

“[The] kinds of places that are getting it right . . . we might call Joel Kotkin cities, after the writer who champions them. These are opportunity cities . . . [that] are less regulated, so it’s easier to start a business. They are sprawling with easy, hodgepodge housing construction, so the cost of living is low. . . . We should be having a debate between the Kotkin model and the [Richard] Florida model, between two successful ways to create posterity.” —David Brooks, *New York Times*

“Kotkin’s premise focus[es] on the predictions made by some economists who believe suburbs are going to wither as more Americans return to the cities. He [says] those have been hasty reactions to the 2008 economic recession, and that humans’ desire for spacious living remains strong.” —Ronnie Wachter, *Chicago Tribune*

“*The Human City* . . . takes a wider and longer view. Kotkin shows how cities developed as religious, imperial, commercial, and industrial centers. . . . To his subject Kotkin brings a useful worldwide perspective.” —Michael Barone, *Washington Examiner*

“[Kotkin] believes it’s time to start rethinking what suburbia can be and to become more strategic about how it evolves.” —Randy Rieland, *Smithsonian.com*

“Kotkin recommends that we embrace a kind of ‘urban pluralism’ . . . That means a sustained effort to make the city livable, yes, but it also entails acceptance of the suburbs. . . . The reality of suburban life isn’t as grim as the naysayers suggest, and Kotkin rattles off a long list of statistics to prove it.” —Blake

Seitz, Washington Free Beacon "[Kotkin] writes that the suburbs are alive and well—and are positioned for strong opportunity." —Michael Stevens, Crain's Chicago Business "Whether you're a downtown dweller or suburbanite, renter or owner, there is plenty of urban food for thought in *The Human City*." —Deborah Bowers, Winnipeg Free Press "A long and lucid argument against . . . the current orthodoxy—that high-density living in the core, rather than suburban sprawl, is the optimal design for the modern urbanopolis." —Pat Kane, New Scientist "[*The Human City*] is a prolonged argument for development that responds to what people want and need during the course of their lives . . . [It] is not meant as an anti-urbanist tract, but rather as a redefinition of urbanism to fit modern realities and the needs of families. . . . It's hard to argue with that point." —David R. Godschalk, Urban Land Magazine "The notion that people are dying to leave the suburbs is just not true. . . . Kotkin [says] most of the job growth and affordable housing are in the suburbs." —Kim Mikus, Daily Herald Advance praise for Joel Kotkin's *The Human City: Urbanism for the Rest of Us* "The most eloquent expression of urbanism since Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Kotkin writes with a strong sense of place; he recognizes that the geography and traditions of a city create the contours of its urbanity." —Fred Siegel, scholar in residence at St. Francis College, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research "Kotkin is a refreshingly poetic and compelling writer on policy; he weaves data, history, theory, and his own probing analysis into a clear and soulful treatise on the way we ought to live now." —Ted C. Fishman, author of *China, Inc.* and *Shock of Gray* "Kotkin is one of the clearest urban writers and thinkers of our time. His first-hand experiences and insights on a broad array of issues such as inequity, infertility, lifestyle, and urban design shake the reader like a jolt of urban caffeine." —Alan M. Berger, codirector of the Center for Advanced Urbanism at MIT, founding director of P-REX Lab "While advocates trumpet megacities and global urbanization, Joel Kotkin makes an informed case for urban dispersal and argues that bigger and denser are not necessarily better." —Witold Rybczynski, author of *Mysteries of the Mall* "This book asks the crucially important question, 'What is a city?' It should be read by all urban planners and included on the reading list for any urban planning course in a university." —Chan Heng Chee, chairman, Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Singapore University of Technology and Design Praise for Joel Kotkin's *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050*: "Given the viral finger-pointing and hand-wringing over what's seen as America's decline these days, Mr. Kotkin's book provides a timely and welcome. . . antidote." —Sam Roberts, *New York Times* "Kotkin. . . offers a well-researched—and very sunny—forecast for the American economy. . . . His confidence is well-supported and is a reassuring balm amid the political and economic turmoil of the moment." —Publishers Weekly "A fascinating glimpse into a crystal ball, rich in implications that are alternately disturbing and exhilarating." —Kirkus "Kotkin provides a well-argued, well-researched and refreshingly calm perspective." —Joe Friesen, *The Globe and Mail* "Lamenting its own decline has long been an American weakness. . . . Those given to such declinism may derive a little comfort from Joel Kotkin's latest book." —*The Economist* "Kotkin has a striking ability to envision how global forces will shape daily family life, and his conclusions can be thought-provoking as well as counterintuitive." —WBUR-FM, Boston's NPR News Station Praise for Joel Kotkin's *The New Class Conflict*: "Kotkin is to be commended for seeing past the daily bric-a-brac of American politics to perceive the newly emerging class divisions." —Jay Cost, *The Washington Free Beacon*. . . Paints a dire picture of the undeclared war on the middle class." —Kyle Smith, *New York Post*. . . In having the courage to junk the old nostrums, [Kotkin] has taken an important step forward." —*Financial Times* "This original and provocative book should stimulate fresh thinking—and produce vigorous dissent." —*Foreign Affairs* Praise for Joel Kotkin's *The City: A Global History*: ". . . This fast read succeeds most with Kotkin as storyteller, flying through time and around the world to weave so many disparate histories into one urban tapestry." —*The Fifth Annual Planetizen Top 10 Books List, 2006 Edition*. . . Offers fascinating insight into the ideologies that have created different city designs, and into the natural human desire to gather together to live and for commerce." —Steve Greenhut, *The Orange County Register* "The book is taut, elegant, informative and lots of fun to read. When I got to the end, I wished it had been longer." —Alan Ehrenhalt, *Governing Magazine*