For most of the past century, urban America was dominated by top-down policies serving the white business and cultural elite, the suburbs, and the automobile. In the 1990s, this model finally began to erode as local citizens, neighborhood groups, and other stakeholders began asserting their own needs and priorities. This new era of “humane urbanism” seeks to make cities and suburbs greener, healthier, safer, more equitable, more efficient, and generally more people-friendly.

As Rutherford H. Platt points out, humane urbanism can take many forms, from affordable housing and networks of bike paths to refurbished waterfronts and urban farms.

“Platt’s book offers a breathtaking historical sweep of attempts to shape the physical and social organization of U.S. cities—and why some of them succeeded while many others failed.”—Jennifer Wolch, Dean, UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design

“A sophisticated, thorough, and comprehensive history of city planning in the United States over the last 125 years.”—Alex Marshall, author of How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl, and the Roads Not Taken

“Each generation remakes the city in its own image. The past provides the problem and the future provides the opportunity. Rutherford Platt’s excellent new book provides a perspective, literally a viewpoint, from which to see and contemplate the American urban landscape, and the people and ideas that have shaped it over the last century. Highly recommended!”—Eric W. Sanderson, author of Terra Nova: The New World after Oil, Cars, and Suburbs and Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City

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