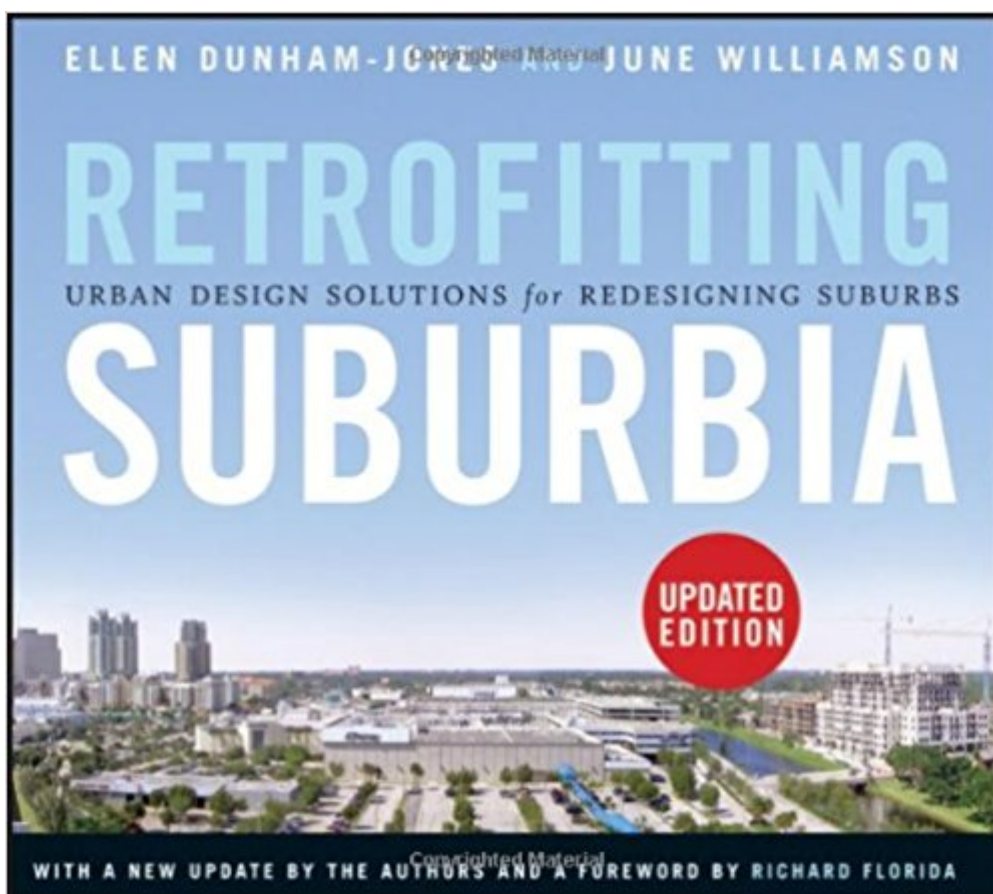




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# Retrofitting Suburbia, Updated Edition: Urban Design Solutions For Redesigning Suburbs



## Synopsis

Updated with a new Introduction by the authors and a foreword by Richard Florida, this book is a comprehensive guide book for urban designers, planners, architects, developers, environmentalists, and community leaders that illustrates how existing suburban developments can be redesigned into more urban and more sustainable places. While there has been considerable attention by practitioners and academics to development in urban cores and new neighborhoods on the periphery of cities, there has been little attention to the redesign and redevelopment of existing suburbs. The authors, both architects and noted experts on the subject, show how development in existing suburbs can absorb new growth and evolve in relation to changed demographic, technological, and economic conditions. Retrofitting Suburbia was named winner in the Architecture & Urban Planning category of the 2009 American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence (The PROSE Awards) awarded by The Professional and Scholarly Publishing (PSP) Division of the Association of American Publishers

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Wiley; 1 edition (March 29, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0470934328

ISBN-13: 978-0470934326

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #135,366 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #104 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Urban & Land Use Planning](#) #125 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > City Planning & Urban Development](#) #125 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Urban Planning & Development](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Retrofitting Suburbia advocates drastically overhauling much of America's older suburban development, and shows in considerable detail how to make it happen. At the heart of the opus is an analysis of 36 real-world projects that demonstrate not only that suburban redevelopment is economically viable, but also that the movement is well under way." (Period Homes, 2010) "Ellen Dunham-Jones focused much of her talk on redeveloping the failing shopping centers and big box

stores of suburbia. Her book, "Retrofitting Suburbia", looks at more than 80 examples done around the country." (The Florida Times-Union, May 2010) "It offers an interesting look at the possible future of suburbs, and what to do with all those abandoned malls and warehouse-style stores with sprawling parking lots. Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson present the argument for "retrofitting" existing low-density communities and commercial strips into sustainable, mixed-use spaces that reduce urban sprawl and the dependence on cars." (Cincinnati.com, November 21, 2009) "Aging suburban cities, especially first tier cities, are finding it more and more difficult to afford the massive infrastructure and services necessary to accommodate those thinly spread homes and businesses. Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson call this the "suburban form" in their recent book, Retrofitting Suburbia. They partially define the suburban form as isolated buildings, single uses, auto-dependence, low density, and streets and roads that branch out and often end in cul-de-sacs." (National League of Cities, November 2, 2009) "Why, where, and how should suburbia be retrofitted? This content-rich, well-written book provides compelling answers. The book's analysis and commentaries are rigorous and comprehensive, predicated not on academic theory but on planning and development history, social science, demographics, market conditions, and regulatory considerations." (Architectural Record, November 2009) "It highlights a handful of innovative suburban revamps that have already gained traction. Some examples highlight the benefits of simply re-inhabiting existing buildings. Others chronicle "re-greening efforts" to restore local ecology and wetlands while bolstering adjacent property values. But many of the book's examples focus on the redevelopment of what the author describes as a "fragmented habitat whose public realm is designed for cars" not people." (Builder Magazine, October 15, 2009) "A well-regarded new book-Retrofitting Suburbia - describes the results as "incremental metropolitanism". It consists of connecting and filling in to increase the density of both people and uses on the same acreage, making better use of infrastructure and energy and creating environments congenial to walking and socializing, all of which aggregates demand sufficiently to support convenience retail and restaurants." (Illinois Times, October 22, 2009) "Overall this book is an interesting read and just about the first to deal in any depth with what no doubt will emerge as a major concern of academic debate and planning and design practice." (Environmental and Planning, 2009 Vol 36) "We aren't proposing to demolish entire single-family neighborhoods" says Prof. Dunham Jones at Georgia Tech. Rather, "the idea is to revitalize an area by inserting more choices for people, especially more urban choices." (Wall Street Journal, September 19-20, 2009) "Well-illustrated case studies make up the bulk of the book. These range from in-filling garden apartments and reimagining dead malls to revising Levittown and remaking Main Street. Along the way the authors offer useful how-to

details: organizing charettes, dealing with building codes, analyzing sites morphologically. Like their predecessor, the authors are remarkably optimistic about the possibility of solving the problems with which US communities are burdened." (Choice, August 2009) "A book documenting the successful redevelopment of shopping centers and other types of properties." (Harvard Business Review, July - August 2009) "In Retrofitting Suburbia" Dunham-Jones and Williamson target the outdated, unsustainable developments of existing suburbs. With the reduction of vehicle miles traveled as their goal, the authors see transit options and increased density as the key means for success....the book leaves no suburban condition untouched." (A Daily Dose of Architecture, July 2009) "Retrofitting" suburbia has to do with environmental sustainability as well as economic: greater densities, diversity of uses and reduced car dependence. The authors' examples range from fitting solar collectors to individual houses to finding new uses for abandoned big box streets and introducing public streets into the vast tracts of privately controlled land associated with shopping centres." (Ottawa Citizen, 7/27/09) "...suburban infill developments and redevelopments are springing up all around the country. A recently released book explores several of the most interesting and successful of these projects. Retrofitting Suburbia documents dilemmas the nation faces as a result of changing demographics and volatile economic conditions." (Residential Architect, 6/3/09) "Retrofits, as they're called, take a variety of forms, from "raze it all and start anew" to creative adaptation of an existing space, such as the Food Lion supermarket in Denton, Texas, that became a public library. Each process shares common goals: reduce the blight, scale down sprawl, cut car traffic, amp up foot and bicycle access, and eliminate barriers between residential and retail space. In "Retrofitting Suburbia," Ms. Dunham-Jones and Williamson argued that similar revitalizations are necessary to accommodate the rapidly changing suburban culture." (Christian Science Monitor, 5/22/09) "Dunham-Jones and Williamson use real-world case studies to show how older (or even empty) office parks, malls, and residential subdivisions can be reinvented and revitalized through changes in transit patterns, rezoning for mixed use, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and roads. The book is jam-packed with innovative cases spanning small and large scale projects, and frames them within the context of urban planning theory." (Popgadget.net, 5/19/09) "Retrofitting Suburbia overflows with innovative examples, from decrepit Walmarts reimagined as elegant churches, to derelict edge-city highway strips transformed into multi-purpose boulevards. The book's ultimate goal is to create a sort of primer in what the authors call "incremental metropolitanism" - a design philosophy that sees Jane Jacobs' spirit living on in the repurposing of "ghostboxes" (abandoned big box retail outlets). Retrofitting Suburbia assembles all the essential tools a designer needs to join new frontier of sustainability." (Azure Magazine, April

29th, 2009) "I love books. I have hundreds of them. Many are great resources. But none have proved as valuable as the recently published *Retrofitting Suburbia*. The introduction does a wonderful job of explaining "urban versus suburban form." Every elected official in every local of government needs to read this book cover to cover." (Urban Review STL, April 28th, 2009) "An excellent recent book called *Retrofitting Suburbia* is essential reading for anyone interested in just how much possibility there is in the reimagining of suburban space as sustainable space." (CivicCamp, April 17th, 2009) "A timely book co-written by Atlantan Ellen Dunham-Jones, proposes a way to turn dead malls - as well as ailing office parks, older subdivisions and strip-center-lined arterial roads into lively places. She and co-author June Williamson have adapted those principles to mint what you might call New Suburbanism." (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, April 12th, 2009) "do a splendid job of explaining and illustrating what they call "incremental metropolitanism" in *Retrofitting Suburbia*. The authors make clear at the beginning that by "urban" and "suburban" they are talking about the kinds of built environments that can appear anywhere." (American Planning Association, April 2009) "The American suburb as we know it is dying. The suburbs need to be remade, and just such a transformation is under way in regions that were known for some of the worst sprawl in the U.S. communities. Many Americans will still prefer the space of the suburbs - including the parking spaces. People want to balance the privacy of the suburbs with more public and social areas" says Dunham-Jones. But the result will be a U.S. that is more sustainable - environmentally and economically." (Time Magazine, March 12th, 2009) "is the latest volume to tackle the complex problems of urban-suburban flux. The authors rightly explain that the city and suburbia are intimately interrelated rather than oppositional, and that suburbia is constantly evolving, with many older suburbs around the United States today ripe for urbanization. This book is important and well-intentioned, and its subject is certainly deserving." (The Architect's Newspaper, March 4th, 2009) "If I am right, and central cities alone can't handle the growing demand for urban living, then there is only one practical choice: we are going to have to urbanize the suburbs. This, in fact, is the premise of this new splendid book by two architecture professors. They argue that the remaking of the american suburb not only needs to happen but already is happening, in places scattered all over the country. And they offer reporting and superb photography to back up their claim." (governing.com-Alan Ehrenhalt, March 1, 2009) "Architects Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson confront the challenge of redeveloping abandoned suburban retail space in their new book, *Retrofitting Suburbia*. The detailed text also explores several creative solutions in which progressive planning has reinvigorated suburban communities nationwide." (Popular Mechanics, February 2nd, 2009) "Most of the book's case studies involve

projects of 40 acres or more. The authors say large projects are needed to achieve the critical mass necessary to induce behavioral change," such as encouraging more walking and less driving." (New Urban News; Jan-Feb 2009) "With some of the nation's fastest growth occurring in many suburban communities over the last couple of decades, some current residents might ask why do suburbs need to be designed? Yet, changes taking place in the American economy, marketplace, lifestyles, demographics and design philosophies have necessitated a re-thinking of how we have traditionally ordered our outlying residential communities. Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson make a strong case for this in *Retrofitting Suburbia*." (chicagoarchitecturetoday.com; 1/09) "What's happening around the country is that such places as dead shopping malls, underperforming industrial and business parks, empty big-box stores, worn-out strip malls, aging garden apartments and older subdivisions near transit stops are being changed into vibrant, mixed-use development of various kinds. This - the point of the book - is a good thing. Perhaps its most important contribution is a vision of metropolitan regions that have a number of vibrant and populous town centers." (The Hartford Courant; 1/11/09) "This is the first book I've come across that is specifically targeted at how to redevelop and reposition suburbs for the 21st century world. I think the case studies are particularly relevant. The book provides many examples to study, in areas ranging from enclosed malls to edge cities. The authors are pretty fair in showing both the good and the bad of these. Given the wealth of case studies and reference materials, I think that this is a book that deserves to be on the shelf of leaders in all suburbs in need of redevelopment." (theurbanophile; 1/10/09)

"The greatest threat to suburbs over the next decade is this: "There might not be enough people to live in them." So says June Williamson, author of *Retrofitting Suburbia*. In the 1950's, 50 percent of American households had children. Now, says Williamson, that percentage has shrunk to 35; by 2030, it'll be down to 25 percent. So suburbia is due for a massive makeover. Yes, it's time for a retrofit." (grist.org; 1/15/09) "Dunham-Jones said big-box enclosed malls have become a dying breed as more shoppers prefer going to shop at strip malls or "lifestyle" open-air mall. In an upcoming book, *Retrofitting Suburbia*, co-authored by Dunham Jones, she's included case studies of places across North America that have turned dead malls or big-box stores into thriving community centers." (CnnMoney.com; 12/17/08) "Its encouraging to see that there are enough suburban retrofits to fill a whole book. *Retrofitting Suburbia* helps provide evidence the new administration needs to put together a broad spectrum program that will create jobs, improve quality of life for all, and energy independence." (metropolismag.com; 12/24/08) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"THE BIBLE OF THE RETROFITTING MOVEMENT." &#151;Blair Kamin, architecture critic, Chicago Tribune A guide, with multiple case studies, for redeveloping out-of-date suburban developments into more urban, sustainable places The winner in the Architecture & Urban Planning category of the American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence (The PROSE Awards) The last fifty years have been dominated by the reproduction of sprawl development patterns. The big project for the next fifty years will be retro-fitting sprawl into sustainable places. This edition of Retrofitting Suburbia, which includes a Foreword by Richard Florida and new updated Introduction by the authors, is a comprehensive guidebook for urban designers, planners, architects, developers, environmentalists, and community leaders that illustrates how existing suburban developments can be redesigned into more urban and sustainable places. Retrofitting Suburbia in the press: Retrofitting Suburbia was featured in Time magazine's March 23, 2009 cover story on "Ten Ideas Changing the World Right Now" "In their book, architects and academics Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson . . . recommend urban strategies to solve suburban problems. The book's numerous case studies show that this strategy has its merits. Increasing density, transit, and walkability often (though not always) can help to revitalize struggling communities." &#151; Allison Arieff, The New York Times "Why, where, and how should suburbia be retrofitted? This content-rich, well-written book provides compelling answers. The book's analysis and commentaries are rigorous and comprehensive, predicated not on academic theory but on planning and development history, social science, demographics, market conditions, and regulatory considerations." &#151; Architectural Record "Architects Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson confront the challenge of redeveloping abandoned suburban retail space in their new book, Retrofitting Suburbia. The detailed text also explores several creative solutions in which progressive planning has reinvigorated suburban communities nationwide." &#151; Popular Mechanics "Hats off to Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson. Their work is helping us chart a way to better suburbs, better communities, and a better, more fulfilling way of life. Wielding careful research, eye-opening before-and-after case studies, and a panoply of urban design solutions, Retrofitting Suburbia presents a highly convincing argument for both the desirability and the feasibility of redeveloping failed suburban properties into more sustainable places." &#151; from the Foreword by Richard Florida

Great book for those interested in Urban Planning and the issues the suburbs have posed!

Inspiring. There's hope, yet!

Very good!

The book was in a perfect condition

I view this through the Kindle app on my iPad. There are so many benefits: no heavy book, can highlight (and UNhighlight) suggestions are made based upon what other users have highlighted! The ability to "search" the text alone makes this totally worth it for textbooks. The only down side is not being able to sell them back to for credit...lol.

Morningside Heights in Manhattan looked surprisingly suburban at the turn of the century. One of the most striking comparisons in this book shows a photo of Morningside Heights in the late 1800s beside a photo of a modern, suburban apartment complex outside Dallas. The two photos look remarkably similar, even to the point of having cattle in the background. Manhattan's transition from rural to suburban to urban happened surprisingly quickly, and throughout this book it becomes evident that no matter the physical infrastructure of a place, transition is possible. While having background in urban planning certainly helps understand the context of this book, and there is some planning jargon, any reader interested in the future of suburbs will find this book interesting and approachable. To a large degree this book consists of a series of case studies of various suburban retrofits--how to make such places more walkable, transit friendly and less generic. Effectively, the author is arguing to make these places more unique and relevant to human needs rather than accepting the current status quo of auto-centric design. The photos and diagrams from all over the country are superb and really convey the impact retrofitting can have on communities. The transformations include malls being changed into community town centers (complete with housing and other mixed uses), suburban office buildings being changed into condos, and even strip malls transformed into schools. To the urban planners who may use these case studies professionally, there is not much discussion or advice on how to handle political or economic battles. While suburban retrofitting may not face opposition from communities, this type of development has not been proven to be economically viable in all cases and zoning laws may quash these design ideas when push comes to shove. Still, anyone who is interested in architecture, transit, design, and of course, urban studies, will enjoy this book and find the case studies compelling--especially those who think about urban development holistically like the late Jane Jacobs.



This book tells us why and how to retrofit suburbs, and in particular aging suburban commercial areas. First, the why- older suburban office parks, malls and strip malls often cannot successfully compete with newer, shinier commerce further out in suburbia. And because they are often surrounded by developed land, they cannot adapt simply by expanding. So they need to change or die. Moreover, there is a more public-spirited reason for change: if suburbs are adapted to become more pedestrian-friendly, they will generate fewer car trips and thus less pollution. Second, the how. The typical suburban commercial area involves buildings set back far from the street, thus making walking inconvenient. The area between the street and the buildings is typically dominated by parking lots. The authors' formula, put simply, is: build a bunch of stuff where the parking lot is now. Make some of it residential, so people can walk to the shops and offices (thus increasing the market for the shops). And instead of disorienting superblocks, make these residences, shops and offices on a grid of streets that are narrow enough to be easily crossed by pedestrians. Put the parking in decks surrounded by "liner buildings" so that it doesn't impair walking or uglify the neighborhood. Finally, the authors show numerous examples, to show how doable it all is. Why only commercial areas? Residential areas are not so easily changed, because a typical subdivision has hundreds of owners while a strip mall has only one. So the only way to change a subdivision is to buy out every owner.

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