



Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design

By Charles Montgomery

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A globe-trotting, eye-opening exploration of how cities can?and do?make us happier people

Charles Montgomery's *Happy City* is revolutionizing the way we think about urban life.

After decades of unchecked sprawl, more people than ever are moving back to the city. Dense urban living has been prescribed as a panacea for the environmental and resource crises of our time. But is it better or worse for our happiness? Are subways, sidewalks, and condo towers an improvement on the car dependence of the suburbs?

The award-winning journalist Charles Montgomery finds answers to such questions at the intersection between urban design and the emerging science of happiness, during an exhilarating journey through some of the world's most dynamic cities. He meets the visionary mayor who introduced a "sexy" bus to ease status anxiety in Bogotá; the architect who brought the lessons of medieval Tuscan hill towns to modern-day New York City; the activist who turned Paris's urban freeways into beaches; and an army of American suburbanites who have hacked the design of their own streets and neighborhoods.

Rich with new insights from psychology, neuroscience, and Montgomery's own urban experiments, *Happy City* reveals how cities can shape our thoughts as well as our behavior. The message is ultimately as surprising as it is hopeful: by retrofitting cities and our own lives for happiness, we can tackle the urgent challenges of our age. The happy city can save the world?and we can all help build it.

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Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design By Charles Montgomery Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #14116 in Books
- Brand: Farrar Straus Giroux
- Published on: 2014-10-07
- Released on: 2014-10-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .4" w x 5.49" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 368 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Can cities make us better people? Is the suburban American Dream really a nightmare? In this lively and accessible book, journalist Montgomery (*The Shark God*) marshals decades of interdisciplinary research into an effective argument against what he calls the dispersed city—the modern city/suburb designed around the automobile. The result is a succession of arguments meant to debunk individualism and show how citizens thrive on contact with others. In Montgomery's hands, urban design proves not only exciting, but integral to our future. He persuasively demonstrates that designing cities with social beings in mind can make them more pleasant places to live, and shows why suburbs are experiencing higher crime, as well as a significant happiness deficit. Furthermore, this passionate jeremiad argues that urban design often reinforces inequality, and Montgomery includes useful prescriptions for creating what he calls the fair city, as well as addressing issues like gentrification. For Montgomery, the city is a happiness project that exists in part to corral our conviviality and channel it productively. Though Montgomery's argument may seem strange at first, the book will likely make you a believer. 68 b&w illus. Agent: Rebecca Gradinger, Fletcher & Co. (Nov.)

From [Booklist](#)

What is considered the happiest city on earth? Improbably, it just might be Bogotá, Colombia, where drug lords ruled, bicycles now roll, and pedestrians stroll in a city with a mayor committed to transforming his town's image and its people's lives. What's the secret to his success? Not surprisingly, restricting traffic plays a huge part in Bogotá's livability, but banning cars isn't the be-all and end-all to urban bliss. As Montgomery illustrates through vibrant discussions of the physics, physiology, and psychology of urban, suburban, and exurban dwellers, multiple factors must coalesce before a city, large or small, can achieve perfection. All of which may become terribly muddled as climate change and resource depletion stress urban centers to an untenable tipping point. Touting extensive research tempered by anecdotal examples, Montgomery enumerates the mistakes made not only by the people who plan and govern cities but also by the people who live in them, and he offers cautious reassurance that it's not too late to turn things around for all cities. --Carol Haggas

Review

"*Happy City* is not only readable but stimulating. It raises issues most of us have avoided for too long. Do we live in neighborhoods that make us happy? That is not a silly question. Montgomery encourages us to ask it without embarrassment, and to think intelligently about the answer." ?*Alan Ehrenhalt, The New York Times Book Review*

"Beautifully researched, Charles Montgomery's tale cleverly interweaves rigorous inquiry on urban history and the science of happiness with intimate and personal stories that humanize the vast task of understanding urban dynamics. An inspiring book that reminds us that the power to change our cities often lies in our own hands." ?*Maria Nicanor, Associate Curator of Architecture and Urbanism, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York*

"*Happy City* is its own opiate: an eye-opening, pleasurable, utterly necessary tour through the best and worst neighborhoods of our urbanized world. Charles Montgomery shows us the way to a beautiful city." ?*Andrew Blum, author of Tubes*

“*Happy City* will fundamentally change the way you see, experience, and feel the place you inhabit. It is a hopeful and optimistic vision of our urban future that uses science to argue what we always should have known: in building the good city, we won't just save our planet. We'll save ourselves.” ?*Robert Hammond, cofounder of Friends of the High Line*

“A brilliant, entertaining, and vital book. Charles Montgomery deftly leads us from our misplaced focus on money, cars, and stuff to consider what makes us truly happy. Then everything changes--the way we live, work, and play in humanity's major habitat, the city.” ?*David Suzuki, host of CBC's The Nature of Things and cofounder of the David Suzuki Foundation*

“Charles Montgomery's message is simple: If we're going to save the world, we must first be happier, and that means creating happier cities. *Happy City* isn't just a book about urban design written for urban professionals; it's for everyone who's ever wondered if their city could be a better place, and what they can do about it.” ?*Jarrett Walker, author of Human Transit*

“In a word, wow. I thought I had it all figured out, but this is something I was missing. In echoing all the great economic, health, and environmental mandates for walkable cities, I had mostly sidestepped the concept of happiness, thinking it too intangible to discuss in a compelling way. Thank goodness Charles Montgomery has had the guts and the skill to correct my error with this fascinating and entertaining book.” ?*Jeff Speck, author of Walkable City*

“Charles Montgomery writes with rare wit and erudition about the psychology of urban life. A wake-up call for citizens and planners alike, *Happy City* takes you by the scruff of the neck and shakes you into questioning everything around you. It not only shows us that we must make our cities better, but it tells us how we can.” ?*Nicholas Humphrey, author of Soul Dust*

“I thought I already lived in a happy city: New York. But Charles Montgomery reveals how much happier all of us--kids and adults--can be if we only reconsider what actually contributes to the good life. Suddenly I'm thinking of all the ways we can make millions of people happier. What a great book!” ?*Lenore Skenazy, author of Free-Range Kids*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melvin Hayes:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information currently can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even an issue. What people must be consider whenever those information which is inside the former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously which one works to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* as your daily resource information.

Victor Green:

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because when you find yourself reading a book especially book

entitled Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design your mind will drift away through every dimension, wandering in most aspects that maybe unknown for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a e-book then become one contact form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get previous to. The Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design giving you an additional experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful facts for your better life on this era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished reading it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

James Jones:

This Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design is great book for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who also always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This particular book reveals its details accurately using great arranged words or we can state no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but difficult core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design in your hand like getting the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no book that offer you world within ten or fifteen seconds right but this guide already does that. So, this is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt which?

Fern Gooding:

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