



# House by House, Block by Block: The Rebirth of America's Urban Neighborhoods

*Alexander von Hoffman*

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Not long ago, neighborhoods such as the South Bronx, South Central Los Angeles, and Boston's Roxbury were crime-ridden wastelands of vacant lots and burned-out buildings, notorious symbols of urban decay. In *House by House, Block by Block*, Alexander von Hoffman tells the remarkable stories of how local activists and community groups helped turn these areas around.

For sixty years, federal policy has attempted with little success to solve the problems of housing and poverty in America's inner cities. Yet increasingly, local organizations are picking up where Washington has left off. In a series of dramatic and colorful narratives, von Hoffman shows how these groups are revitalizing once desperate neighborhoods in five major cities: New York, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. The unlikely heroes include: the tough-talking Bronx priest who made apartment buildings for low-income people glisten in the midst of ruins and despair; the "crazy white man" who scrambled to save Chicago's historic Black Metropolis from the wrecking ball; the Boston cops who built a task force that put the brakes on youth gangs. Thanks to locally-based, bootstrap efforts like these, in inner-city neighborhoods across the country, crime rates are falling, real estate values are rising, and businesses are returning. Von Hoffman also shows that grass-roots work can't do it alone: successful revitalization needs the support of local government and access to business and foundation capital.

Based on years of research and more than a hundred interviews, this book is the first systematic account of the dramatic urban revival now going on in the United States. *House by House, Block by Block* will be a must-read for anyone who cares about the fate of America's cities.

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