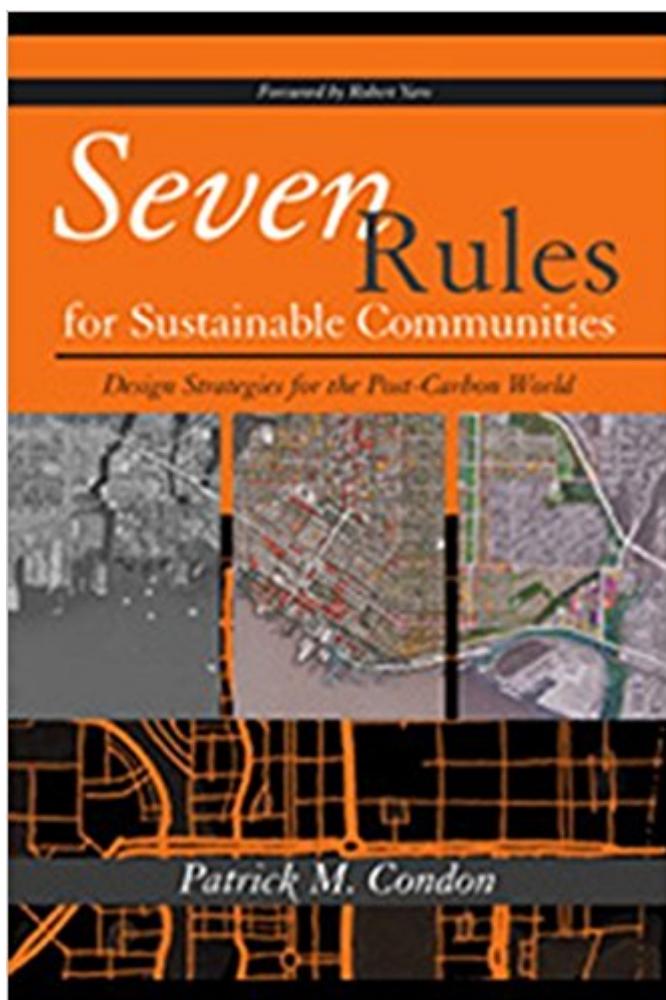


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# Seven Rules For Sustainable Communities: Design Strategies For The Post Carbon World



## Synopsis

Questions of how the design of cities can respond to the challenge of climate change dominate the thoughts of urban planners and designers across the U.S. and Canada. With admirable clarity, Patrick Condon responds to these questions. He addresses transportation, housing equity, job distribution, economic development, and ecological systems issues and synthesizes his knowledge and research into a simple-to-understand set of urban design recommendations. No other book so clearly connects the form of our cities to their ecological, economic, and social consequences. No other book takes on this breadth of complex and contentious issues and distills them down to such convincing and practical solutions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities builds on reflective practice to suggest better ways to design communities. In doing so, Professor Condon puts forth the essential building blocks for constructing the post-carbon city." (Frederick Steiner Dean, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin)"Professor Condon's deep familiarity and engagement with the Vancouver model of city-building, and many other models from across North America, lends practical credibility to this much-needed book. With clear rules and real solutions, this is the kind of book practitioners and engaged citizens need to read." (Brent Toderian Director of City Planning, Vancouver, British Columbia)"Seven Rules is worthy of our attention because it improves our understanding of how urban form affects greenhouse gas production. In referring to an imminent planetary

meltdown" (p. 10), Condon sounds an alarm bell about global warming. Yet, he brings the discussion down to the level of designing individual sites, building neighborhoods, retrofitting cities, and promoting smart growth in regions. Planners who want to respond to the warning bell but have not yet deciphered exactly what can and should be done at local and regional (rather than national and global) levels will benefit greatly from Seven Rules." (Practicing Planner)"Condon's intimate understanding of his neighborhood—of how a series of different elements work together to make Kitsilano a satisfying human habitat—gives depth and persuasiveness to his Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities, one of the best books I've read on urban planning in the era of climate change." (New Urban News)"Professor Condon sums up the opportunities well: "If we change the way cities are built and retrofitted, we can prevent the blackest of the nightmare scenarios from becoming real and can create the conditions for a livable life for our children and grandchildren. It is not apocalyptic to say we can save their lives." (Goldstream Gazette)"While some of this has been said before, Condon offers a fresh take on the material. He starts with an uncompromising view of the reality and menace of climate change. His thesis is that urban areas are responsible for 80 percent of all greenhouse gases and that, therefore, fixing cities must be a priority...The shift in thinking Condon calls for is sizeable and has barely begun. "No responsible planner, architect, landscape architect, politician, or developer," he writes, "can escape the moral imperative to change the way he or she does business." (Planning)"Professor Patrick Condon uses his impressive knowledge of urban planning and his years of research and teaching at the University of British Columbia to create a comprehensive set of rules that may help to secure our future on this planet. His rules are simple and realistic, and are supported by extensive data. Although the rules themselves are not new ideas, Condon's ability to simplify and apply them to current urban design situations is impressive and inspiring...Well-written, concise, and thorough, this should not only be a required reading for students, but should be on the shelves of every planner, developer, architect, landscape architect and engineer in the city...Condon should be highly-praised for his ability to take the world's most complex problem and outline a set of realistic, and exciting solutions." (Re:place Magazine)"For Condon, climate change is a fact, not a debate, and one (along with unsustainable dependence on cars and increasingly unaffordable infrastructure maintenance costs) that demands a response. Although it's clear that he's passionate about the impact of our current lifestyle on the natural world, he makes his points with data and lessons from the field, not emotion or aesthetic critiques. Issues are framed in terms of how they affect people's lives, not in abstractions about atmospheric temperature changes. Reading this book, you can just about

believe a retrofit is possible." (Landscape Architecture Magazine)"A slim 166 pages, the book is rich in ideas and well-articulated arguments for those ideas. It frames the problems of our existing urban forms clearly and proposes solutions. The writing is organized and well illustrated with examples. It is very accessible to the casual reader and well suited to policy-makers, elected officials, and the public at large. This is the book to hand to elected officials to help them understand the issues and possible solutions for making their communities more sustainable...Fundamentally, Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities is about the design of cities. While it gives a comprehensive review of many strategies and techniques for achieving sustainability, its real value is the provision of an intelligent framework for integrating them into comprehensive designs and master plans. The book sets a direction that the discipline of landscape architecture would do well to pursue as part of its research agenda." (Landscape Journal)"Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities is a compact, informative handbook to one of the most profound and intricate planning challenges of our time... Condon prescribes very specific and useful solutions ... Condon has assembled a concise, cogent plea to search for design strategies for the post-carbon world in our own backyards—as well as our streets, sidewalks, driveways, roads, houses, blocks, parks, waterways, and the planning policies we devise together to govern them" (Journal of Planning Education and Research)"Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities is a must-read. It is exhaustively researched and empirically grounded in the unknown or forgotten histories of real examples. Condon's manual presents a compelling and detailed vision for how cities can be transformed and contribute to planetary survival." (Harrison Fraker Professor of Architecture and Urban Design, University of California at Berkeley)

Using vivid comparisons between the experiences of US and Canadian cities, Patrick Condon sets forth seven rules to create a more livable world for future generations—a world not unlike the better parts of our own.

Condon has done an excellent job pulling together a broad range of in-depth ideas for sustainable cities. The work is well-documented. It's highly readable. The text is supplemented by interesting photos and graphics. Every public library should have a copy in the stacks!

Boring read...

Nothing terribly innovative here, but it's succinct and covers many of the main principles promoted

by New Urbanism.

It's okay, but very much North American focused. Doesn't apply to Asia megatropolis!

This book covers no new ground. In many ways it rehashes numerous 15-20 year old new-urbanist concepts such as snout houses that in terms of sustainability are insignificant. The author's basic thesis that streetcar suburbs should be replicated as a model for sustainable development is a disappointment. I would not recommend purchasing this mediocre book.

I was impressed by the straightforward way Patrick Condon presents his arguments. This is a book that is easily accessible to anyone - no need to be an expert in climate change, urban design, transportation or development issues. There is enough hard data and references to make a convincing case without overwhelming a reader not intimately familiar with the points presented. I was pleased that the emphasis to transform urban structure was based on transportation systems - the streetcar and the interconnected road system. From personal experience working on large scale master planned projects I had become convinced of the need for effective, efficient public transit and road networks if truly sustainable communities are to be achieved so it is compelling to see an historical North American urban form (the streetcar city) analyzed and demonstrated as a solution to current and future issues. In combination Condon's proposal addresses greenhouse gas production, scarce land availability, affordable housing, diverse housing mix, neighbourhood employment, excessive VMT. Imbedded in this approach are two essential points ' ease of transit access and continuous corridor development. Condon convincingly argues that the streetcar city works because it operates at human scale and provides what people want in close proximity ' the retail, commercial, entertainment and business base located along the transit corridors. While the 5 minute walk has been generally accepted for nodal based urban development approaches Condon demonstrates how continuous corridor development provides greater utility for this concept. It matches our basic physical capability, addresses our consumer and employment needs and provides convenience that supercedes private auto use. Condon's proposal addresses the hierarchy of public to private spaces from the street to the private home identified by Jane Jacobs through a simple, pragmatic approach ' the historical Vancouver city block, lane and small lot land arrangement. The key characteristics of street oriented housing, lane based parking and multiple housing type possibilities is also shown to address the need for diverse, affordable housing that can support a range of family types and incomes. Finally, Condon does a good job a presenting the value and critical importance of

designing with respect to watershed function. As the effects of climate change increase this point cannot be overemphasized. By providing a comparison to 50 years of urban change between 1950 and 2000 and the potential for equally significant but enhanced urban change by 2050 Condon offers a vision of an achievable sustainable future. This book would be an excellent primer for government officials, staff, design professionals and concerned citizens who are struggling with finding a direction for city development that addresses the multiple, interrelated, complex issues we face. While it is primarily a design based approach it is clear that it has the flexibility and adaptive qualities necessary to complement, and integrate with, a robust community planning process. Real potential for community building exists in this approach - something that is a fundamental component of successful sustainable cities.

Because Patrick's new book is so adept at taking complex material and making it simple to understand even for non-designers while providing a compelling and practical set of strategies to create post-carbon communities, we have made it a mandatory textbook for our Certificate in Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University. This Certificate is geared towards mid-career professionals from a range of backgrounds such as planners, engineers, land developers, elected officials, consultants, economic developers, and staff of non-profit organizations. Patrick's combination of accessible writing style, supportive research and practical case studies is a compelling combination. The fact that Patrick's streetcar city model successfully addresses cultural realities and trends that have stumped many community planning efforts provides an ideal launching pad for critical classroom discussion. If jobs have a tendency to disperse rather than concentrate in designated town centres, should we review the idea that business parks are inherently 'bad' planning? Or, given their often close proximity to services, housing and transit, could improved design make them a bonus rather than a bane for sustainability? Is progress made towards sustainability if transit ridership is increased? Or, as Patrick points out, do we need a more refined definition of success that considers trip duration, carbon impact and the drain on the public purse strings over the long term? While based in urban design, Patrick's book successfully links to a range of community planning and development issues that are relevant to our Certificate participants - from economic development to affordable housing to green infrastructure and natural areas, amongst others. Patrick demonstrates how strategies in each of these areas are important and must fit together to create the kinds of post-carbon, sustainable communities that we need to create in the years and decades ahead. We look forward to using Patrick's book in the Certificate and the many engaging and informed discussions that it will

no doubt stimulate! Rosemary Cooper, Curriculum Coordinator, SFU Certificate in Sustainable Community Development.

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