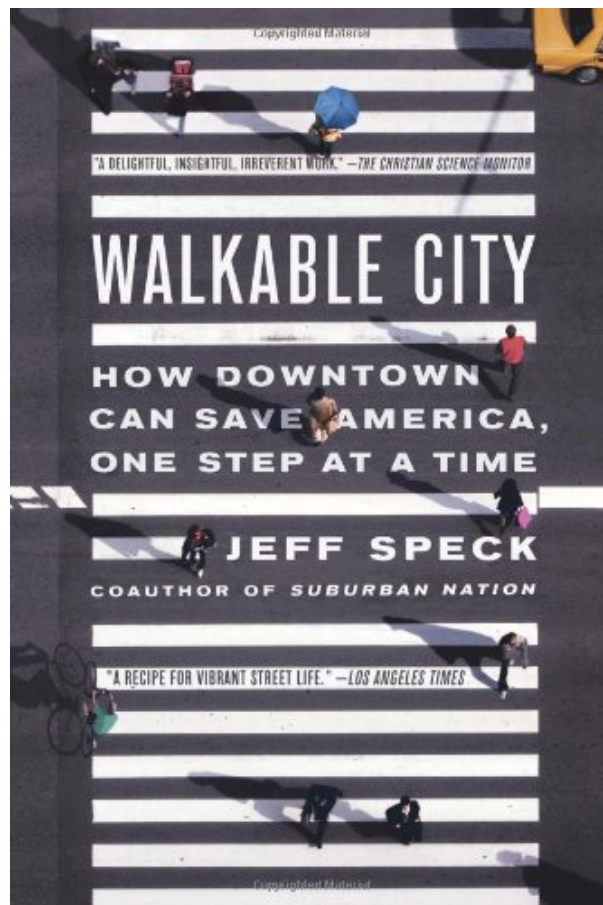
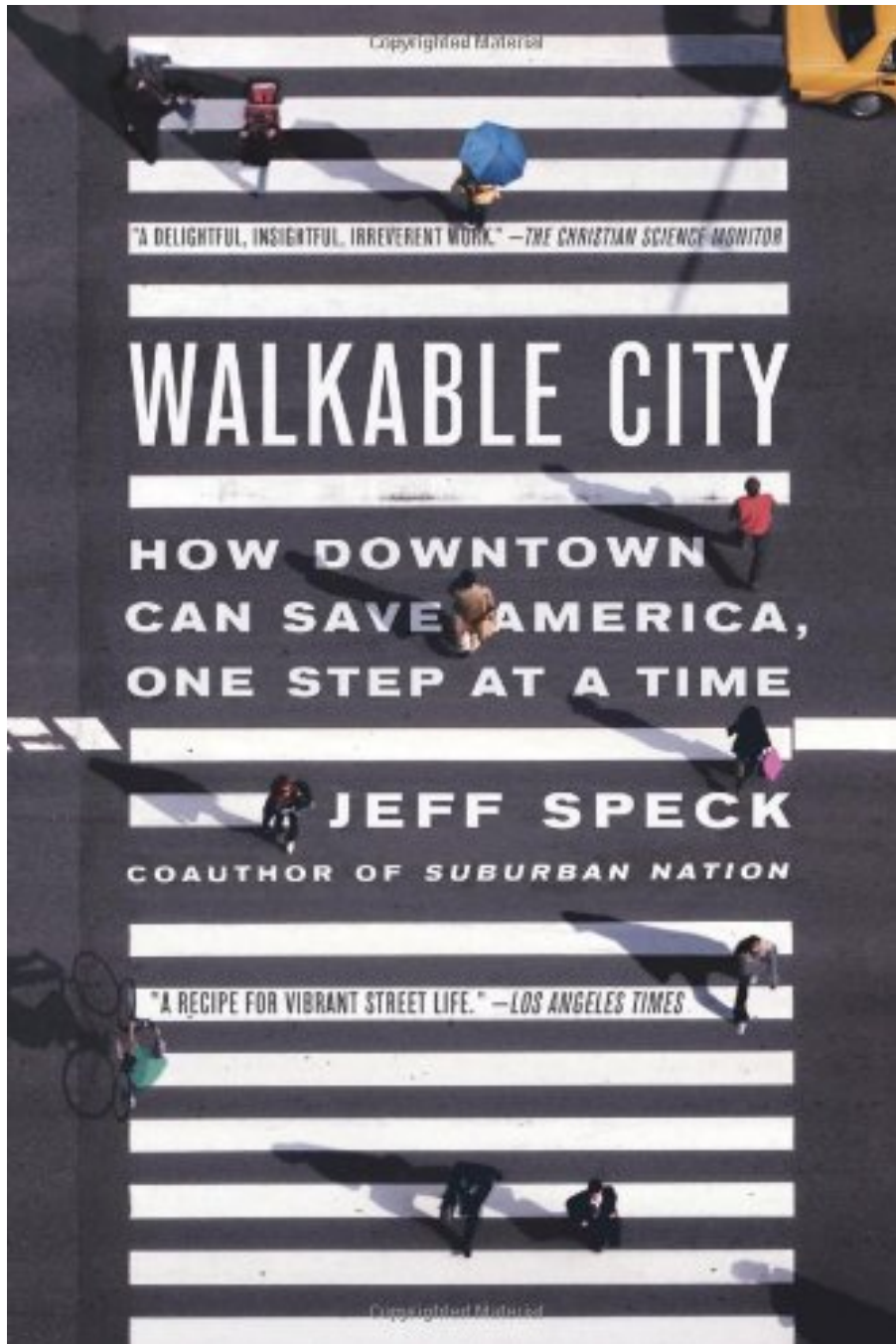


# **WALKABLE CITY: HOW DOWNTOWN CAN SAVE AMERICA, ONE STEP AT A TIME BY JEFF SPECK**



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## From Booklist

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A Best Book of the Year according to Planetizen and the American Society of Landscape Architects

Jeff Speck has dedicated his career to determining what makes cities thrive. And he has boiled it down to one key factor: walkability.

Making downtown into a walkable, viable community is the essential fix for the

typical American city; it is eminently achievable and its benefits are manifold. Walk-

able City?bursting with sharp observations and key insights into how urban change

happens?lays out a practical, necessary, and inspiring vision for how to make American

cities great again.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

82 of 92 people found the following review helpful.

Think you know everything about walkable cities? Not until you read this.

By Darrin Nordahl

I'm no stranger to Jeff Speck's work (Suburban Nation, Smart Growth Manual). He and I sing the same hymns, and preach from the same editions of The Book of Great City Living and Pedestrian Life. I bought Speck's latest book because, as an urban designer and writer myself, I felt I should have this in my library. I figured I might find a couple of useful tidbits to make cities happier places to live, but no huge revelations. Nothing that I didn't know already.

Wrong. This book is packed with astute insights into what makes for livable, lovable communities. Speck's genius, I think, is finding connections between seemingly disparate urban phenomena. And offering solutions that are pragmatic, implementable, and so, so...SIMPLE that it is hard to believe we have gotten it so wrong for so long.

I wish this book came out when I was wrapping up my latest book Making Transit Fun!: How to Entice Motorists from Their Cars (and onto their feet, a bike, or bus). My book is pretty good ;-) But it would have been better had I had Speck's book before mine went to press.

Best of all, Speck's literary style is engaging. This book is an easy read, an inspiring read, and a compelling read. I thought I was just going to flip through a few pages, maybe read a chapter or two, and then place it on my shelf alongside the dozens of other planning books. Wrong again. I was surprised how quickly I became absorbed in this book. Most planning books are drier than butter-less popcorn. Speck's book glides down the gullet with flavor.

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Breezy and engaging--like a great walk!

By MEM

At a recent book talk, I heard Jeff Speck discuss this book and his life's work, and was entirely compelled to read the rest myself. It turns out he really does have the life experience, numerous skills, wide exposure to various urban situations, and the concrete ideas to deliver the outcomes we want to create a walkable life.

I was particularly engaged by the three "E" features that were coming together: epidemiology, environment,

and economics--that were clearly all in favor of urban density, mixed use, and transit oriented development (where it is appropriate). The book backs up these things with evidence on each count.

And then about a month later at a city meeting, here he was again. He's been working with my city planners in Somerville MA to turn our city into the top tier of walkable cities in the US. We are at the right place and right time: we are about to get several MBTA train stations, and currently have the chance to plan and strategize around them.

He acknowledges that we were born on 3rd base (and I don't dispute this). But he has evidence and methods that can help us be an incredibly walkable city. I think he has the goods. I hope we can act on it.

Certainly I have to admit that this book is delightful in part because it matches all of my cognitive bias (heh). I love cities (especially older ones), and I would love to live almost entirely without a car. Many of the examples he uses as both good and bad scenarios are places I've lived--so I know his facts are solid on those. But the text contains enough data and references that you can check the information with other sources, look at images on the web, and see that the story holds.

I wish it had contained more photographic evidence of some of the features he describes. Some of them he showed at our city meeting and they were very effective. But it is possible to seek them out in other ways with the internet, of course.

Certain hot-buttons (like traffic engineers and "starchitects") clearly earn some of Speck's ire. But obviously these stereotypes were for effect, and there are good actors on these things as well. And it will help me to recognize some of these things in the future at city planning meetings and have the ammunition to counter points or suggest alternatives that make more sense.

The breezy and engaging style (including citing The Onion and Monty Python, for example) allow you to quickly get the points, which are well made.

I will be recommending this book to my neighbors as we proceed through the next few years of getting our city enhancements. It will give them a sound basis to understand some decisions that might be hard to grasp at first. And I'm really looking forward to the future with more walkability, for everyone's benefit.

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Awesome - both educational and entertaining

By SFDave

This is a great read... the author is funny and smart, and really knows the details of whats happening (and what should happen) in American cities. He really boils down the policy jargon and hot air into practical ideas, and also illuminates some of the history of how cities got the way they are (the 70s). I disagree with his seeming total anti-car bias (esp innovation in cars), but that comes with the territory; in any case, this book is one of the best I've read in the past few years (on a par with 'Fooled by Randomness' for example) ; and thats saying a lot for a public policy book... My advice - buy it!

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