



# **The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985 (Creating the North American Landscape (Paperback))**

*Jon C. Teaford*

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After prospering in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, America's great urban centers faced economic, demographic, and political decline during the depression of the 1930s. When the Second World War brought economic recovery, politicians and planners of the 1940s confidently anticipated a new golden age for big cities. But the postwar boom never came, and urban America has been waiting for the "renaissance" ever since. In "The Rough Road to Renaissance", Jon C. Teaford describes efforts in twelve older central cities in the Northeast and Midwest to achieve revitalization during the period from 1940 to 1985. Focusing on the "view from City Hall" rather than on state or federal perspectives, Teaford explores the changing trends in city politics and municipal finance as well as the policies that pursued the elusive goal of urban renaissance. He also considers the environmental, transportation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction programs undertaken to create better cities and to close the widening competitive gap with suburbia.

In the early fifties, Teaford explains, big cities were planning for a bright future. Crosstown highways, low-income highrises, and vigorous demolition drastically altered the urban landscape and confidently anticipated new development. But the automobile culture was already derailing urban renewal as city dwellers sought the good life in the suburbs. By the late sixties, rising crime, racial tension, labor militancy, and a wave of abandonment seemed to offer further evidence of impending urban demise. Yet in the 1980s, "messiah mayors" and visionary planners boosted the hopes and morale of urban residents. Once again there was talk of renaissance, but beneath the facade of revival serious problems persisted. In "The Rough Road to Renaissance", Jon Teaford tells a story that residents of Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York, St. Louis, and other famous urban centers will recognize-- a story that is still being written

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