

# PLANETIZEN

Feature

## The 100 Most Influential Urbanists

These are the people that have had the most influence on the places and environments that we call home.

October 9, 2017, 8am PDT | [Planetizen](#) | [@planetizen](#)



The results are in, and *Planetizen* readers [have chosen](#) the "Most Influential Urbanists" of all time.

And, yes, we mean all time. Names on the list date back as far as 498 BCE, but there's also no shortage of contemporary thinkers, activists, planners, and designers in the final list of 100.

It probably won't surprise anyone that Jane Jacobs won this vote by a long shot, basically lapping the competition. There were certainly some surprises to follow, and more than a little evolution from the previous ["Top Thinkers" list](#) generated by the *Planetizen* audience in 2009.

On the subject of evolution, this list includes 17 women, which is a large increase from the 2009 list's nine. Overall, the list is far less male, and less white, than the previous version, but urbanism has been long dominated by one group. As we hope this list makes obvious, urbanists are becoming more aware of the essential contributions of women and people of color throughout history and in the present, but we have a long way to go to achieve equal standing for all people in the built and natural environments.

So, without further ado, and in the hopes of inspiring more debate, consideration, and the next generation of world changing urbanists: *Planetizen's* Most Influential Urbanists.

1. [Jane Jacobs](#) - (May 4, 1916 – April 25, 2006) The author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs is credited with nurturing a new era of community-led planning. Famously opposed Robert Moses on some of the most famous planning controversies of the 20th century.

2. [Jaime Lerner](#) - An architect and urban planner, founder of the Instituto Jaime Lerner and chairman of Jaime Lerner Arquitectos Associados. A three-time mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, during a period of revitalization that made the city renowned for urban planning, public transportation, environmental social programs, and urban projects.

3. [Frederick Law Olmsted](#) - (April 26, 1822 – August 28, 1903) A landscape architect, journalist, social critic, and public administrator. Olmsted is considered the "father" of American landscape architecture, and is responsible for many plans and designs of open spaces around the country, perhaps most famously exemplified by Central Park in Manhattan.

4. [Jan Gehl](#) - An architect and urban designer famous for refocusing design and planning on the human scale. Author of *Life Between Buildings*; *Public Spaces*, *Public Life*; and *Cities for People*, among other books.

5. [Andrés Duany](#) - An American architect, an urban planner, and a founder of the Congress for the New Urbanism. Duany is credited with the plan and code for Seaside, the first new traditional community, the development of the SmartCode, and the definition of the rural to urban transect, among other accomplishments.

6. [Lewis Mumford](#) - (October 19, 1895 – January 26, 1990) Mumford interpreted architecture and urban life in a social context, while working as the architectural critic for *The New Yorker* magazine for over 30 years and authoring numerous books, including *The City in History*, published in 1961.

7. [Robert J. Gibbs](#) - President of Gibbs Planning Group. Planned Michigan's first ten New Urban communities and form-based codes, in addition to contributing to commercial developments in more than 400 town centers and historic cities in the United States and abroad.
8. [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) - Perhaps the most famous architect in U.S. history. Frank Lloyd Wright led the Prairie School of architecture and pursued the theory of organic architecture. Fallingwater, a home located in Pennsylvania, is a beloved example of his work.
9. [Le Corbusier](#) - (October 6, 1887 – August 27, 1965) Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier, was a pioneer of modern architecture and planning. The "towers in the park" concept that emerged from his Radiant City Plan was adopted in cities around the United States.
10. [Charles Marohn](#) - Founder and president of *Strong Towns*, a news and commentary website and a popular portal for advocacy on issues of planning. Marohn authored *Thoughts on Building Strong Towns*, volumes 1 and 2, and *A World Class Transportation System*.
11. [Richard Florida](#) - One of the world's most visible urbanists. Richard Florida authored *The Rise of the Creative Class* and, most recently, *The New Urban Crisis*. Serves as university professor and director of cities at the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto.
12. [William H. Whyte](#) - (October 1, 1917 – January 12, 1999) Whyte's 1980 book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* set a new standard of observation and the study of human behavior in urban settings.
13. [Donald Shoup](#) - Distinguished research professor in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. Author of *The High Cost of Free Parking*, which has succeeded in launching a new approach to parking policy, as a fundamental aspect of planning and land use regulations, in communities around the country.
14. [Kevin Lynch](#) - (January 7, 1918 – April 25, 1984) An urban planner and author of *The Image of the City* (1960) and *What Time is This Place?* (1972). In *The Image of the City*, Lynch posited a theory of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks that is referenced implicitly or explicitly in many planning and design efforts of the current day.
15. [Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk](#) - Co-founder of Arquitectonica and Duany Plater Zyberk & Company. A leader in the New Urbanism movement and the co-author of *Suburban Nation: the Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*, and *The New Civic Art*.
16. [Janette Sadik-Kahn](#) - Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation from 2007–2013, while the nation's largest country pursued and delivered one of the most sweeping revitalizations of the city's streets in a half-century. Currently the principal at Bloomberg Associates and chair the National Association of Transportation Officials (NACTO). Author of *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*.
17. [Robert Moses](#) - The "master builder" of mid-20th century New York City and environs, Robert Moses is one of the most polarizing figure of modern city building. Perhaps the most

powerful man in New York City for a long stretch of the 20th century, Moses pursued a campaign of modernism based on slum clearing, public housing projects, and high-speed automobile transportation evident in New York to this day. Moses's ambitions also inspired the growth of an opposition movement around Jane Jacobs.

18. [Daniel Burnham](#) - (September 4, 1846 – June 1, 1912) An American architect and a towering figure in the history of American planning, thanks to his work in co-authoring the Plan of Chicago. Burnham also contributed to plans for cities like Cleveland, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

19. [Ebenezer Howard](#) - (January 29, 1850 – May 1, 1928), the originator of the garden city movement. Authored *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, published in 1898, which described a utopian city in which people live harmoniously together with nature.

20. [Christopher Alexander](#) - Architect and design theorist, regarded as the "father" of the pattern language movement. Co-author of the 1977 book *A Pattern Language*.

21. [Jeff Speck](#) - A city planner and urban designer and a leading advocate for walkable cities. Author of *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, among other books.

22. [Peter Calthorpe](#) - Founder of the award-winning firm of Calthorpe Associates, Calthorpe is also one of the founders and the first board president of the Congress of New Urbanism.

23. [Michael Bloomberg](#) - Michael R. Bloomberg is an entrepreneur and philanthropist who served three terms as the mayor of the city of New York, during a time of innovation in city government and placemaking efforts in the nation's largest city.

24. [Jane Addams](#) - (September 6, 1860 – May 21, 1935) Known as the "mother" of Social Work.

25. [Enrique Peñalosa](#) - Mayor of Bogotá from 1998 until 2001, and then again beginning in 2016, overseeing major transportation and public space projects in the city. Also served as the president of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP).

26. [Nikos Salingaros](#) - A mathematician by training who applies his work to urban theory. Salingaros has championed network thinking and traditional architecture in the books *Principles of Urban Structure* and *A Theory of Architecture*, respectively, among other books.

27. [Charles, Prince of Wales](#) - A frequent commenter on matters of the built environment, Prince Charles is an advocate of neo-traditional ideas, such as those of Christopher Alexander and Leon Krier. Prince Charles illustrated his ideas on the built environment during a 1984 attack on the British architectural community in a speech given to the Royal Institute of British Architects, in which he described a proposed extension to the National Gallery in London as a "monstrous carbuncle."

28. [Ian McHarg](#) - A pioneer of the environmental movement, McHarg founded the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture and authored the book *Design with Nature*, published in 1969.
29. [James Howard Kunstler](#) - Noted author and critic of suburban development patterns, best known for the book, *The Geography of Nowhere*.
30. [Rosa Parks](#) - (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) An activist in the Civil Rights Movement who set the stage for the Montgomery bus boycott with an act of civil disobedience on public transit.
31. [Pierre-Charles L'Enfant](#) - (August 2, 1754 – June 14, 1825), A French-born American military engineer who designed the basic plan for Washington, D.C. known today as the L'Enfant Plan (1791).
32. [Buckminster Fuller](#) - (July 12, 1895 – July 1, 1983) An American architect, author, designer, inventor, and futurist. Fuller published more than 30 books and developed numerous inventions and architectural designs, including the geodesic dome.
33. [John Muir](#) - (April 21, 1838 – December 24, 1914) A naturalist and author, most famous an early advocate for the preservation of wilderness in the United States. His activism helped preserve the Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park, and many other wilderness areas. Muir also founded the Sierra Club, which is one of the most active environmental groups, advocating positions on development projects throughout the United States.
34. [Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.](#) - (July 24, 1870 – December 25, 1957) A landscape architect and city planner who worked on projects in Acadia, the Everglades, and Yosemite National Park as part of a life-long commitment to U.S. National Parks. Also a founding member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.
35. [Léon Krier](#) - A leading proponent of New Urbanism and provocateur of modern urbanism. Best known for the development of Poundbury, an urban extension to Dorchester, in the United Kingdom.
36. [Rachel Carson](#) - (May 27, 1907 – April 14, 1964) An American marine biologist, author, and conservationist. Carson's book *Silent Spring* is credited with bringing environmental advocacy to a new level of public awareness.
37. [Walt Disney](#) - (December 5, 1901 – December 15, 1966) An entrepreneur, animator, voice actor, and film producer. In 1965, Disney began development of Disney World as a new type of city, the "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow."
38. [Candi CdeBaca](#) - Co-founder and co-executive director of Project VOYCE, founder and member of the Cross Community Coalition, and founder and principal of Rebel Soul Strategies.

39. [Henri Lefebvre](#) - (June 16, 1901 – June 29, 1991) A Marxist philosopher and sociologist, best known for pioneering the critique of everyday life and for introducing the concepts of the right to the city and the production of social space. Author of 60 books and 300 articles.
40. [Jimmy Carter](#) - The 39th president of the United States, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and a tireless champion of Habitat for Humanity.
41. [Patrick Geddes](#) - (October 2, 1854 – April 17, 1932) A Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, and pioneering town planner, Geddes introduced the concept of "region" to architecture and planning and coined the term "conurbation."
42. [Saul Alinsky](#) - (January 30, 1909 – June 12, 1972) An American community organizer and writer and an early adopter and champion for many of the practices of modern community organizing.
43. [Edward Glaeser](#) - Economist and professor of economics at Harvard University. His book, *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*, is a popular and widely cited reference for urban boosters.
44. [Gil Peñalosa](#) - Founder and chair of 80 Cities, and a leading advocate for the design and use of parks and streets as great public places, as well as sustainable mobility: walking, riding bicycles, using public transit, and the new use of cars.
45. [Saskia Sassen](#) - Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and a member of the Committee on Global Thought. Coined the term "Global City," and authored *Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, published in 1991.
46. [David Harvey](#) - A theorist in the field of urban studies, geographer by training, professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and prolific author.
47. [Peter Hall](#) - (March 19, 1932 – July, 30 2014) Professor of planning and regeneration at University College London. Also served as president of the Town and Country Planning Association and the Regional Studies Association. Considered the "father" of the enterprise zone, a policy tool subsequently adopted by countries worldwide to support economic development in disadvantaged areas.
48. [Edmund Bacon](#) - (May 2, 1910 – October 14, 2005) An American urban planner, architect, educator, and author. Served as executive director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission from 1949 to 1970, earning the nickname "The Father of Modern Philadelphia."
49. [Jacob Riis](#) - (May 3, 1849 – May 26, 1914) Social reformer, "muckraking" journalist, and social documentary photographer.
50. [Georges-Eugene Haussmann](#) - (March 27, 1809 – January 11, 1891) Commonly known as Baron Haussmann. Carried out a massive urban renewal program of new boulevards, parks, and public works in Paris commonly referred to as Haussmann's renovation of Paris.

51. [Thomas Jefferson](#) - (April 13, 1743 – July 4, 1826) The third president of the United States (1801–1809), the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776), and an accomplished architect. Jefferson's designs for his home of Monticello and the University of Virginia campus are significant contributions to the architectural heritage of the United States, as well as influences on the federal style of architecture that survives to this day.

52. [Brent Toderian](#) - Vancouver chief planner from 2006 to 2012, during the city's 2010 Winter Olympics-related planning and design process as well as the EcoDensity initiative and the Greenest City Action Plan. Toderian is now a consulting city planner and urbanist with TODERIAN UrbanWORKS and vocal advocate for livability initiatives.

53. [Allan Jacobs](#) - An urban designer and professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. Authored the paper, "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto," with Donald Appleyard, among other books. Also served for eight years as the director of the San Francisco Department of City Planning.

54. [Jennifer Keesmaat](#) - Served as chief planner of Toronto from 2012 until September 2017, during which the city underwent a period of rapid growth. Keesmaat is an active participant in the planning discussion, contributing numerous editorials for local publications that argued in favor of progressive transportation planning policies.

55. [Vitruvius](#) - (c. 80–70 BCE – c. 15 BCE) A Roman author, architect, and engineer. Author of *De architectura*, whose description of perfect proportion in architecture and human form influenced Leonardo da Vinci.

56. [Rem Koolhaas](#) - Architect, architectural theorist, urbanist, and professor in practice of Architecture and Urban Design at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. Koolhaas is the author of multiple books, including *S,M,L,XL*, which includes an essay on urban planning titled "Whatever Happened to Urbanism?"

57. [Jarrett Walker](#) - A consulting transit planner, Walker's work in cities like Houston and his blog *Human Transit* lead current thinking about best practices public transit and mass transportation infrastructure.

58. [Dan Burden](#) - A leader in innovative transportation planning, working in the past as Florida's first state bicycle and pedestrian coordinator and as a co-founder of Walkable Communities, Inc. Burden is currently director of innovation and inspiration at Blue Zones, LLC.

59. [Hippodamus of Miletus](#) - (498 – 408 BCE) An ancient Greek architect and urban planner, among other intellectual pursuits. Considered the "Father of European Urban Planning" and the namesake of the "Hippodamian Plan" (grid plan) of city layout.

60. [Joseph Minicozzi](#) - Principal of Urban3, LLC, Minicozzi is an advocate for downtown-style mixed-use developments, especially as preferred to big box retail.

61. [Michael Mehaffy](#) - Portland-based consultant and author specializing in walkable mixed-use projects. Mehaffy is also a senior researcher in urban sustainability at KTH University in Stockholm and the executive director of the Sustasis Foundation.
62. [Fred Kent](#) - Founder and president of Project for Public Spaces, and an authority on revitalizing public spaces.
63. [Jim Venturi](#) - Jim Venturi is the founder and principal of ReThinkNYC, a New York City-based urban transportation planning think tank.
64. [Mitchell Silver](#) - Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Past president of the American Planning Association (APA) and former chief planning and development officer and planning director for Raleigh, North Carolina.
65. [Christopher Leinberger](#) - Research professor and chair of the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at the George Washington University School of Business, president of Locus: Responsible Real Estate Developers and Investors, and founding partner of Arcadia Land Company. Recently a proponent of Walkable Urban Places, or WalkUPs.
66. [Carol Coletta](#) - A senior fellow with The Kresge Foundation's American Cities Practice, Coletta is leading a proposed \$40 million collaboration of foundations, nonprofits, and governments to demonstrate the benefits of a civic commons. Former vice president of community and national Initiatives for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and president of ArtPlace.
67. [Dan Gilbert](#) - The chairman and founder of Rock Ventures and Quicken Loans Inc., Gilbert makes this list for his portfolio of downtown development investments in Detroit and Cleveland.
68. [Zaheer Allam](#) - An advocate for energy and urban systems in Africa and the Small Island States. Co-founder of the Plateforme Citoyenne.
69. [James Rouse](#) - (April 26, 1914 – April 9, 1996) Founder of The Rouse Company, was a pioneering real estate developer, urban planner, and civic activist. In 1982, Rouse created the Enterprise Foundation, an organization that helps community groups build housing.
70. [Majora Carter](#) - An American urban revitalization strategist and public radio host from the South Bronx area of New York City. Carter's work focuses on inclusion and sustainability.
71. [Ellen Dunham-Jones](#) - Professor at the Georgia Tech School of Architecture and director of the school's urban design program. Authored, along with June Williamson, *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs*.
72. [Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five](#) - A pioneering hip hop group formed in the South Bronx of New York City in 1976. Their classic song "The Message" is an instantly recognizable urban manifesto.



73. [Gaétan Siew](#) - Architect, planner, and founder of Lampotang & Siew Architects. Work includes master plans for the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport in Mauritius, the Chinese neighbourhood in Port Louis, the Seychelles International Airport, and other projects around the world.

74. [John Nolen](#) - (June 14, 1869 - February 18, 1937) A landscape architect and planner best known for work in Florida and Wisconsin. An advocate for regional planning and land use controls to counter land speculation.

75. [Mike Lydon](#) - Principal with Street Plans and a leading proponent of Tactical Urbanism. Co-author of *Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action, Long-Term Change* Vol.1-4.

76. [Bruce Katz](#) - The inaugural Centennial Scholar at the Brookings Institution, where he focuses on the challenges and opportunities of global urbanization. Served for 20 years as the vice president and co-director of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, and authored the book *The Metropolitan Revolution*, published in 2013.

77. [Camillo Sitte](#) - Architect, painter, and city planning theoretician. Authored *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, published in 1889, frequently cited as a criticism of the Modernist movement.

78. [William Penn](#) - (14 October 1644 – 30 July 1718) An English real estate entrepreneur, philosopher, early Quaker, and founder of the Province of Pennsylvania, the English North American colony and the future Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

79. [F. Kaid Benfield](#) - Former director for sustainable communities for the National Resources Defense Council and high profile author, writing at numerous urbanism publications and authoring several books.

80. [R. John Anderson](#) - Co-founder and principal for Anderson|Kim Architecture + Urban Design.

81. [Earl Blumenauer](#) - The U.S. Representative for Oregon's 3rd congressional district, Earl Blumenauer is one of the federal government's most ardent supporters of alternative transportation, through public transit and bike infrastructure, as well as sustainability initiatives.

82. [Walter Benjamin](#) - (July 15, 1892 – September 26, 1940) A philosopher famous for theories of aesthetics. Benjamin also focused academic inquiry on the concept of the flâneur.

83. [Naomi Klein](#) - A journalist, activist, and author of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, *Shock Doctrine*, and *No is Not Enough*.

84. [Donald Appleyard](#) - (July 26, 1928 – September 23, 1982) An urban designer and theorist, teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. Author of the book *Livable Streets* and, along with Allan Jacobs, the paper "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto."

85. [Henry Cisneros](#) - Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, from 1981 to 1989—the second Latino mayor of a major American city and the city's first since 1842. Cisneros also served as the secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the administration of President Bill Clinton.
86. [Idefonso Cerdá Suñer](#) - (December 23, 1815 – August 21, 1876) A Catalan Spanish urban planner who designed the 19th-century "extension" of Barcelona called the Eixample.
87. [Shelley Poticha](#) - Director of the Urban Solutions team at the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC). Formerly a senior political appointee in the Obama Administration, where she led the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and launched the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
88. [Doug Farr](#) - Founding principal and president of Farr Associates Architecture and Urban Design. Farr also founded the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Core Committee and is a board member of EcoDistricts.
89. [Virginia Hanusik](#) - A New Orleans-based artist examining the the relationship between culture and the built environment. Hanusik's most recent projects, Backwater and Impossible City, were detailed in *Places Journal*.
90. [Richard Sennett](#) - Centennial professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and university professor of the Humanities at New York University. Sennett studies social ties in cities, and the effects of urban living on individuals in the modern world, and has authored many books on related subjects, including *The Fall of Public Man*, published in 1977, about the public realm, and *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation*, published in 2012.
91. [Kennedy Smith](#) - Expert on commercial district revitalization and development, independent main street businesses, and economically and environmentally sound community development. Co-founded the Community Land Use and Economics (CLUE) Group, LLC. Also the longest-serving director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center.
92. [Mike Davis](#) - A writer, political activist, urban theorist, and historian, best known for his investigations of power and social class in Southern California. Authored *City of Quartz*, published in 1990.
93. [Clarence Stein](#) - (June 19, 1882 – February 7, 1975) An urban planner, architect, and writer. Stein was a major proponent of the Garden City movement in the United States. Co-founded the Regional Planning Association of America to address large-scale planning issues such as affordable housing, the impact of sprawl, and wilderness preservation.
94. [Jose Corona](#) - Currently the director of equity and strategic partnership for the Mayor's Office in the city of Oakland. Previously worked as chief executive officer of Inner City Advisors (ICA).

95. [Jason Roberts](#) - Co-founder of the Better Block Project, founder of the Oak Cliff Transit Authority, and co-founder of the Art Conspiracy and Bike Friendly Oak Cliff.

96. [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#) - (December 22, 1960 – August 12, 1988) An American artist, who began his career as a graffiti artist in New York City, helping to popularize the medium.

97. [Emily Talen](#) - Professor of urbanism at the University of Chicago, following previous faculty positions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Arizona State University. Author of numerous books devoted to the relationship between the built environment and social equity.

98. [William McDonough](#) - Architect, product designer, and advocate. Authored the book *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, as the most famous expression of his message. Also the founding principal of William McDonough + Partners and co-founder of McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC).

99. [Theaster Gates](#) - A Chicago-based installation artist, Gates's addresses urban planning, among other issues. Gates is also the founder and artist director of the Rebuild Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on cultural-driven redevelopment and affordable space initiatives in under-served communities.

100. [Norman Krumholz](#) - Professor in the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. Long-time Cleveland planning director, serving under three separate mayors, and a leading proponent of equity planning.