



# **The Politics of Downtown Development: Dynamic Political Cultures in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.**

*Stephen McGovern*

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American cities experienced an extraordinary surge in downtown development during the 1970s and 1980s. Pro-growth advocates in urban government and the business community believed that the construction of office buildings, hotels, convention centers, and sports complexes would generate jobs and tax revenue while revitalizing stagnant local economies. But neighborhood groups soon became disgruntled with the unanticipated costs and unfulfilled promises of rapid expansion, and grassroots opposition erupted in cities throughout the United States.

Through an insightful comparison of effective protest in San Francisco and ineffective protest in Washington, D.C., Stephen McGovern examines how citizens—even those lacking financial resources—have sought to control their own urban environments. McGovern interviews nearly one hundred business activists, government officials, and business leaders, exploring the influence of political culture and individual citizens' perceptions of a particular development issue. McGovern offers a compelling explanation of why some battles against city hall succeed while so many others fail.

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