7 Recommended Books for Advanced Students Interested in Urban Planning

The Death and Life of Great American Cities
by Jane Jacobs (1961)
A classic since its publication in 1961, this book is the definitive statement on American cities: what makes them safe, how they function, and why all too many official attempts at saving them have failed. The New York Times writes: "Perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning."

Edge City: Life on the New Frontier
by Joel Garreau (1992)
First there was downtown. Then there were suburbs. Then there were malls. Then Americans launched the most sweeping change in 100 years in how they live, work, and play.

The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York
by Robert A. Caro (1975)
The tragic story of Robert Moses, whose use and abuse of power shaped the politics, the physical structure and even the problems of urban decline in New York.

The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape
by James Howard Kunstler (1995)
The Geography of Nowhere traces America's evolution from a nation of Main Streets and coherent communities to a land where every place is like no place in particular, where the cities are dead zones and the countryside is a wasteland of cartoon architecture and parking lots.

The Urban Villagers
by Herbert J. Gans (1962, updated 1982)
A report of a participant-observation study of an inner-city Boston neighborhood called the West End and, in particular, of the native-born Americans of Italian parentage who lived there with other ethnic groups.

Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West
by William Cronon (1992)
In this groundbreaking work, a former Yale University professor of history gives an environmental perspective on the history of 19th-century America. "No one has written about Chicago with more power, clarity, and intelligence than Cronon. Indeed, no one has ever written a better book about a city." --Boston Globe

Silent Spring
by Rachel Carson (1962)
Rarely does a single book alter the course of history, but Rachel Carson's Silent Spring did exactly that. The outcry that followed its publication in 1962 forced the government to ban DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson's book was instrumental in launching the environmental planning movement. Introduction by Al Gore, Jr.