

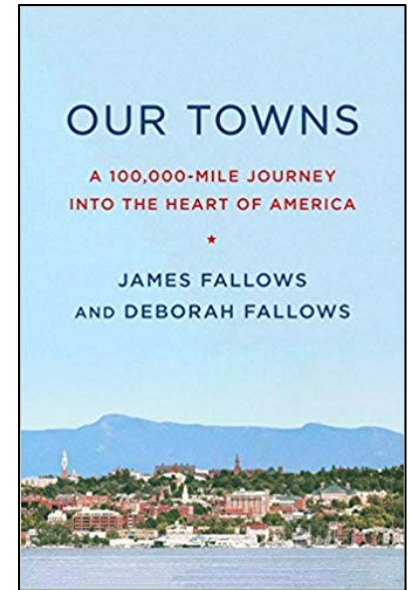


BOOK REVIEW

Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America by James Fallows and Deborah Fallows

review submitted by Nathan Huret and Crystal Morphis

This book was recommended by NCEDA President Pat Mitchell. It is a must-read for economic developers. James and Deborah Fallows spent five years traveling across America in their single-engine prop plane learning what drives the reinvention of cities. From Eastport, Maine to San Bernardino, California, they visited cities that have revamped downtowns, retooled schools, attracted entrepreneurs, and became hotspots for young professionals. The couple interviewed community champions, elected leaders, economic developers, educators and others who led the turnaround of their cities. However, saying "they interviewed" may be too simple a phrase. In addition to talking with those mentioned, the authors stayed in the towns and participated in community events at which they often talked informally with residents over a lunch or dinner or sitting on a street bench. They went into classrooms and talked to children. They walked many of the communities to "get a feel" for the environment of a community. They are honest about the problems cities are facing like economic dislocation and the opioid crisis, but they focus on the innovative solutions communities are crafting. Readers will discover best practices and creative ideas to apply to their home communities. Moreover, the reader comes away with the feeling that the authors truly care about communities and thus the reader experiences the compassion and passion brought about by the story-telling. *Our Towns* is written by true story-tellers. Articles about the Fallows' journey have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *New York Times*, and other national media.



The Fallows define the 10 ½ "signs of civic success":

1. People work together on practical local possibilities, rather than allowing bitter disagreements about national politics to keep them apart.
 2. You can pick out the local patriots.
 3. The phrase "public-private partnership" refers to something real.
 4. People know the civic story.
 5. They have downtowns.
 6. They are near a research university.
 7. They have, and care about, a community college.
 8. They have distinctive, innovative schools.
 9. They make themselves open.
 10. They have big plans.
- 10 ½. At least one craft brewery, maybe more, and probably some small distilleries.

Learn more here: www.ourtownsbook.com.