

Quotes by Jane Jacobs and Milton Friedman

On Public Housing

“Far from improving the housing of the poor, as its proponents expected, public housing has done just the reverse. The number of dwelling units destroyed in the course of erecting public housing projects has been far larger than the number of new dwelling units constructed....But this has only made the problem for the rest all the worse, since the average density of all together went up.” - Milton Friedman, [*Capitalism and Freedom*](#), p. 179.¹

“Public housing on its part is held to a current cost of \$17,000 per dwelling unit. Were the involuntary subsidies absorbed as public cost, the expense of these dwellings would soar to politically unrealistic levels. Both of these operations, “renewal” projects and public housing projects, with their wholesale destruction, are inherently wasteful ways of rebuilding cities, and in comparison with their full costs make pathetic contributions to city values..... Project building as a form of city transformation makes no more sense financially than it does socially.” – Jane Jacobs, [*Death and Life*](#), p. 313.

On the Paternalism of Government

“Conventional planning approaches to slums and slum dwellers are thoroughly paternalistic. The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so. To overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests, which they certainly are.” – Jane Jacobs, [*Death and Life*](#), p. 271.

Public housing cannot therefore be justified on the grounds either of neighborhood effects or of helping poor families. It can be justified, if at all, only on grounds of paternalism; that the families being helped “need” housing more than they “need” other things but would themselves either not agree or would spend the money unwisely. - Milton Friedman, [*Capitalism and Freedom*](#), p. 178.

On Order from Freedom

“The possibility of co-ordination through voluntary co-operation rests on the elementary—yet frequently denied—proposition that both parties to an economic transaction benefit from it, *provided the transaction is bi-laterally voluntary and informed*....Exchange can therefore bring about co-ordination without coercion.” - Milton Friedman, [*Capitalism and Freedom*](#), p. 13. (Emphasis in the original.)

“Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city....This order is all composed of movement and change....an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole.” – Jane Jacobs, [*Death and Life*](#), p. 50.

¹ Note Friedman’s pages numbers refer to the 1962 paperback edition published by the University of Chicago. Jacobs’ pages refer to the paperback Vintage Book Edition from December 1992.