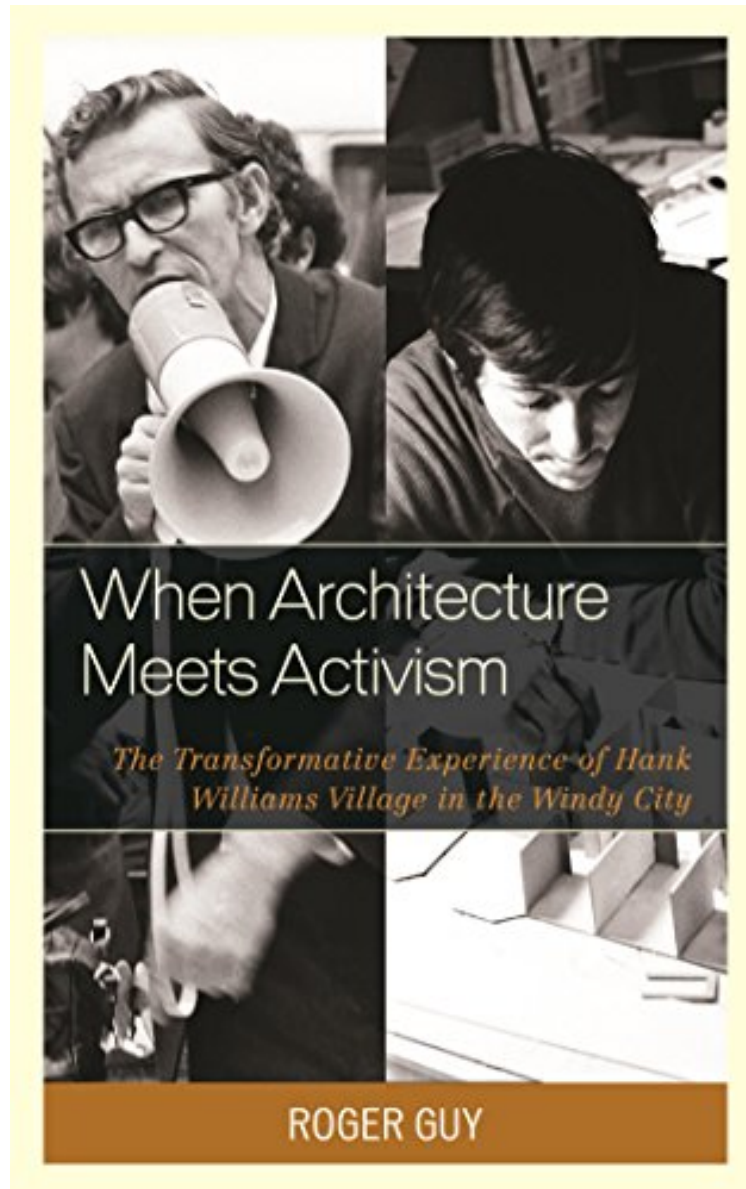


[Mobile ebook] When Architecture Meets Activism: The Transformative Experience of Hank Williams Village in the Windy City

## When Architecture Meets Activism: The Transformative Experience of Hank Williams Village in the Windy City

*Roger Guy*

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## Architecture Meets Activism: The Transformative Experience of Hank Williams Village in the Windy City:

This social history and community study documents the events surrounding the attempt by community members, activists, and VISTA architects to resist the planned construction of a community college in the neighborhood of Uptown. The planner and architect are seldom envisioned as advocates for the urban poor. However, during the 1960s, New Left planners and architects began working with marginalized groups in cities to design alternatives to urban renewal projects. This was part of a national advocacy planning movement that was taking shape in urban areas like Chicago. Inspired by critics of the Rational-comprehensive model of planning, advocacy planners opposed the imposition of projects on neighborhoods often with no collaboration from residents. One example of this resistance was Hank Williams Village—a multi-purpose housing and commercial redevelopment project modeled after a southern town. The Village was an attempt to prevent the displacement of thousands of southern whites by the planned construction of a community college in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. While the plan for the Village failed to win support of the local urban renewal board, the work performed by the young VISTA architects became instrumental in their subsequent career trajectories and thus served as formative personal and professional experience.

This is an excellent, thoroughly researched and well-written detailed historical account of a group of "advocacy" planners and architects who, in the 1960s, led the effort to revitalize Chicago's Uptown, a community of poor white migrants from the South. Guy's book presents a new perspective on urban renewal by uncovering the grassroots organizing role played by a group of radical architects and planners who led the effort to preserve community control over redevelopment in Uptown. This is a ground breaking study that is well suited for urban history, geography, sociology, and planning courses. (Joseph A. Rodriguez, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) For those concerned with the history of America's sometimes turbulent city centers, Roger Guy's vibrant new book is an important read. By exploring the life and death of Hank Williams Village in Chicago's Uptown, he describes how, in the final years of the 1960s, architects and planners came together with political activists to create an alliance, a wave of organized resistance to the orthodoxies of centrally planned urban renewal. The story told in *When Architecture Meets Activism*—that of the unprecedented level of control and self-determination over their built environment sought by local residents spurred on by the promises of the civil rights era, and the ultimately successful extinguishing of this community-based approach to design—makes clear the profound importance of grassroots decision-making and advocacy planning, and reveals much that can teach us about contemporary urban issues. (Paul Cronin, School of Visual Arts) The once thriving Uptown neighborhood in Chicago was a cauldron of social change at the end of the 1960s. Roger Guy has written an intriguing book about the struggle by residents to fight the city's urban renewal efforts by proposing their own plan for Hank Williams Village. Through extensive interviews and archival research Guy traces the emergence of advocacy planning, Community Design Centers, and activist architecture from early concepts and theory to application in Uptown. The story of young VISTA Volunteer architects, charismatic leadership among Appalachian migrants living in Uptown, development of a Community Design Center, and the lasting impact on those involved is a must read for anyone interested in urban planning history. (Thomas E. Wagner, University Professor Emeritus of Planning and Urban Studies, School of Planning, University of Cincinnati) About the Author Roger Guy is professor of sociology and criminal justice at University of North Carolina at Pembroke.