Foreword

I introduced the notion of a ‘Third Place’ in 1989, in the hard-cover edition of *The Great Good Place*.

That book and the concept of the third place came about after I was first introduced to life in a modern American suburb. Earlier I held a position at the University of Nevada in the city of Reno. Life there was easy with a block and a half walk to campus, two blocks to a grocery store, and a walk of three blocks put me downtown among the casinos and restaurants.

From Reno, I moved to Pensacola, Florida as a charter member of the newly-founded University of West Florida and, for the first time in my life, I lived in an automobile suburb. In Reno, I had parked my car out back and watched it gather dust as I had little need for it. Now I needed the car every day of the week and for everything. The use-value of my neighborhood (things available on foot) was zero. There were sidewalks but nothing to walk to, and that ‘place on the corner’ where earlier generations met and got to know one another had been zoned out; living in a community for single-use zoning had killed any hope of it.

After several weeks of shuttling back and forth between the two small worlds of home and work, I got lucky. Regularly driving past Krell’s bakery, I noticed through its several picture windows, the same group of men sitting at the counter every morning. By my third visit I was one of the gang. One morning Roby was outside putting a new alternator in my car while I was inside enjoying my coffee. Buck had a big tree that needed to come down, an easy job for me and my chainsaw. Gene’s son became my ‘yard man.’ These few examples suggest the practical gains of third place involvement, apart from the daily conversation and laughter in good company – the major benefit. My residential neighborhood offered nothing, but Krell’s made up for it.

In a long life, I’ve had many third places but it was Krell’s, more than any of them, that struck me with their importance. It was living in the sterile world our planners have created that brought the message home. In 2001, I followed the original book with a reader in which 20 authors

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1 Ray’s forthcoming book is called *The Joy of Tippling*. Ray explains that the book ‘encourages a moderate consumption of alcohol which brings people together in happy communion and promotes a livelier form of conversation.’
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detailed a variety of places serving to bring people together beyond the confines of home and work.

The present volume zeroes in on the widespread problem of loneliness in urban centers; a problem that city planners seem never to understand nor address. Among several new approaches to third place planning are the effects of technological advances, the need for child-friendly places, the development of community gardens, and the role of music. It pleases me greatly that this book is the product of two women, for if ever a field needed more women, and needed them badly, it is urban planning.

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