How can American cities foster sustainable regional development? What role can a university play in this process? These are the central questions addressed in this innovative collection of essays, which brings together scholars in such diverse fields as history, political economy, community studies, industrial theory, economic geography, environmental studies, ergonomics and work design, race and gender studies, manufacturing engineering, and public health.

The focus of the book is Lowell, Massachusetts, a city rich in industrial and immigrant history. In 1993 a core group of faculty members at the University of Massachusetts Lowell launched an interdisciplinary study to find ways for the university to help stimulate regional development on a sustainable basis. They looked at models of development, new processes, and practical tools for transforming ideas into actions. At the same time, they moved beyond traditional research paradigms that focus on business growth and technology diffusion to the exclusion of social, environmental, and cultural development.

The product of this research in Lowell is a set of thoughtful essays that span the physical and social sciences, engineering, and the humanities and engage the debate over how best to achieve sustainable development—a debate in which issues of social justice, popular participation, and economic development are inextricably linked.

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