This talk explores the diversity of ancient urban settlements using a four-part organizational framework: urban form, urban life, urban functions, and urban meaning. I use this scheme in two ways. First, it helps clarify the theoretical orientations that scholars bring to the definition and analysis of ancient urbanism. Second, I use the scheme to organize information about ancient cities; any comprehensive treatment of an ancient city or urbanism must deal with these four realms of knowledge. For *urban form*, I present a new model of ancient urban planning. The theme of *urban life* is illustrated by my excavations of houses in the Aztec city of Yautepec. For *urban functions*, I discuss the nature of archaeological evidence required to address this realm. My treatment of *urban meaning* uses Amos Rapoport’s model of levels of meaning in the built environment to critique archaeological analyses of urban cosmology and symbolism. Although I present examples from ancient urban traditions worldwide, most examples are drawn from my own research on Aztec urbanism.