

'City in 2050' initiative (highlights), the Urban Land Institute

About the City in 2050 Initiative



The recent instability of global capital markets combined with newly emerging frameworks of environmental policy creates several imperatives for ULI. Real estate markets will be restructured and regulatory frameworks redefined. ULI's mission calls us to forge ahead and proactively explore new land use paradigms and scenarios. This is a crucial time to help land use professionals innovate and explore new business strategies.

With *The City in 2050: Creating Blueprints for Change*, we take the opportunity to create a dialogue that explores potential paths of innovation. The initiative is being presented as an exchange of ideas to prepare for and act upon the changes facing metropolitan areas over the next decades as the world

becomes more urbanized.

Elevated concerns over capital markets, rising energy costs, climate change, exploding populations, and equitable development are changing how communities define 'the responsible use of land.' As these issues increasingly affect our daily lives, discussions regarding sustainable development continue to both broaden and escalate.

In only 42 years, when we mark the midpoint of the 21st century, cities around the world will have experienced unprecedented growth—serving larger and more diverse populations than ever in world history. The quest to balance market pressures, public policy goals, and land use decisions in a fast-paced global marketplace will be more challenging than ever.

Emerging Frameworks

Major forces will influence urban growth over the next 40 years, including energy prices, climate change, technology, and the globalization of capital. As the world's population also grows from 6 billion to 9 billion people, with the majority living in urbanized communities, more choices will face us at all levels. From policy makers, to young people entering careers, to investors choosing portfolios, societies will not adopt one urban model, but many. The following is a summary of the framework established in ULI's *The City in 2050: Creating Blueprints for Change* publication released at the 2008 ULI Fall Meeting and Urban Land Expo in Miami Beach, Florida.

Signs of Stress; Drivers of Change



Climate Change

Climbing Temperatures — Cities that currently experience heat waves are expected to be challenged by an increased number, intensity, and duration of heat waves during the course of the century.

Severe Weather — Changing weather patterns place higher burdens on infrastructure, such as power lines, sewer systems, levees, and coastal evacuation routes.

Rising Seas — Many millions more people are projected to experience floods every year due to sea level rise. The numbers affected will be the largest in the densely populated, low-lying mega-deltas of Asia and Africa.



Infrastructure

Deferred Maintenance — Underinvestment and deferred maintenance can result in tragic consequences.

Communications Networks — Interconnected global systems create new opportunities, but introduce operational risks.

Unsustainable Patterns — Both capital and operational costs are higher for infrastructure in low-density communities.



Water

Vulnerable Sources — Many semi-arid and arid areas such as the Mediterranean Basin, western United States, southern Africa, and northeastern Brazil are projected to suffer a decrease of water resources due to climate change.

Diminishing Reserves — The availability of clean sources of water complicates the economic growth of communities and regions worldwide.

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Pollution Runoff — Persistent waterborne pollution knows no political boundaries.



Energy

Reducing Emissions — The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions creates dynamic market conditions in the energy sector.

Peaking Oil — Rising gas prices have reduced vehicle-miles traveled in the U.S. for the first time in 30 years.

Security Risks — Seventy percent of oil consumed in the United States is imported from other countries.



Demographics

Growing Populations — World population is projected to rise to 9 billion by 2050, with seven of every ten people living in urban areas.

Regional Migrations — Economic competitiveness will “push” and “pull” migration between regions.

Shifting Demographics — Demographic shifts in age, ethnicity, and household composition will create new markets and drive tensions between “haves” and “have-nots.”



Capital Markets

Concentration of Capital — Institutional investors and niche players grow in importance and define larger segments of the market.

Competition for Capital — Cities and regions vie for investment in a global marketplace.

Assessing Value and Risk — The speed of the marketplace and new economic inputs make the assessment and pricing of risk more difficult.

Themes for Creating Blueprints



Metro Metrics

Ready to Compete? In 2050, the world will be urban and economic competition will heat up, with Brazil, Russia, India, and China stoking the fire. Two billion people will have joined the middle class, bringing new aspirations and discretionary spending with them. Cities will compete around performance metrics like workforce readiness, emissions reductions, mobility indices, public health, water availability, and geopolitical risk.



The City Wild

Natural Assets Give Form to Growth: Falcons in New York City, salmon in Seattle, manatee in Miami—the drama of urban life extends into nature. Reengineered waterfronts, new forests, and restored stream valleys are shaping new addresses for urban development. The fringe benefit? Green infrastructure can reduce the need for costly traditional infrastructure.



Water, Power, Light

Community Lifelines and Networks Redefined: Infrastructure—the lifeline of thriving cities—is undergoing big changes. The worldwide quest to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is driving new economies. Decentralized and alternative technologies will enable new design solutions. Higher energy and water prices will induce investment and alter behavior patterns. Entrepreneurial investment will forge new business relationships.



Getting Around

Greater Mobility, More Choices: New technologies will offer new options—from smaller cars and individualized transit to high-speed rail and smart buses. Moving forward, developers will find tremendous potential to link land use with transportation, creating a larger, more integrated system of choices that promote health, quality of life, and regional competitiveness.



Whole Buildings

Structuring New Opportunity: Buildings and their construction account for nearly half of all energy consumed each year. As global population swells by 3 billion people, we will need more buildings than ever—millions more in the United States alone. The challenge to deliver sweeping changes across the entire building stock offers a vast opportunity to reshape our cities for a sustainable future.



Full-Spectrum Housing

From Starting Out to Growing Old: Successful housing will mean a diversity of options. Thriving communities will provide a full spectrum of prices and types—catering to shifting demographic preferences. Buyers and renters will balance lifestyle choices with market options; retirees will downsize up the street; a family with children will move without changing schools; and employees will find homes near their jobs.



Plan it. Build It.

A New Generation of Master Developers: Public and private interests are aligning to develop large-scale projects. From building new cities to finding new uses for discarded sites, creative partnerships are producing lasting legacies. By sharing risks, rewards, and best practices, new large-scale developments aim at the state of the art.



Click, Learn, Go, Get

Framing the Marketplace: Evolving information technologies will create even more points of contact along the supply chain—enriching interactions between buyers and sellers. But face-to-face interaction will always be needed.

Destinations for shopping, health care, culture, or education will reinvent how we shop, learn, and socialize. Accessible locations that allow buyers to “confirm” or “conclude” transactions will be robust centers of urban development.

Creating Blueprints



The Urban Land Institute is currently engaged in a variety of program activities which seek to define “best futures” land use outcomes for the City in 2050. From the [Reality Check](#) program to new publications; from focused forums to student competitions, we seek to frame how land use professionals define the “best 2050 future” for their community.

If you have thoughts about this endeavor or seek to provide feedback to the project team, please email us at 2050@uli.org.

Source: Urban Land Institute

<http://www.uli.org/ResearchAndPublications/Initiatives/City2050/About.aspx>